PROPOSING FACULTY: LORRAINE MERCER

COURSE TITLE AND NUMBER: ENB 313 THE AMERICAN SHORT STORY

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OBTAIN CHAIR AND CLUSTER COORDINATOR SIGNATURES
BEFORE SUBMITTING TO UNIVERSITY STUDIES OFFICE

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DEPARTMENT CHAIR(S):__________________  DATE: Jan. 9, 2005

__________________________________________  DATE:

CLUSTER COORDINATOR:____________________  DATE:

All changes to Clusters must be approved by PSU's Senate Curriculum Committee.

THE ORIGINAL + 12 COPIES OF THE PROPOSAL
MUST BE RECEIVED AT UNIVERSITY STUDIES (CH 163)
BY NOVEMBER 8, 2005

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COURSE APPROVED FOR CLUSTER INCLUSION

CHAIR, CLUSTER COORDINATORS:__________________  DATE:

CHAIR, UNST COMMITTEE:_________________________  DATE:
University Studies Cluster Course Addition to American Studies Cluster

Proposing faculty: Lorraine Mercer, English Department
January 9, 2006


   B. This course has been taught for the last 4 years, first as an ENG 399 and then as ENG 313U.

   C. This course is offered 2-3 times a year.

   D. There are no prerequisites.

2. Course Outline: Instructors committed to teaching this course include: Lorraine Mercer, Maria DePriest, and Maude Hines.

   Texts that have been used for this course are:
   The Short Story and Its Writer, and The American Short Story and Its Writer, both edited by Ann Charters and published by Bedford/St. Martin’s.

   The course readings are between 35-40 short stories by American writers and related commentaries by writers on their own work and the work of others.
   The following selections are included:

   Margaret Atwood, “Happy Endings,” and “Death by Landscape.”
   Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown,” and “My Kinsman, Major Molineux.”
   Edgar Allen Poe, “The Cask of Amontillado” and “The Tell-tale Heart.”
   Sarah Orne Jewett, “A White Heron.”
   Charles Chesnutt, “The Sheriff’s Children.”
   Kate Chopin, “Desiree’s Baby.”
   Edith Wharton, “Roman Fever” and “The Other Two”
   O. Henry, “The Gift of the Maji.”
   William Carlos Williams, “The Use of Force.”
   Katherine Anne Porter, “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall.”
Sherwood Anderson, “Hands,” and “Death in the Woods.”
James Baldwin, “Sonny’s Blues.”
William Faulkner, “A Rose for Emily,” and “That Evening Sun.”
Ernest Hemingway, “Hills Like White Elephants.”
John Cheever, “The Swimmer.”
Alice Walker, “Roselily.”
Ralph Ellison, “The Battle Royal.”
Laurie Moore, “How to be a Writer.”
Grace Paley, “Conversation with my Father.”
Mary Gaitskill, “Tiny, Smiling Daddy.”
Bobbie Ann Mason, “Shiloh.”
Tim O’Brien, “The Things They Carried.”
Louise Erdrich, “The Red Convertible.”
Leslie Marmon Silko, “Yellow Woman.”
Sherman Alexie, “The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven.”
Sandra Cisneros, “The House on Mango Street.”
Raymond Carver, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love.”

A sample syllabus with course materials is included with this document.

General Education Goals:
A. Course content and suitability for cluster: This course examines the
development of the short story in the United States from its
beginnings as tales such as Rip Van Winkle, by Washington
Irving, to recent stories like those found in The House on Mango
Street, by Chicana writer, Sandra Cisneros. Many literary critics
and historians believe the short story to be a distinctly
“American” art form. These stories examine many aspects of
American life of the last two centuries including those of race,
class and gender. These works capture political and cultural
moments in the history of the United States, through the colonial
period, through slavery, women’s rights, wars, and many
significant aspects of life in the U.S.
B. University Studies Goals:
Inquiry and critical thinking: students will learn to do close readings
of works and ask analytical questions of the texts. They will also be
asked to do library research and present findings of dense critical
journal articles.
Communication: daily response papers and two essay exams demand lots of writing, both formal and informal. There is also a research project and short, class presentation.
Diversity of Human Experience: The course includes many writers of color, diverse ethnicities and women.
Ethical Issues and Social Responsibility: Because the literature deals with subjects that include historical experiences from the colonial period, slavery, war, women’s rights and class issues, students confront questions of ethics and social responsibility on many levels.

