

## ENGLISH 132: SHORT FICTION AND NOVELS

Fall, 2002

"Stories are new things, stories make things new; that is one of their illusions and part of their beauty. And of course the great stories of the world are the ones that seem new to their readers on and on, always new because they keep their power of revealing something."

---Eudora Welty

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### NAVIGATIONAL LINKS:

[Assignment Overview](#)  
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### TEXTS:

Lawn, Beverly. *40 Short Stories: A Portable Anthology*.  
Mason, Bobbie Ann. *In Country*.  
Ninh, Bao. *The Sorrow of War*.  
O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried*.  
Phillips, Jayne Ann. *Machine Dreams*.

Possible films: Excerpts from *Apocalypse Now*, *Platoon*, *Full Metal Jacket*, *In Country*

### COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS:

English 132 is an introductory literature course, providing basic grounding in the forms of fiction, specifically, the short story and novel. We'll read our short fiction chronologically and our novels thematically, contrasting different authors' styles, techniques, and distinctive individual and cultural perspectives. As we read, we'll look historically at the development of the novel and short story as art forms and consider how they have emerged as formalized genres over the last three centuries. Finally, we will develop a critical vocabulary with which to talk about fiction, deploying terms like "point of view," "plot," "characterization," and "irony." We'll also consider various approaches to literary study, including historicism, formalism, Marxism, feminism, and others.

Choosing stories for this course is very difficult: there are so many to sample, so many flavors, textures, sizes and exotic varieties. Although we will enjoy a veritable smorgasbord of short fiction--several centuries and many cultures' worth—I have decided arbitrarily to focus our choices for novel-reading by assigning a very narrow range of novels, four books offering different fictional perspectives on the Vietnam war.

### ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW:

1. **Five to ten reading checks**, given unannounced. I will ask you to share your written feedback on the assigned readings occasionally to ensure that you keep up with the syllabus schedule.

Specific knowledge of the assigned story or stories will be required in the reading check. No make-ups allowed unless you had an excused absence. (25% of your semester grade).

2. **A midterm exam.** This will consist of short-answer and essay questions. It will cover not only the stories we have read, but also the ideas, concepts, and historical/ biographical contexts we have explored together in the first half of the semester. The midterm exam will be given during one of our regular 50-minute classes. (15%)
3. **One five-page comparison/contrast essay.** Choose a character in a story or novel we have read this semester who in some way resonates with you and/or your experience. Then write an original essay (no research needed) in which you tell a little about yourself and your experience, analyze the character and the character's comparable experience, then compare and contrast your story and your personality with that of the fictional character. (20%)
4. **A final exam.** Like the midterm, this will consist of short-answer and essay questions and will cover not only the stories we have read, but also the ideas, concepts, and historical/biographical contexts we have explored during the second half of the semester. The final will be weighted slightly more heavily than the midterm since it will be given over a two-hour period and will catch you at the apex of your own development as an English 132 student! (25%)
5. **Attendance and participation.** (15%) See below under "Requirements and Policies."

## REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES:

### Attendance and participation--

You can earn up to 15 points in this class just by coming to class every day and participating daily. **Attendance** will be taken at the beginning of every class meeting and **will be graded** as follows: 0 unexcused absences=13 points (includes 1 extra credit point for excellent attendance); 1 unexcused absence=11 points; 2 unexcused absences=10 points, 3 unexcused absences=9 points; 4 unexcused absences= 8 points. More than 4 unexcused absences will mean you earn 0 attendance points.

There are two types of excused absence:

- **Advance Notice:** You know ahead of time that, for good reason, you will have to miss class. You see me at least one class period in advance and negotiate an excused absence, providing some kind of appropriate written documentation for doing so (example: you're on the track team and have an away meet).
- **Emergency Situation:** Some emergency prevents you from getting to class. You contact me as soon as possible and on your return provide some kind of appropriate written documentation of your absence.

