

English 2307: Intro to Fiction
MWF 12-12:50 (011)
Texas Tech University
Fall 2013

Instructor: Lauri Anderson Alford

Classroom: 308

Office: 459

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Office Hours: MW 1pm-2pm

Course Objectives

1) to read literature analytically, carefully attending to plot, characterization, theme, metaphor, image patterns and genre 2) to read literature sympathetically, considering the cultural, religious, political and social backgrounds of the works 3) to build literary awareness, through a consideration of genre and techniques 4) to write persuasively, clearly, and effectively 5) to revise analytical writing, incorporating suggestions from the instructor for more effective communication

What to Expect from Humanities Courses

This course satisfies the Texas Tech University core curriculum requirement in humanities. The objective of the humanities in a core curriculum is to expand the student's knowledge of the human condition and human cultures, especially in relation to behaviors, ideas, and values expressed in works of human imagination and thought. Through study in disciplines such as literature and philosophy, students will engage in critical analysis and develop an appreciation of the humanities as fundamental to the health and survival of any society. Students graduating from Texas Tech University should be able to think critically and demonstrate an understanding of the possibility of multiple interpretations, cultural contexts, and values.

Cell Phones/Laptops/MP3 Players

Students must obtain permission from the instructor prior to class before using laptops. Cell phones, MP3 players, tablets, and eReaders are strictly prohibited. Also, see attendance policy.

If you are caught using your phone, I will give you a verbal warning. Any subsequent time you are caught using your phone, I will simply mark you absent. You can choose to stay or go.

Students with Disabilities

Any student who because of a disability may require some special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact me within the first three days of class

to make necessary accommodations. Students should present appropriate verification from Student Disability Services.

Required Materials

Students are required to obtain actual books. Tablets and eReaders of any kind are prohibited.

- Gavin, Jim. *Middle Men*.
- Wilson, Kevin. *Tunneling to the Center of the Earth*.
- Horrocks, Caitlin. *This is Not Your City*.
- Watson, Brad. *Aliens in the Prime of Their Lives*.
- Evans, Danielle. *Before You Suffocate Your Own Fool Self*.

Additional handouts will be provided by the instructor.

All books are available at Texas Tech's Barnes and Noble store, as well as Varsity Books. Please purchase them promptly, as booksellers tend to send back unpurchased copies after the first few weeks of school. (see Schedule of Readings and Assignments)

Assignments/Grade Distribution

- Participation 10%
- Leading Class Discussion 15%
- Short Story Skit 15%
- Three Short Analytical Essays 45% (Essay 1: 10%; Essay 2: 15%; Essay 3: 20%)
- Final: Creative Blog Post Assignment 15% (10% writing, 5% commenting)

Plagiarism

If you are caught using someone else's words as your own or co-writing any of your papers, you will receive an F on that assignment, and possibly for the entire class.

Late Work

Late work will not be accepted.

Absences

You are allowed three unexcused absences. Any subsequent unexcused absences after three will result in a 5% deduction from your average per absence. If you have a note from a doctor, a sponsor/coach from your university-approved group/team, or from an accredited legal representative, your absence is excused and does not count against your three "free" absences. If you are unsure whether your absence is excused or not, just ask.

Unless you have made previous arrangements with me, your assignments are due on their scheduled dates regardless of your absences.

You may make up one unexcused absence by attending a Thursday night reading in the basement of the English building, room 001. A list of dates is forthcoming.

Leaving Early

Class ends at 12:50 and no sooner. If you must leave early (without a note), you'll be counted absent. If you have a note, you must inform me at the beginning of class that you are leaving early.

Student Conduct

Please be respectful of other students and of me. If you engage in any distracting or delinquent behavior during class, you will be asked to leave and will be counted absent. If such behavior continues, you will be dropped from the course.

Class Participation 10%

Please come to class having read the assigned material and ready to discuss it at length. Bring your book to class. (No e-readers allowed!) In order to receive an A for participation, you must participate in class discussions on a regular basis. Simply attending class won't earn you any participation points. Come with questions about the text or specific areas you'd like to address. Personal anecdotes do not amount to A-worthy class participation. You must actually address the text.

