The US Short Story and Literary Method

This course offers a survey of mostly US short stories of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries with special attention to the categories of literary analysis. For each week, we will read a group of short stories alongside two or three examples of specific literary methodologies that relate to one formal component of narrative fiction. Through these readings, you will become not only conversant in a wide-range of approaches to analyzing literature but also attentive to the formal and thematic structure of short, narrative fiction. Readings will include stories by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Hisaye Yamamoto, Sarah Orne Jewett, Charles Chesnutt, Carson McCullers, and others.

Assignments:
There are a variety of short written, spoken, and bibliographic assignments for this course to help prepare you for writing your junior essay, as summarized below:

1) 3-sentence projection of an argument: One of the biggest skills that I want you to develop is knowing the difference between an observation and an argument. An observation points to a moment in the text and says “Wow! Cool, right?” An argument observes a piece of the text in relation to the whole and explains something interesting, counterintuitive, or surprising about the relationship between piece and whole.

2) 1-sentence summary of an argument: Usually, you can summarize a good piece of criticism in a sentence or two. Think of this sentence as trying to explain to a peer who comes across this piece of criticism what the point of it is: what interesting thing is it trying to say? Why did so-and-so write it? What does it explain?

3) Annotated Bibliography: This is a list of sources accompanied by a few sentences like you would write for the previous assignment. What is each source arguing? Why is it useful to you? One of these sentences should look a lot like the sentences you write for assignment #2.

4) 2-page close reading: This is a chance to try out a piece of your argument. Here, you can take something like you would write for assignment #1 and couple it with the observations to back it up.

5) 5-6 page short paper: This paper is designed both to develop skills you will need to write the final paper and to help me diagnose areas to focus particular attention in helping to improve your writing and argumentation. In this paper, you need to do two things 1) engage with a secondary source (either that you find or that we have read together) 2) make an argument based on a close reading of a primary text. Your engagement with a secondary source can range from a disagreement about the meaning of a passage in a text to a conceptual use of a theoretical text; but your use of this source must be substantive.

6) 2-page Prospectus: Here you should try to explain your plans for your junior essay. This document needs to have all of the following: 1) a short description of your central texts 2) a hypothesis about your argument and 3) a short explanation of why that hypothesis matters: how does it relate to other criticism about the text(s), (including the criticism you list in your annotated bibliography)? what is interesting or surprising about your hypothesis? In working on your prospectus, you should meet with the departmental writing fellow (TBA).

7) 5-minute talk: In this talk at a conference with all the other junior tutorial students, you will have five minutes to give a brief introduction of your topic and an outline of your argument.
**Week of 30 August: What is a Short Story?**


Peer Review of Sample Junior Essays

**Assignment:** Fill out the Peer-Editing Sheet as if this sample essay were by a classmate

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**Week of 7 September: Voice:**

Catharine Maria Sedgwick, “The Catholic Iroquois”

Herman Melville, “Bartleby the Scrivener”

Charles Chesnutt, “The Gray Wolf’s Ha’nt,” “The Goophered Grapevine”

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”


**Assignment:** 3-sentence projection of an argument about one of the stories

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**Week of 14 September: Language**


Zora Neale Hurston, “The Book of Harlem,” “Monkey Junk,” “High John De Conquer”

Meredith McGill, “Unauthorized Poe” from *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting*

Barbara Johnson, “Thresholds of Difference: Structures of Address in Zora Neale Hurston”

Mikhail Bakhtin, from “Discourse in the Novel” in *The Dialogic Imagination*

**Assignment:** 1-sentence summaries of Johnson and McGill

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**Tuesday, 15 September, 4-5pm, Barker 133: First meeting of all Junior Tutorial students**

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**Week of 21 September: Paratext:**


James Fenimore Cooper, “An Execution at Sea”


Joseph Rezek, “Cooper and Scott in the Anglophone Literary Field,” *ELH*

Leah Price, “From The History of a Book to a ‘History of the Book’” *Representations*

**Assignment:** 5-6 page short paper on one of the stories read thus far

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**Week of 28 September: Library Visit and Individual Conferences**

**Assignment:** Pre-Library Scavenger Hunt.

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**Week of 5 October: Scale:**

Katherine Anne Porter, “Old Mortality”

Sarah Orne Jewett, “The Queen’s Twin,” “The Foreigner” in *Novels and Stories*, “Miss Sydney’s Flowers,” in *Best Stories of Sarah Orne Jewett*, 19–34

Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren from *Understanding Fiction*


**Assignment:** 3-4 Annotated Sources
Week of 12 October: Character
Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The May-Pole at Merry Mount,” “My Kinsman, Major Molineux,” “Endicott and the Red Cross”
Willa Cather, “Neighbour Rosicky,” from Obscure Destinies
Carson McCullers, “Ballad of a Sad Café”
Alex Woloch from The One vs The Many
David Brewer from The Afterlife of Character
Assignment: Annotated bibliography with 8-10 sources

Tuesday, 13 October, 4-5pm, Barker 133: Second meeting of all Junior Tutorial students

Week of 19 October: Focus of Narration
Henry James, “The Beast in the Jungle”
Hisaye Yamamoto, “Yoneko’s Earthquake,” “Seventeen-Syllables”
King-Kok Cheung “Double-Telling: Intertextual Silence in Hisaye Yamamoto's Fiction” American Literary History. 3.2 (Summer 1991): 277-93
Assignment: A two-page prospectus
Individual Meetings about the prospectus

Week of 26 October: Plot
Pauline Hopkins, “Talma Gordon”
Abraham Cahan, “A Providential Match,” “Circumstances”
Caroline Levine, “Rhythm” from Forms
Assignment: 2-page reading/use of evidence for the junior paper

Week of 2 November: Setting and Space
Mary Austin “The Basket Maker,” “The Pocket Hunter,” “The Scavengers”
Sherwood Anderson “Hands,” from Winesberg, Ohio
Flannery O’Connor “Everything that Rises Must Converge”
Lawrence Buell from The Environmental Imagination
Assignment: 3-sentence projection of an argument about one of the stories

Week of 9 November: Draft Week
William Faulkner, “A Rose for Emily,” “Red Leaves,” “That Evening Sun”
Zitkala-Sa, “Impressions of an Indian Childhood,” “The School Days of an Indian Girl,”
Raymond Williams from Marxism and Literature

Assignment: Draft of Junior Essay is due 1 day before class.
Individual meetings about your writing.

Week of 16 November: Theme
Assignment: Draft of Junior Essay is due 1 day before class.
Individual meetings about your writing.

Week of 23 November: No class for Thanksgiving; optional individual meetings

Week of 30 November: Peer Editing Workshop
Assignment: An (updated) full draft of the Junior Essay is due two days before class. We will circulate and discuss your essays as a group.

4pm, 8 December: Departmental Due Date for Junior Essay
Monday, 7 December, 4-6:30pm OR Wednesday, 9 December, 4-6:30pm, Junior Tutorial Conference

Grading:

**Participation and Preparation:**
- Active and engaged participation in tutorial: 10%
- Performance on short, pre-tutorial assignments: 5%
- 5-6 page short essay: 10%

**Junior Essay and Its Components:**
- Annotated Bibliography: 5%
- Prospectus: 10%
- 2-page close reading: 5%
- Draft: 15%
- Final Essay: 40%

Note: Given that the course is structured around producing a coherent and well-crafted essay, you will not be able to receive a passing grade for the course without turning in a final version of the junior essay.