"A book should serve as the axe for the frozen sea within us."

— Franz Kafka

ENG 237 Introduction to Fiction fulfills the requirement for a Foundational Area of Knowledge in In Search of Meaning and Values. A course that fulfills this requirement will assure that students consider the importance and significance of what it means to be human. In this class, students will work to:

1) consider ways that humans have come to understand the meaning of existence
2) evaluate the philosophical or spiritual implications of human actions and policies
3) develop an understanding of their ethical values

PRE 323 will seek to accomplish all of these learning outcomes
Course Readings:


Course Description:

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

Introduction to Fiction will explore the writings of various American and Continental authors. Over the next eight weeks, we’ll read selected stories from these authors with close attention to a story’s theme (faith vs. doubt, self-identity, alienation, etc). We’ll also study the building blocks of fiction in order to learn how a story “works.”

Learning Outcomes:

1) students will read and appreciate great literature

2) students will learn the building blocks of fiction (e.g., character, plot, symbol, theme, foreshadowing, epiphany, setting and pacing, etc.)
3) students will be able to sympathize with worldviews and life journeys different than their own

4) students will develop a tolerance for doubt, diversity and uncertainty

Learning Strategies:

In order to fulfill the learning outcomes of ENG 237, various learning strategies will be used. Strategies include but are not limited to the following: lectures by the instructor, small group discussions, interviews with the authors on You Tube, and guest speakers (ministers, literary scholars, social workers, etc).

Learning Assessment:

Attendance, Participation & Attentiveness (APA): Attendance is mandatory. The material we’ll cover in class may not be found in the readings. Participation is expected. Learning to express your ideas orally is a huge part of a college education; it also makes discussion more interesting. Attentiveness is also expected. You may use a laptop computer for class notes only. If you use a laptop for the Internet, email or video games, you will lose the privilege of using a laptop for the rest of the semester. Finally, if you are disruptive in class (talking while the instructor is talking, texting, sleeping, flirting, etc.), you will be asked to leave for the remainder of the class. APA will account for 40% your grade.

The Literature Journal: You will write a one-page journal entry for each story we read. The goal of keeping a journal is to help you identify the building blocks of fiction—those elements of a story that make it “work”. You may explore one or more building blocks in each journal entry. You are responsible for ten journal entries. Each journal entry should be at least one typed double-spaced page, though your journal entries may exceed one page. The Literature Journal will account for 60% of your grade.
Note: The Literature Journal should be stapled together and submitted as a whole on the last day of class.

What to Expect in Class:

Expect to be challenged. This class will challenge your most deeply held convictions. Get used to it. You won’t grow as a human being unless you wrestle with points of view—religious, political, and ethical—in opposition to your own.

Expect to read and write. This isn’t a “coasting” course. You must do the readings and come to class ready to discuss them. This will be a boring class if I’m the only one up here talking.

Expect to pay attention in class. Don’t talk while the instructor is talking or while a colleague is talking. Raise your hand if you have a question and wait until you’re called on to speak.

Expect to be in class until at least 10:00AM.

Expect to be on time for class. If you arrive to class late, don’t ask the person next to you what you’ve missed. Wait until the break or after class to ask this and related questions.

Expect the instructor to teach the class. Don’t think you can teach the class by dominating the class discussions. Many students enroll in the courses offered at Doane College. Expect to hear from all of those students.

Expect to keep all books, notebooks and pencils on your desk until class is over. Don’t put them away early. Don’t do anything that suggests class is over when it isn’t; doing so will trigger the “off” switch and students will stop paying attention.

Expect to turn your cell phone off at the beginning of class—and keep it off.
Grading Scale

100-95 = A
94-90 = A-
89-87 = B+
86-84 = B
83-80 = B-
79-77 = C+
76-74 = C
73-70 = C-
69-67 = D+
66-64 = D
63-60 = D-
59 & below F

A Note on Plagiarism

All written work must be in your own words. Borrowing an author’s words, sentences or thoughts without a proper citation is a crime. If I find you guilty of plagiarism, not only will you earn a free trip to the Dean’s Office, you may also fail the course. Play it safe—don’t steal.

A Note on Courtesy

We live in the twenty-first century. Everybody should act civilized. When the instructor is talking, nobody talks. When you’re talking, nobody else talks (including the instructor). And finally, if you disagree with someone, attack the person’s argument, not the person.

Tentative Class Schedule

Session 1

Introduction to Literature: The Building Blocks of Fiction

Session 2

The Pearl
Session 3

Andre Dubus: “The Fat Girl”
Ann Beattie: “Weekend”

Session 4

Post Office

Session 5

Joyce Carol Oates: “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?”
Flannery O’Connor: “A Good Man is Hard to Find”

Session 6

The Catcher in the Rye

Session 7

The House on Mango Street

Session 8

The Stranger

Note: The Literature Journal (ten entries) is due one week after the last class meeting. Submit all assignments to Mr. Tasey’s third floor mailbox (bottom/left-hand side).