

Syllabus  
Summer 2012 NSO  
NLIT3364  
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## The American Short Story

### Description

It has long been observed that the short story, in its brevity and its sense of implied significance, is more like a poem than a novel. Readers who feel overwhelmed by the all-embracing quality of a long novel find the enigmas posed by short stories a more satisfying literary experience. How is a short story not just shorter but fundamentally different from a novel? How therefore do we read it differently? Reading 20th-century American short stories gives us access to some of our greatest writers, from as Ernest Hemingway, James Baldwin, and Willa Cather to Ursula Le Guin and Tillie Olsen. It also offers an opportunity to sample the cultural and geographical diversity of the United States. The changes in style and subject matter enable us to trace the priorities and preoccupations of American culture from 1900 to 2000. (3 credits)

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### B. Requirements:

Two six to seven page papers. Paper 1 is due June 30/July 1 (midnight on Saturday/Sunday; paper 2 on July 28th by 9 PM.

### Assignments--Papers 1 and 2

The first paper assignment, due March 1 (midnight btw Sunday and Monday) should contrast the styles of Cather and Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Fitzgerald, Cather and Hemingway, or, if you are up to

the challenge, all three. it should be five to six pages.

The second paper, due on the final day of the course, should take one of the stories on the last five weeks and discuss how it is significant in terms of encapsulating themes in American culture. It should be six to seven pages.

Papers should be e-mailed to me at birnsn@newschool.edu, as attachments. On the first paper the students will have an opportunity to revise if a paper is returned with comments but without a grade, those comments are meant as revision suggestions to get the grade up to an acceptable level.

Full and extensive participation in online class discussion

Commenting in class on each of the stories we study

#### C. Grade Breakdown

32% first paper

32 % second paper

36 % attendance and Participation

#### D. Textbooks

All stories are to be found in R. V. Cassill, ed., *The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*, seventh (2005) edition.

#### E. Outcomes

At the end of the class, students should be able to understand

--How the short story differs from longer forms of fiction in its aims, organization, and procedures

--the general trajectory of the progression of the form in the US in the

twentieth century  
-how to write capable expository prose

F. Order of Discussion;

Week 1 Introduction

Week 2 Cather, "Paul's Case" and Hemingway, "The Hills Like White Elephants"

Week 3 Fitzgerald, "Babylon Revisited" and Faulkner, "Barn Burning"

Week 4 Mary Wilkins Freeman, "A New England Nun" and Olsen, "O Yes".

Week 5 Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues" and Warren, "Blackberry Winter"

Week 6 Cheever, "The Enormous Radio" and Welty, "A Worn Path".

Week 7 Roth, "The Conversion of the Jews" and Updike, "A & P"

Week 8 Viramontes, "The Moths" and Walker, "Everyday Use".

Week 9 Le Guin, "the Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," and L'Heureux, "Brief Lives in California".

G. Other Important Information

Other Important Information

The syllabus should include a section on plagiarism, attendance, incompletes, and students with disabilities. Please review and draw from the information below (In the section of your syllabus devoted to Incompletes, only include information that is pertinent to students.)

Attendance

The New School adheres to a Zero Tolerance Policy regarding absences and requires all credit students to attend every class. Any extended

absence will adversely affect your grade.

### Plagiarism

The New School adheres to a Zero Tolerance Policy regarding plagiarism. Plagiarism will result in an F in the course at the discretion of the instructor and in accordance with the University's policy on plagiarism (see Student Handbook). Students should purchase A Writer's Reference by Diana Hacker, available at most book stores, for information on proper citation format.

### Incompletes

The grade of Incomplete "I" should not be assigned automatically. It should be assigned only at the request of the student and only at the discretion of the instructor. Students who have not completed assigned coursework and have not requested Incompletes should either fail the course or receive a grade of WF. Incomplete grades cannot be given for Bachelor's students who are graduating seniors. The maximum time allowed for the completion of the work and removal of the "I" will be set by the instructor but may be for no later than the 7<sup>th</sup> week of the following semester for undergraduates and one year after the end of the class for graduate students. Instructors who want to set earlier deadlines may do so.

In order to avoid misunderstandings and/or grade appeals, we urge instructors to make use of the "Request for a Grade of Incomplete" contract that is signed by both the instructor and the student, and to ask undergraduates if they are graduating seniors. This ensures that students understand the exact nature of the required work, the manner in which it is to be submitted, and the date by which it must be submitted for a grade. Instructors who do not use the "Request for a Grade of Incomplete" contract are urged to communicate deadlines and incomplete arrangements with students via email (with a request for verification of receipt).

Terms of the Incomplete should be agreed upon before the last class session. The grade of "I" is due and must be submitted at the same time as all other grades—one week after the last class session. An Incomplete for an undergraduate that is not changed to a grade through a Change of Grade form by the 7<sup>th</sup> week of the following semester will

automatically be converted to a failing grade of a “WF” by the University Registrar’s Office. The WF is factored into the student’s GPA the same way a grade of F would be factored in.

Change of Grade forms can be printed from MyNewSchool and faxed to the Dean’s Office at 212.229.6814. If you have any questions about the policy please contact Chrissy Roden (212.229.5615, [rodenc@newschool.edu](mailto:rodenc@newschool.edu)).

### Students with Disabilities

In keeping with the University's policy of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who needs academic accommodations should contact the office of Student Disability Services. All conversations will be kept confidential. Students requesting any accommodations will also need to meet with Jason Luchs, [luchsj@newschool.edu](mailto:luchsj@newschool.edu) , in the office of Student Disability Services, who will conduct an intake, and if appropriate, provide an academic accommodation notification letter. Mr. Luchs's office is located at 79 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor. His direct line is 212.229.5626 x3135. You may also access more information through the University's web site.