**Your participation** in class delights me and **will contribute to your grade** as follows: Daily insightful participation=3 points; regular constructive participation=2 points; occasional helpful participation =1 point.

### Preparation for class--

- **Do all of the assigned readings** and be prepared to discuss them in class. If you are confused, find questions to ask that will help the rest of the class.
- **Bring your book to class.** We'll be referring to our texts specifically every day.

### Grading criteria--

Your success in this class will depend on the thoroughness with which you understand and the conscientiousness with which you strive to meet the course goals and complete the requirements of the class. All your work will be evaluated according to the following grading scale: 100=A+, 91-99=A, 90=A-; 89=B+, 81-88=A, 80=B-; 79=C+, 71-78=C, 70=C-; 69=D+, 61-68=D, 60=D-; 59 and below=F.

Your essay will be evaluated with the following values in mind: An **A** is reserved for exceptional work both in content and writing, a **B** for good work with no inadequacies of content and only two writing-error patterns, a **C** for fair work with some flaws of reasoning or content and no more than 5 patterns of writing error. A seriously flawed essay with multiple writing errors and inadequate reasoning, development, or focus earns a **D**. An **F** is reserved for the paper that completely fails to respond to the assignment, never gets submitted, or is submitted more than 5 sequential (not class) days late without a very good reason.

### **Getting email updates--**

I'll be sending the class regular email messages to remind you about what's happening in English 132 using the WVU MIX system. You should therefore activate your MIX email account if you haven't yet done so. A good feature of MIX is that it offers users the option of having their MIX email forwarded to their regular email accounts if they want. (This is what I do.) So if you don't want to use MIX for your regular email, be sure to get your MIX email forwarded this way.

If you are a first-time MIX user, you can access your account by going to <http://star.wvu.edu> and clicking on "WVU STAR web" and then on "WVU STAR system." You should then follow the instructions on the screen. For security reasons, the default password should be changed after MIX is accessed for the first time. When you are finished using the system, you should always log out. MIX staff will be available to help users the first week of classes at a booth in the Mountainlair Monday, Aug. 19, through Thursday, Aug. 22, from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. and at the Health Sciences Center Friday, Aug. 23, from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. For more go to: <http://intranet.wvu.edu>

### **ETHICAL ISSUES AND EMERGENCIES:**

#### **Plagiarism/Cheating--**

Talking over your ideas and getting comments on your writing from friends are NOT examples of plagiarism. Taking someone else's published or unpublished words and calling them your own IS plagiarism; a synonym is academic dishonesty. This is true whether you borrow those words from hard-copy texts or from the Internet. When plagiarism amounts to an attempt to deceive, it has dire consequences, as spelled out in University regulations.

#### **Cell phone and pager courtesy--**

While cell phones and pagers make life safer and more convenient for students and teachers alike, they can be disruptive in the classroom. As a courtesy to your fellow students and me, please turn your cell phones and pagers off during class, or use a silent signal.

#### **Social justice--**

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I share that commitment and expect to foster a nurturing learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Any suggestions on how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and seriously considered.

### **Accommodating disabilities--**

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation to participate in this class, please let me know. You should also make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services (293-6700).

### **Emergencies or health crises--**

If you encounter an emergency situation or serious health problem in the course of the semester--and I sincerely hope you don't--you or your family should immediately contact the Office of Student Life in E. Moore Hall (293-5611). The Dean of Student Life will then communicate with me concerning your problem and authorize me to make any necessary arrangements for you to complete this course. *Note:* the Dean should only be contacted in case of major crises, not for mild illnesses or everyday excuses from class.

### **Questions about grades--**

If you would like to know your semester grade in advance of your final grade report, or if you have questions about how I evaluated an individual project or overall portfolio, please feel free to ask me over the phone, by mail, or in person. As a matter of policy, however, I will not respond to email requests for grade information or email arguments about my assessment of your work. Instead, use the phone, arrange an interview, or write me a letter.