Student-Lead Discussion 15%

Each student will lead class discussion once during the semester, either with a partner or alone. Your duties include:

1. Read your story at least one week in advance.
2. Generate three discussion questions about the story.
3. Visit with me during office hours at least one class day prior to your discussion date in order to clear up any confusion you may have about your story. After class is fine. Bring your discussion questions.
4. Relate this story to another text. What other story, novel, movie, commercial, graphic novel, etc. does this story remind you of? Tell us why. If appropriate, read us an excerpt or show us a clip.

Short Analytical Essays 45%

Essay 1 – 10%

Essay 2 – 15%

Essay 3 – 20%

In each of these three short papers, you will analyze one short story of your choice. These papers should begin with your thesis sentence and should thereafter include (at

least) five textual references (quotes with citations). Neither an extended introductory paragraph nor a conclusion paragraph is necessary in these short papers.

Here, you should write about what interests you about the text: character, form, voice, structure, relationships between characters, use of figurative language, scene, etc. Remember that analysis is not just pointing out something cool in the text. You must also tell WHY the writer does this cool thing or HOW this cool thing contributes to our understanding of the text. 750-1000 words.

In addition, all submitted work should follow standard MLA guidelines available at owl.english.purdue.edu. More specifically: typed, double-spaced pages, 1-inch margins, Times or Times New Roman 12-point font. Your heading should appear as follows, in the top left corner of your paper:

Name
ENGL 2307 (section number)
Anderson Alford
Date

Check the Calendar of Readings & Assignments for due dates. Turn in your essay during the first ten minutes of class on the date of that story's discussion. (I recommend writing your SAEs on the stories for which you'll be leading class discussion.)

Short Story Skit 15%

For this assignment, your group will create, practice, and perform a 15-minute skit over your assigned short story. You can do whatever you want here. But remember, you are not summarizing the story. You are not re-enacting the story. You are contributing to our understanding of the story in some way. Here are some ideas (although feel free to be come up with something on your own):

1. Conduct a mock interview with the writer and/or any of the characters (or even readers) of the story in the style of Oprah. Or, if you're brave, Jerry Springer.
2. Create a scene that shows us what these characters are doing in 20 years (or more). How have they changed? How have they stayed the same?
3. Create a scene that shows us these characters as children. How have their personalities/predilections endured? How have they changed? What childhood factors contributed to their adult actions in the story?
4. Create a scene in which the characters from your assigned story interact with characters from another story, either of the same collection or from a different collection we've read. Who would be friends? Who would be enemies? What trouble would they get into?
5. Create a scene which portrays an alternative ending to your story. It's important that we know why your story needs a revised ending, or why these characters deserves a second chance.

6. Pretend your characters are on the game show *Jeopardy*. What questions would help us understand them better? Who would win the game? Who would be a sore loser?
7. Write and create a commercial (or infomercial) for your short story. What would make potential readers read this story, as opposed to some other?
8. Pretend you are news anchors. What breaking news should you share about your characters/story?
9. Your choice.

You will be graded on the following guidelines:

1. Preparedness: Have you memorized your lines? Is it clear you've practiced? Does your skit go off smoothly?
2. Originality: costumes, props, accents, dedication to your role
3. Relevance: What are we learning about the story and/or the characters? Is the group doing more than summarizing and/or re-enacting the story? How has the group elevated our understanding of these characters as people?
4. Class critique: What did the group do well? What could be improved upon? What did you learn about the story from this skit?

Final: Creative Blog Post Assignment 15%

For this assignment, you will write a 1,000 word short story, and post it to our class blog.

Please adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Write your story. Guidelines/suggestions to follow.
2. Accept my invitation through your Tech mail to be an author of our class blog, andersonalford@blogspot.com. This may require you to set up a Google username if you don't already have one.
3. Post your story to our class blog.
4. Read three other students' stories.
5. Comment on those three stories, answering the following questions:
 - 1) What do you like about this story? Be specific.
 - 2) What would you change about this story? Be specific. (You must choose something.)
 - 3) What other story from our class does this story remind you of? Why?