C. Classroom Environment: The class time is divided between small group work and discussion to large group discussion and individual presentations on research topics.

Attached is a course syllabus and exams for further edification.
English 313/The American Short Story

Prof. Lorraine Mercer / Office NH 421 hrs: Thursday 4:53PM/mercerl@pdx.edu
& Instructor Taya Noland / Office NH 378 hrs: TTH 1-2/tayanoland@hotmail.com

“A great deal of the story is believed to be inside of the listener, and the storyteller’s role is to draw the story out of the listener.” Leslie Marmon Silko

“Who reads short stories? One is asked, and I like to think that they are read by men and women in the dentist’s office, waiting to be called to the chair; they are read on transcontinental plane trips instead of watching a banal and vulgar film spin out the time between our coasts; they are read by discerning and well informed men and women who seem to feel that narrative fiction can contribute to our understanding of one another and the sometimes bewildering world around us.

In short stories I find those rented summer houses, those one-night love affairs, and those lost key rings that confound traditional esthetics. We are not a nomadic people, but there is more than a hint of this spirit of our great country—and the short story is the literature of the nomad.” John Cheever

Text: The Story and Its Writer, Fifth Edition, editor Ann Charters,

In her introduction to the new collection of American Short Stories Charters asks these questions: What is an American story? How do American stories differ from stories originating in other parts of the world? How short is short? I add to her list the following: What is the purpose of art? And more specifically, what is the purpose of fiction? The answers to these and other fascinating questions will be our project for the next 10 weeks as we examine the development of the short story genre in the United States from Washington Irving to Sandra Cisneros.

Course Requirements:

1. Reading Portfolio: daily response papers (1-2 pages) and questions (3) about the reading.
2. Annotated Bibliography and In-Class Presentations on literary topics.
3. Mid-term exam.
4. Final Project: a portfolio that includes your annotated bibliography and a written copy of your in-class presentation, letter of reflection and final response paper.

Reading Portfolio: Each student is required to bring a 1-2 page reading response each day. These papers reflect your engagement with the readings. While these papers will not be graded, they will account for one-quarter of your final letter grade. Be prepared to read these papers aloud in small groups. No late responses will be accepted. At mid-term and at final time you will be asked to review your response papers and provide a letter/essay/statement of reflection regarding your work in the course. This 2 page typed document will be turned in on the day of the exam and will be graded as part of your in-class exam.

Annotated Bibliography/Research Project/Class Presentation: This 1 page research project on critical readings of the texts takes the form of an annotated bibliography in MLA format. The annotated bibliography must have at least 2 academic sources. A rough draft of this bibliography is due at the presentation. The finished project is due with the Final Project. The class presentations are limited to 8 minutes per person. This time limit will be strictly enforced. Using internet sources for literary research will only be acceptable on a case-by-case basis. Internet sources must be from scholarly and academic journals. The presentation part of this assignment is due on the date assigned in the reading schedule. Please be ready on the date assigned.
As the old people say, "If you remember the stories, you will be all right. Just remember the stories." And, of course, usually when they say that to you, when you are young, you wonder what in the world they mean." Leslie Marmon Silko

**Reading Schedule**

I. January 4:  
   1/6: Introduction  
   Atwood, Irving and **all Related Commentary /RC**  
   (RC required for every reading) & Appendix 2

II. 1/11:  
   1/13: Hawthorne, Poe, App. 3. (Esp pps. 1701-1713)  
   Chestnut Chopin, Jewett  
   (optional: Chekov)

III. 1/18:  
   1/20: Cather, Wharton, O. Henry/William Sidney Porter Stein, Williams  
   (optional: du Maupassant)

IV. 1/25:  
   1/27: Anderson, Katherine Anne Porter  
   Hurston, Hughes, Baldwin  
   (optional: Gogol)

V. February 1:  
   2/3: Faulkner, Hemingway  
   Cheever

VI. 2/8:  
   2/10: Walker, Ellison

   **Mid-term exam**

VII. 2/15:  
   2/17: Moore, Paley, Gaitskill  
   Mason, O'Brien,

VIII. 2/22:  
   2/24: Erdrich, Silko  
   Alexie

IX. March 1:  
   3/3: Cisneros

X. 3/8:  
   3/10: Carver

**Final Exam Week is March 14-18**
English 313/Mid-Term Exam

Select two of the following and write well-reasoned and delightful essays. Use plenty of **textual evidence** in your answers. Please cite **page numbers** with your quotations. Plan to discuss at least 5 short stories and 2 related commentaries. **Please identify which questions you are answering.** Exams should be under 4 pages, typed and double-spaced (or space and a half if you must). Please turn your exam in on Thursday, February 17 by 5 PM.

