

Fall/Winter 2018-2019

AP/EN 2130 6.0A (Y)

The Short Story

Course Director:

Brett Zimmerman
bazim0804@aol.com

Delivery Format:

Seminar

Time:

Seminar: Monday 7-10pm

Description:

Everyone would appear to *know* what a short story is but, as scholars acknowledge, the form is surprisingly difficult to define! As well, not all people are clear on how to distinguish between it and other literary genres such as the *anecdote* or the *novella*. Some academics are even mistaken as to the origin of the short story, often incorrectly citing Edgar Allan Poe as the originator of the form in the early 1800s. In fact, the earliest short stories in prose are many centuries older and appeared in collections such as *The Arabian Nights*, the first English-language edition of which was published in 1706. Other early foreign-language collections are Boccaccio's *Decameron* (completed around 1353) and Margaret of Navarre's *Heptameron* (1558), inspired by the *Decameron*. After clearing up confusions as to genre definitions, we begin the course with a small sampling of tales from *The Heptameron*, translated from the French. After that, we concentrate on English-language publications. While Poe did not invent the modern short story, he and other nineteenth-century Americans are largely responsible for its rise as a literary form, mainly through magazines. Some scholars have been so cheeky as to pronounce the modern short story an *American* genre, and they're not far off the mark despite significant contributions from the international community (Kafka, Scott, Hoffman), especially Russia (Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Chekhov), even while Poe and his contemporaries flourished in the literary marketplace on the other side of the Atlantic. Perhaps no nation has so remarkable a tradition of short fiction as the U.S.; this year's course is dominated by some of the most famous practitioners including Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Poe, Herman Melville, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Dashiell Hammett, and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

We also look to the UK with some of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes tales. As for our own nation, Canadians are now recognized as leaders in the genre; we therefore tip our hats to two of the dominant figures in Canadian letters: Margaret Atwood and Alice Munro.

Major themes and sub-genres on the course include the following: allegories; Gothic (terror fiction); detective fiction/mysteries; early science fiction; psychopathology (mental illness); the dangers of the wilderness; and lives of girls and women (to borrow a title from Alice Munro). An important theme tying together the first and second terms is the *evolution of a short story genre*, and we examine as our case study the evolution of detective fiction, beginning with Poe (who invented the "soft-boiled" variety, drawing it from terror fiction), moving on to Doyle (its most famous practitioner), then to Hammett, who redefined the genre in the American context to give the world "hard-boiled" detective fiction.

Critical approaches to the material include the following: generic, rhetorical (argument and style), feminist, history-of-ideas, historical (historicist), influence, and psychoanalytical.

Category:

B

Historical Requirement:

N/A

Requirements:

1st essay: 15% (6-7 pages)

2nd essay: 20% (7-8 pages)

1st-term test: 20%

2nd-term test: 20%

JSTOR assignment: 3%

attendance: 10%

participation: 12%

Reading List:

Atwood, Margaret. "Death by Landscape" (in course kit)
de Navarre, Margaret. *Heptameron* (selections) (in course kit)
Doyle, Arthur Conan. "The Adventure of the Dancing Men" (in course kit)
Doyle, Arthur Conan. "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (in course kit)
Doyle, Arthur Conan. "A Scandal in Bohemia" (in course kit)
Doyle, Arthur Conan. *A Study in Scarlet* (Chapters 1 and 2) (in course kit)
Doyle, Arthur Conan. "The Yellow Face" (in course kit)
Fitzgerald, F. Scott. "Bernice Bobs Her Hair" (in course kit)
Fitzgerald, F. Scott. "The Ice Palace" (in course kit)
Fitzgerald, F. Scott. "The Jelly-Bean" (in course kit)
Fitzgerald, F. Scott. "The Offshore Pirate" (in course kit)
Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. "The Yellow Wallpaper" (in course kit)
Hammett, Dashiell. "\$106,000 Blood Money" (in course kit)
Hammett, Dashiell. "The Big Knockover" (in course kit)
Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "Alice Doane's Appeal" (in course kit)
Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "The Birthmark" (in course kit)
Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" (in course kit)
Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "Rappaccini's Daughter" (in course kit)
Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "Young Goodman Brown" (in course kit)
Irving, Washington. "Rip Van Winkle" (in course kit)
Melville, Herman. "The Paradise of Bachelors and The Tartarus of Maids" (in course kit)
Munro, Alice. "Open Secrets" (in course kit)
Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Cask of Amontillado" (online)
Poe, Edgar Allan. "King Pest the First" (online)
Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Masque of the Red Death" (online)
Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (online)
Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Purloined Letter" (online)
Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Tell-Tale Heart" (online)
Poe, Edgar Allan. "Thou Art the Man" (online)
Zimmerman, Brett, ed. *The Short Story: First Term*. (course kit available in the York bookstore)
Zimmerman, Brett, ed. *The Short Story: Second Term*. (course kit available in the York bookstore)

Open To:

YR 2, 3