## **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:**

### **Week 1 (August 19–23)**

Mon: Introductions

#### ***Part I: Short Stories***

Wed: Read handouts for class; Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"

Fri: Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado"

### **Week 2 (August 26-30)**

Mon: Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener"

Wed: De Maupassant, "The Necklace"; Chopin, "The Story of an Hour"

Fri: Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"

### **Week 3 (September 2-6)**

Mon: HAPPY LABOR DAY HOLIDAY!

Wed: Jewett, "A White Heron"

Fri: Kafka, "Metamorphosis"

### **Week 4 (September 9-13)**

Mon: Joyce, "Araby"

Wed: Hemingway, "A Clean Well-Lighted Place"

Fri: Faulkner, "Barn Burning"

### **Week 5 (September 16-20)**

Mon: Welty, "A Worn Path"  
Wed: O'Connor, "A Good Man is Hard to Find"  
Fri: Garcia Marquez, "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings"

### **Week 6 (September 23-27)**

Mon: Carver, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love"  
Wed: Mukherjee, "The Management of Grief"  
Fri: Walker, "Everyday Use"

### **Week 7 (September 30-October 4)**

Mon: Oates, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"  
Wed: MIDTERM EXAM

### **Part 2: Novels**

Fri: O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (specific reading TBA) Today, October 4<sup>th</sup>, is officially **mid-semester**. Mid-semester grades will be reported to the registrar Tuesday, October 8<sup>th</sup>.

### **Week 8 (October 7-11)**

Mon: O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (specific reading TBA)  
Wed: O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (specific reading TBA); possibly view "Platoon" excerpt  
Fri: O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (specific reading TBA)

### **Week 9 (October 14-18)**

Mon: *The Things They Carried* (specific reading TBA)  
Wed: Mason, *In Country* (specific reading TBA)  
Fri: Mason, *In Country* (specific reading TBA)

### **Week 10 (October 21-25)**

Mon: Mason, *In Country* (specific reading TBA); PAPERS ASSIGNED  
Wed: Mason, *In Country* (specific reading TBA)  
Fri: Mason, *In Country* (specific reading TBA)

### **Week 11 (October 28-November 1)**

Mon: Mason, *In Country* (specific reading TBA); possibly view excerpts from the film "In Country"  
Wed: Ninh, *The Sorrow of War* (specific reading TBA)  
Fri: Ninh, *The Sorrow of War* (specific reading TBA)

### **Week 12 (November 4-8)**

Mon: Ninh, *The Sorrow of War* (specific reading TBA)  
Wed: Ninh, *The Sorrow of War* (specific reading TBA)  
Fri: Ninh, *The Sorrow of War* (specific reading TBA); possibly view excerpts from "Full Metal Jacket"

**Week 13 (November 11-15)**

Mon: Ninh, *The Sorrow of War* (specific reading TBA)  
Wed: Phillips, *Machine Dreams* (specific reading TBA)  
Fri: Phillips, *Machine Dreams* (specific reading TBA)

**Week 14 (November 18-22)**

Mon: Phillips, *Machine Dreams* (specific reading TBA)  
Wed: Phillips, *Machine Dreams* (specific reading TBA)  
Fri: Phillips, *Machine Dreams* (specific reading TBA); PAPERS DUE

**Week 15 (November 23-December 1) HAPPY THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY!** Keep reading *Machine Dreams!*

**Week 16 (December 2-6)**

Mon: Phillips, *Machine Dreams* (specific reading TBA)  
Wed: Phillips, *Machine Dreams* (specific reading TBA)  
Fri: Phillips, *Machine Dreams* (specific reading TBA)

**FINAL EXAM:**

- English 132, Section 2, MWF 11:30 a.m.: Friday, December 13, 8-10 a.m. in our classroom

English 132, Section 4, MWF 1:30 p.m.: Thursday, December 9, 3-5 pm in our classroom