

English 132: Short Story and Novel
Death and Desire: Encountering and Expressing the Self in the World

Instructor: Aaron Matthew Percich
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9:30—10:20 am, MWF; Armstrong Hall 315
Office: Colson Hall, G05
Office Hours: Monday 11:00—12:00 pm **and by appointment**

“Never to suffer would never to have been blessed.”—Edgar Allan Poe

“The artist is a receptacle for the emotions that come from all over the place: from the sky, from the earth, from a scrap of paper, from a passing shape, from a spider’s web.”—Pablo Picasso

“Every reader is, when he reads, reading only about himself.”—Marcel Proust

If we are to believe the three quotes taken together, then our intimate, individual lives are records tied to all of the objects we come in contact with. Furthermore, we find ourselves reflected and imbedded in any novel we read; in this course, we will be exploring these general tenets through a couple of specific themes: death and desire. In a world of collapsing borders and increasingly multiple interconnections, including cultures, languages, customs, and creeds, we are all marked by these differences. Perhaps the only universal phenomena we experience in common are death and desire. In this course, we will explore the form and development of the short story and the novel through the prisms of death—including suffering, violence, reflection, and atrocity—and desire—encompassing sexuality, obsession, and self-identity. In engaging with death and desire, we will interrogate how writers use a highly public space, the published text, as means for grappling with highly personal subject matter; consequently, we will also examine how we as readers negotiate this mixing of the public and the private within our own lives and thoughts.

I’ve structured the readings of the course around a core group of novels largely influenced by British literature, with short stories that are contemporary and taken from authors around the world. Looking at these texts, we will highlight different literary forms and concepts embodied within the texts we read, as well as engaging with the idea of literature as a world phenomenon and not a strictly British, American, or Western idea. I’ve grouped novels and short stories around each other, paying attention to both cultural and historical details of the short stories leading into the novels, as well as thematic ideas where novels and short stories deal with different conceptions of love, personal struggles with death, the dangers of desire, etc.

Required Books:

- *The Art of the Story* edited by Daniel Halpern / ISBN-13: 978-0140296389
- *Moon Tiger* by Penelope Lively / ISBN-13: 978-0802135339
- *Under the Volcano* by Malcolm Lowry / ISBN-13: 978-0061120152
- *The Bad Girl* by Mario Vargas Llosa / ISBN-13: 978-0312427764
- *Disgrace* by J.M. Coetzee / ISBN-13: 978-0143115281

All short stories correspond in page numbers to *The Art of the Story*. Additionally, I may post supplementary articles and/or worksheets to the course eCampus page so make sure you are well-versed and comfortable with pulling materials from eCampus.

Coursework:

This is a reading course, so you must be prepared by reading the assigned texts **before** the date they are due. If I find out in the course of class that any student or students have not read, they will be asked to leave class and will be given an absence for the day, regardless of how much time you have spent in class that day. This class will not be successful unless everyone reads and participates.

The grades for the course will breakdown as follows:

Participation:	25%
7-8 Quizzes:	25%
Mid-Term Exam:	25%
Final Exam:	25%

I will drop your lowest quiz grade; missed quizzes, for any reason, cannot be made up. There will be no extra credit offered in this class. You must take both the mid-term and final exam in order to pass the class. Each of these assignments is worth one quarter of your final grade so I strongly suggest you manage your reading and attendance in order to ensure your ability to be successful in this class.

I will give you sample questions for the midterm exam and final exam at both review sessions. Both tests will be short-essay responses to questions aimed at interpretation and application from the stories we read in class.

Attendance:

This is a reading/discussion-based course, therefore you must be present in order to be successful. Furthermore, this course will only

be successful with **your** input; each one of my students has valuable life experiences, thoughtful contributions, and a unique perspective. All of you can, and need to, contribute positively to make this class as fruitful as I know it can be. Practically, this means that you must attend class; you will be given **three** penalty-free absences for the semester. In order to escape penalty, you **must** contact me in advance about the absence. If you miss more than three classes you will fail. Lateness occurs for everyone, but do not make it a habit or I will penalize you.

Classroom ethics:

I expect all students to treat each other with respect, regardless of any differences we may have, whether personal or in the course of class discussions. We will be discussing personal subjects, such as death, desire, sexuality, etc., and I expect everyone to be respectful of other's feelings, but also mature enough, and excited, to discuss things openly for the benefit of everyone. Although uncomfortable subjects may arise, I will always treat them with respect and understanding, which I expect from each student as well.

Class Participation Grading:

A to A-

- Student contributes to class every day or almost every day. Contributions are thoughtful and relevant, evidencing that the student has carefully read the assigned material and formed observations or questions about it.
- Student takes an active role in small group discussions, contributing suggestions and helping to keep the group focused (student is praised by classmates for these actions).
- Student listens to what classmates say and responds to the contributions of others, noting how his or her own observations differ or support those preceding. Student takes care not to overwhelm class discussions with more than three or four contributions per class.