1. Henry James asks “What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?” Pick two or more of the stories we have read and explore his statement. How are characters and their actions related? Include a character profile of at least two characters.

2. It has been said that educational institutions use literature to discipline students, put them under society’s control by presenting them with its dominant values and assumptions. In this view studying literature is a way to indoctrinate people into how reality is perceived or constructed in the society.
   
   It has also been suggested that literature encourages readers to question or try to change or challenge the norms of their culture. Proponents of this claim that through reading literature people discover parts of themselves that the dominant structures of society wish to control, repress or trivialize, thus reading could be seen as a counter-dominant practice. In your essay respond to one or both of these statements with ideas and examples from our reading this term.

3. Several of the stories we have read this term have focused on storytelling and writing. These kinds of narratives are sometimes called Metafictions. What is your reaction to these stories about stories? What kind of value do they present within the larger realm of short fiction? Why do writers write them? Why do we read them? Why are they in our book? Be specific.

4. Pick on of the following topics and discuss its significance in 2 or 3 of the stories from this term: family relationships, money, marriage, religion, childhood, gender issues, sex, love, nature. For example, compare and discuss the versions of childhood portrayed in some combination of the following: “A White Heron,” “That Evening Sun,” “Paul’s Case,” and/or “Thank you, Ma’am.”

5. Discuss the use of and importance of Setting in at least three of the stories. Some possibilities include, “Roman Fever,” “Desiree’s Baby,” “Young Goodman Brown,” “Rip Van Winkle,” “The Cask of Amontillado,” and/or “The Use of Force.”
English 313/American Short Story/ Final Project

“As the old people say, “If you remember the stories, you will be all right. Just remember the stories.” And, of course, usually when they say that to you, when you are young, you wonder what in the world they mean.” Leslie Marmon Silko

Final Project: a document that includes your annotated bibliography, letter of reflection and course description. The Letter of Reflection is a 2-4 page, typed, double-spaced document, (letter, essay, response paper) that discusses your work in this class. Use a paper clip or staple to contain your project, not a big 3 ring folder.

“A great deal of the story is believed to be inside of the listener, and the storyteller’s role is to draw the story out of the listeners.” (Silko)

Part I: Pick a passage of around 20 lines from one of the stories we read after the midterm. List all the images you find in these lines and explore how these images relate to other images in the story. Reflect on how these images add to, clarify, or illuminate your understanding of the story. (1 page)

Gather together all your reading response papers from the term. Carefully re-read and review all of your responses taking note of recurring themes, images, ideas or literary concepts and constructions you have been discussing along the way. Although this assignment calls for you to reflect on the reading of the entire term, please give the last half of the term’s readings most of your attention. Do you see the stories differently now that you have done a vast amount of reading in this genre? Remember that, according to Silko “a great deal of the story is believed to be inside of the listener.”

Discuss the experience of reading widely in this area/period of American Literature. What have you discovered? What has surprised you about our reading and discussion? What do you think about reading the Related Commentary alongside the short stories? What has most interested you about the individual student presentations? Discuss how your research has affected your understanding of this subject. What else should you discuss in this piece of writing? (2-3 pages)

Remember to always use textual evidence and cite specific works in your project.

This Final Project is due on Friday, March 11th by 5PM. Please bring your exam to the English Department and leave it in my mailbox. If you deliver your exam when the office is closed, slide it under my office door. Do not attach it to my office door where it can be lost. Be sure to make a photocopy of your work before turning it in. If you would like your exam returned to you with comments, provide a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Bonus Question!!!!!!!! This bonus is not worth any extra points or extra credit. It is strictly for your own edification and amusement. Write a short story of under 750 words that begins with the sentence, “She sat on her suitcase waiting for a taxi.” If you have the story written by Tuesday the 5th you may have the opportunity to read it in class if you should so desire.