

Introduction to Fiction

ENGL 2370 – FALL 2014

Instructor: Greg Graham

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Office Hours: MWF 9:00-10:00, T/Th 10:45-11:45

Textbook: *The Story and Its Writer* (Eighth Edition) by Ann Charters

Materials: Brain, Composition Notebook or Spiral Notebook, Access to a computer and printer

Catalogue Description for this course: ENGL 2370 Satisfies the humanities requirement in the general education program. Students will learn to read stories and short novels carefully and analytically and be encouraged to see the way stories both reflect and enhance our understanding of life. Lecture, discussion, writing.

The Purpose of this Course

A course about fiction may at first glance seem frivolous, but storytelling has had a central place in human history since men and women could speak. Stretching from ancient oral storytellers to today's novelists and screenwriters, storytellers have prodded their audiences to ask questions about the way things are and about who they are. Some stories seek to inspire; others seek to expose. But in the end, the writer's goal is that something *happens* to the reader. As the ancient Indian author Vyasa says at the beginning of the epic *Mahabharata* "If you listen carefully, at the end you'll be someone else." Those words were authored over 3000 years ago, but the goal is still pretty much the same. When Pulitzer Prize winning author Jennifer Egan visited UCA in Feb of 2013, someone asked her what she wanted to accomplish with her stories. She responded "I want someone to read it and have to be rushed to the hospital as a result."

This semester, you will be exposed to some of the masters of the short story. If you give their stories a chance, you may not end up in the hospital as a result, but you just might end up being someone else.

Other than that loftier objective, the goal of this course is to make you a smarter reader, a more informed watcher. Whether in movies, TV shows, songs, commercials, social media, politics, religious gatherings, books, or your uncle at a Thanksgiving Dinner, narrative is everywhere. This course will help you discern what is being said, how it is being said, and why the author is saying it.

Structure: After spending the first couple of weeks getting acquainted with the short story form, we will spend the remainder of the semester reading and responding to several notable short stories. Your work related to the readings will be as follows:

Daily Work – Each reading, including the preliminary pieces assigned to familiarize yourself with the short story form, should be responded to by you with a written response. These responses will enable you to engage in the classroom discussion related to the reading. Each written response will be reviewed and given a check, check plus, check minus, or x. These grades will count toward your final daily work grade, which is 25% of your final grade. These written responses will not be evaluated for their adherence to a form, but rather by how well you engage with the material being read.

Formal Papers – Over the course of the semester, you will write four 700-word papers responding to the assigned short story. With these papers, you will bring to bear the things you have learned about short fiction, identifying smaller concerns such things as plot, characterization, setting, point of view, and setting, while focusing on larger concerns such as the author’s special way of looking at things and what meaning the author is grappling with in the story.

The level at which you delve into these concerns will determine your grade on the paper. The grades on these four papers will determine 50% of your overall grade.

Exams – There will be a mid-term and final exam. The mid-term exam will determine 10% of your grade and the final will determine 15% of your grade.

Grading Procedures: Your grade in this course is based on the quality of your written work, and your level of engagement in the class. The student who is attentive, responsive, and puts forth a serious effort always get the benefit of the doubt.

Grade scale: 100-90% = A, 89-80% = B, 79-70% = C, 69-60% = D, 59% or below = F.

Grades will be calculated with the following weights:

Daily Work (including engagement in class discussions)	25%
Formal Papers	50%
<u>Exams</u>	<u>25%</u>
Final Grade	100%

Policies

Participation: This class is *fully interactive*. Your participation is required. Students will be asked to engage in daily writing, Q & A, and group discussion. 25% of your grade will be based on class participation and daily writing.

Attendance: Regular class attendance is vital to your success. Students who miss more than two weeks' worth of classes—i.e., six classes of a MWF course, or four classes of a TTh course—will be dropped from the course and receive a WF (withdraw fail). ALSO, students who miss three consecutive classes will be dropped from the class and receive a WF.

Tardiness: Please arrive at class on time. If you arrive after I have checked the roll, you will be marked "late". Two "lates" equals an absence.

Laptops, smartphones, tablets: New media tools are great, but while in class, all digital technologies are to be turned off unless otherwise instructed by me.

RESPECT: Please be courteous of fellow students and the instructor by listening intently and paying attention to what everyone has to say. I will treat you with respect, and I expect that you will do the same for me and for your classmates. Respect includes paying attention and not interrupting when someone has the floor—and it includes avoiding rudeness or slurs.

No put downs. No text-messaging. No sleeping in class. Turn cell phones off.

No children or visitors without my approval.

If you do not own a computer, you will need to purchase a thumb drive. Save each essay on a computer or a thumb drive!!! This is essential for making revisions and corrections!

The Fine Print

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional borrowing or stealing of another's words, thoughts or ideas and passing them off as your own. College and University regulations regarding academic dishonesty, as set forth in the UCA student handbook and other University documents and publications, will be enforced in this class. If written work does not appear to be your own, you will be questioned about it. If it is determined that you indeed plagiarized, you will receive an F for that assignment and may be dismissed from the course.

UCA Academic Integrity Statement:

The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

Americans with Disabilities Act statement:

The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Office of Disability Services, 450-3613.

UCA Sexual Harassment Policy:

Sexual harassment by any faculty member, staff member or student is a violation of both law and university policy and will not be tolerated. Please consult your Student Handbook for policy, definition and procedures. If you have questions or concerns, please contact your instructor or the department chair. Individuals who believe they have been subjected to harassment should report the incident promptly to their academic dean or to a departmental chair or directly to the university's Affirmative Action officer, legal counsel or assistant vice president of human resources.

Disruptive Behavior Statement:

Any student in the class whose behavior regularly interferes with the instructor's ability to conduct the class and foster student learning, or who exhibits a behavior so outrageous as to severely impede conduct of the class, may be dropped from the class with a WF. Prior warning will be provided to the student when possible, but under unusual circumstances a warning may not be possible.

Evaluations:

Your evaluation of this course and professor is a crucial element in helping me achieve excellence in the classroom and the institution in demonstrating that students are gaining knowledge. You may evaluate this course starting on in April through the end of finals week by logging in to myUCA and clicking on the Evals button on the top right.