

Syllabus

ENG 237 – Valmont Campus

Introduction to Fiction

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Reading and study of various authors and forms of fiction (such as short story, novella, novel), with attention to historical development and critical terminology.

Course Description:

Storytelling has long stood as man's greatest artistic achievement. Fiction, in particular, can take on many forms. It can relate old lore and mythology, humorous satires of the present, and visions of the future. The creation of a story carries with it the potential to create universes of improbable possibility. The subjects comprise of the most human of characters to the most supernatural and alien. If a story's scope is limited in any manner, it is because of the writer.

Some writers create fantastical characters, triumphing over impossible hardship and journey, while others create more humble beings conquering what only a human can understand, emotional strife and conflict. We will read selections of the great short stories that exemplify our humanity and fill our imaginations with the wondrous. As we read these stories we will learn how to offer fruitful analysis and criticism of the various parts of storytelling such as plot, character, and symbolism, as well as an analysis of the writing as a whole. Additionally, we will study the finer aspects of appreciating a story artistically by looking at its reflections on the human condition and its originality as a fiction. Together, these perspectives will help us achieve insightful conclusions about the art of storytelling.

In addition to studying short fiction and the finer points of storytelling, we will briefly examine selections of poetry. Poetry compresses pages of story into a few beautifully constructed lines. These lines carry a mind's worth of imagery and creation that blossom together into artistic magic. The final product, like a story, evokes strong emotion and universalizes our individual, everyday experiences.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course you will be able to critically and analytically read a piece of fiction based on its originality and artistic merits. Additionally, you will develop your interpretive skills via the medium of conversation. Since we often approach works of art with diverse perspectives, the best way to enhance our interpretations is to share and debate them with others. Often, conclusions about symbol or story are the products of a synthesis of individual interpretations.

Course Requirements:

- 1) Students will complete all reading assignments and participate in in-class activities and discussions.
- 2) Students will complete assigned essays comprising of critical analyses of the selections.

Grading:

Grading will be based largely on participation in class. Discussion is the best way to reach new ideas and perspectives. There will also be assigned essays meant to exercise the student's analytic and artistic critical thinking skills in regard to reading fiction and poetry.

Final grades will assess the individual's progress throughout the term. Each person comes to the classroom with different abilities and ideas. Therefore, you will be graded on your improvement, and not how you compare to that of others. I don't expect you to change your opinions either, only to learn to explain them in a well-thought and reasoned manner.

Before Class:**Read the following:**

- 1) p.12 – 20 (Fiction: Reading, Responding, Writing)
- 2) p.66 – 70 (Plot)
- 3) p.120 – 123 (Narration and Point of View)
- 4) p.140 – 145 (Character)
- 5) p.196 – 197 (Setting)
- 6) p.230 – 232 (Symbol)
- 7) p.264 – 266 (Theme)

Required Texts:

- 1) The Norton Introduction to Literature, Shorter 9th Edition, edited by Alison Booth, J. Paul Hunter, and Kelly J. Mays

Class Policies:

- 1) Academic Integrity: The Doane College Academic Integrity Policy will be followed in this class.
- 2) Late Assignments: Assignments are due by the assigned date. If late, there will be deductions in the grade of the assignment.
- 3) Attendance: Students are expected to attend every class. Situations of absence will be considered when they occur.
- 4) On Discussion: Students are expected to respect one another's opinions and abilities. This not only prevents a contentious environment, but makes for a more fruitful academic experience.