

# THE SHORT STORY

*Brevity is the soul of wit. Polonius, Hamlet (2.2.86)*

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English 300, Section 001  
May Pre-Session 2016

Office: Simpkins 109  
Hours: By appointment

MTWThF, 1:00-4:00 p.m.  
Memorial 12

## TEXTS

*The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction, Shorter Eighth Edition.* ISBN: 978-0-393-93776-3  
Materials on my faculty website and WesternOnline.

## COURSE INTRODUCTION

A more recent invention than the poem and the play, which date back thousands of years, or the novel, which has just one millennium, the short story did not emerge as a recognizable genre until the early nineteenth century. Arguably, short fiction is a manifestation of modernity, a literary form somehow meeting the demands of the world in which we live.

This seminar is not, however, a chronological survey. While we will look at stories written at different times and from different places in the world, the focus will be on analyzing literary form. We will study some of the most interesting and provocative work in the genre, attending to the intersections of our stories with historically concurrent narratives of gender, sexuality, race, class, colonialism, religion, and other significant topics.

This is a writing-intensive course, aimed at teaching students how to read closely and how to write effective short arguments. At the same time, we attend to what these stories have to tell us about the world around us.

## REQUIREMENTS

The Short Story involves two-page response papers and two five-page close reading essays. Each response paper will focus on a story that we have discussed. These responses should not summarize the stories, but instead choose interesting passages, textual particulars, or concepts to read closely. There will also be creative options.

I will post on my website an assignment sheet for each of the five-page essays, and you will have the option of rewriting them. *All response papers and essays must be submitted by email as Microsoft Word documents (.docx or .doc) that are double spaced. These are due before the given day's class begins. No hard copies!*

Because of the condensed nature of our course—a semester in three weeks—we will often read and analyze stories in class. With all in-class readings, compose discussion questions as you read and after you have finished the story.

There will be a homework reading assignment every day. On a rotating basis, with each reading assignment, a group of students will be assigned the responsibility of writing five discussion questions about the readings. These students will lead small group discussions. When it is your turn, you will send me the questions *by email and before class begins*.

## GRADING

Participation	20%
Discussion Questions	10%
Responses	30%
First Essay	20%
Second Essay	20%

Participation concerns the quantity, quality, and consistency of your discussion questions, as well as your active involvement in class discussion. Missing classes, or arriving late, will affect the participation grade. *A student with more than two absences automatically fails the course.*

Please take the opportunity to meet with me during my office hours, or by appointment, to talk about the readings, or your writing. I very much appreciate any kind of feedback about the course.

*Late work will not be accepted for any reason.* If you anticipate a complication, please get your work done ahead of time. Plagiarism will result in an F for the course, and I will report the student for academic discipline.

## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, [disability@wiu.edu](mailto:disability@wiu.edu) or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.

## SCHEDULE

*Because I cannot anticipate student reading speed, I cannot say in advance how many short stories we will be able to cover. This schedule, then, does not list the readings, but gives the due dates for assignments. Thus, you need to attend class every day to find out what the reading is.*

### Week 1

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|----|------|---|
| M  | 5/16 | Introduction to the course. In-Class readings & discussion.<br>Homework story assignment.   |
| T  | 5/17 | Discussion of homework story. In-Class readings & discussion.<br>Homework story assignment.   |
| W  | 5/18 | <b>Response 1 due.</b><br>Discussion of homework story. In-Class readings & discussion.<br>Homework story assignment.                     |
| Th | 5/19 | Discussion of homework story. In-Class readings & discussion.<br>Homework story assignment.   |
| F  | 5/20 | <b>Response 2 due.</b><br>Discussion of homework story. In-Class readings & discussion.<br>Homework story assignment. Essay 1 assignment. |

### Week 2

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|---|------|--|
| M | 5/23 | <b>Essay 1 Due.</b><br>Discussion of homework story. In-Class readings & discussion.<br>Homework story assignment. |
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## 4

- T 5/24 Discussion of homework story. In-Class readings & discussion.  
Homework story assignment.
- W 5/25 Discussion of homework story. In-Class readings & discussion.  
Homework story assignment. Essay 2 assignment.
- Th 5/26 **Response 3 due.**  
Discussion of homework story. In-Class readings & discussion.  
Homework story assignment.
- F 5/27 Discussion of homework story. In-Class readings & discussion.  
Homework story assignment.

### Week 3

- M 5/30 *No Class: Memorial Day.*
- T 5/31 **Essay 2 Due.**  
Discussion of homework story. In-Class readings & discussion.  
Homework story assignment.
- W 6/1 Discussion of homework story. In-Class readings & discussion.  
Homework story assignment.
- Th 6/2 Discussion of homework story. In-Class readings & discussion.  
Homework story assignment.
- F 6/3 **Response 4 & Rewrites Due.**  
Discussion of homework story. In-Class readings & discussion.  
Reflections on the course.