B+ to B-

- Student makes contributions on $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of class meeting days. Again, contributions are relevant to discussion and show that student has read the assigned material.
- Student listens to other, though his or her comments may not always follow those proceeding.
- Student contributes to small group discussion and gets some recognition from classmates for this.

C+ to C-

- Student contributes occasionally, but less than $\frac{1}{2}$ of class meeting days.
- Contributions are more "ad hoc" than based on reading, or they might be off topic.
- Student is quiet in small group discussions, letting others do most of the work.

D

- Student shows up, but never or almost never contributes.
- Student is visibly disengaged from class discussion.
- Student is silent or unhelpful in small group discussion.

F

- The same characteristics as the D range student, but with the maximum of absences.
- OR Student behaves in ways that distract or deliberately offend classmates, including interrupting or insulting others, yelling, leaving in the middle of class, etc.

Schedule of Readings (subject to change if needed)

January		
Monday	Wednesday	Friday
10 Introductions Outline of Literary Terms Intro Lecture	12 Discuss literary terms, short story, novel Cisneros: “Never Marry a Mexican” pp. 179-188	14 Al-Shaykh: “The Keeper of Virgins” pp. 9-14 Danticat: “Night Women” pp. 196-198
17 MLK Day—No Classes	19 Barker: “G-String” pp. 69-72 Kureishi: “Intimacy” pp. 361-372	21 Carter: “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon” pp. 137-145
24 <i>The Bad Girl</i> Ch. 1-3	26 <i>The Bad Girl</i> Ch. 4	28 <i>The Bad Girl</i> Ch. 5

February		
Monday	Wednesday	Friday
31 <i>The Bad Girl</i> Ch. 6-7	2 <i>The Bad Girl</i>	4 Farah: “My Father, the Englishman, and I” pp. 276-278 Saro-Wiwa: “Africa Kills Her Son” pp. 519-526
7 wa Thiong’o: “Minutes to Glory” pp. 557-566	9 McCann: “Everything in This Country Must” pp. 387-392	11 Wicomb: “You Can’t Get Lost in Capetown” pp. 591-601

	Okri: "In The Shadow of War" pp. 477-480	
14 <i>Disgrace</i> Ch. 1-11	16 <i>Disgrace</i> Ch. 12-16	18 <i>Disgrace</i> Ch. 17-20
21 <i>Disgrace</i> Ch. 21-24	23 Midterm Review	25 (<i>Feb 25 is the mid-term point!</i>) Midterm Exam

March		
Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Feb 28 Barnes: "Evermore" pp. 73-84	Mar 2 Oz: "Where the Jackals Howl" pp. 481-493	Mar 4 Banks: "My Mother's Memoirs, My Father's Lie, and Other True Stories" pp. 63-68
7 <i>Moon Tiger</i> Ch. 1-8	9 <i>Moon Tiger</i> Ch. 9-12	11 <i>Moon Tiger</i> Ch. 13-17
14 Atwood: "Wilderness Tips" pp. 42-57	16 Duncker: "Betrayal" pp. 220-226 Yoshimoto: "Helix" pp. 650-655	18 Mukherjee: "The Management of Grief" pp. 435-447
21 Spring Break—No Classes	23 Spring Break—No Classes	25 Spring Break—No Classes
28 <i>Under the Volcano</i> Ch. 1-5 pp. 1-156	30 <i>Under the Volcano</i> Ch. 6 pp. 157-202	Apr 1 <i>Under the Volcano</i> Ch. 7 pp. 203-240

April		
Monday	Wednesday	Friday
4 <i>Under the Volcano</i> Ch. 8-9 pp. 241-291	6 <i>Under the Volcano</i> Ch. 10-11 pp. 292-350	8 <i>Under the Volcano</i> Ch. 12 pp. 351-391
11 <i>Under the Volcano</i>	13 Wilmot: "Dirt Angel" pp. 618-628	15 Murakami: "The Elephant Vanishes" pp.

Afterword and P.S.	Winterson: “The Green Man” pp. 629-636	453-465
18 Tolstaya: “On The Golden Porch” pp. 567-572 Thu Huong: “Reflections of Spring” pp. 227-232	20 Schulze: “The Ring” pp. 527-533 White: “Cinnamon Skin” pp. 581-590	22 WVU Holiday—No Classes
25 Høeg: “Portrait of the Avante-Garde” pp. 316-330	27 Final Exam Review Session Final Exam: Thursday, May 5, 2011 8:00 am—10:00 am in Armstrong 315 Don’t Be Late	29 (<i>Last day of classes for Spring semester</i>) NO CLASS—INSTRUCTOR AT CONFERENCE I will answer questions about the final exam via the eCampus discussion board.