

B.A. (Honours) in Contemporary English Studies

Course Title	:	The Short Story in English
Course Code	:	ENG386
Recommended Study Year	:	2 nd & 3 rd Year
No. of Credits/Term	:	3
Mode of Tuition	:	Lecture and Tutorial
Class Contact Hours	:	2 hours Lecture/week 1 hour Tutorial/week
Category in Major Programme	:	Disciplinary Elective
Prerequisite(s)	:	N/A
Co-requisite(s)	:	N/A
Exclusion(s)	:	N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	:	N/A

Brief Course Description

The short story is one of the most accessible and enjoyable of literary forms. Most short stories can be read in one sitting. This means that you can feel a story's emotional impact, ponder its themes, experience its aesthetic affects, and see it as a whole, in an hour or two – sometimes less. The short story has been around for a long time and has been written in many different styles and forms. It is an incredibly versatile literary form which can deal with many issues, ranging from very personal concerns like love, identity, sexuality, loss, and family life, all the way through to social issues: for instance, the relationship between individuals and the societies they live in; freedom and unfreedom; gender, race and illness. The short story is an excellent form to study if you wish to improve your English comprehension and writing. Because it is short, it allows you to read carefully, seeing how fine writers use the English language, and how they employ various aspects of narrative technique – narrative point of view, the creation of characters, scene building, and much else. 'The Short Story in English' gives you the opportunity to study some great short stories; to learn about the history of the short story as a literary form; to become familiar with the narrative techniques that occur in this form of writing, including realist and anti-realist techniques; to sample different kinds of short story, including horror and suspense, narratives of family and growing up, fairy tales, adventure stories, narratives which focus on the complexities of human relationships, and on political and social issues. The course will also give you an opportunity to try your hand at short story writing, if you wish to do so. 'The Short Story in English' will build on things students have learnt in English 106, but you do not need to have taken English 106 in order to do this subject. During the first week of term students are required to read the excellent introductory material about the short story at the end of the course text, *The Riverside Anthology of Short Fiction*, pps. 1139-1196. Stories will be assigned for each class from this text, and from supplementary material where necessary (e.g. Hong Kong stories).

Aims

1. To outline the history of the short story;
2. To introduce various kinds of short story writing;
3. To introduce aspects of short story narrative technique;
4. To enable you to read and analyze short stories with enjoyment and precision;
4. To develop your English language writing skills;
5. To introduce you to some great short stories from various parts of the world – including Hong Kong.

Learning Outcomes

The course should help students to gain knowledge of the history of the short story, its varieties as a literary form, and ways of analyzing its methods and themes.

Indicative Content

1. Introduction: what is a short story and why do writers choose this form;
2. Analyzing short stories I: different kinds of story tellers; the concept of narrative point of view; characters: varieties of character; building characters in narrative; descriptions of consciousness;
3. Analyzing short stories II: the relationship between plot and form; writing our experience of time; comparing writing styles; figurative language;
1. A brief history of the short story, including Hong Kong;
2. Defining terms: realism; fantasy, anti-realism, postmodernism: accessible definitions provided;
3. Suspense and horror: the ghost story; the detective story; the mystery story;
4. Action! The adventure story;
5. Stories about strange and solitary people;
6. The complexities of human relationship: stories of love, disappointment, and loss, and family life;
7. The self in its cultural worlds: stories about gender, race and identity.

Teaching Method

The course will meet for 3 hours per week and will consist of a mixture of lectures and tutorials. In the lectures I will discuss the history of the short story and the some of the narrative techniques it employs. I will also outline some different kinds of short story and provide accessible definitions of important concepts. The remainder of the time will be spent discussing particular stories. A list of these, and the dates on which we will discuss them, will be provided before the course starts and can be collected from the English Department office shortly before the Christmas break.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Through written assignments, class discussion of student writing, and regular individual consultations with the teacher.

Assessment

Class performance: 20% of total mark, comprising attendance (10%), and contribution to class discussion (10%).

Two written autobiography assignments: 80% of total mark, comprising first assignment (30%), and second assignment (50%).

Required Readings

Dean Baldwin, ed., *The Riverside Anthology of Short Fiction: Convention and Innovation*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998.

Xeroxes of Hong Kong stories (to be provided)

Supplementary Readings

Studies in Short Fiction (journal)

Allen, Walter, *The Short Story in English*, Oxford University Press, 1981.

Farhat Iftekharrudin [et al.], eds. *Postmodern Approaches to the Short Story*, Praeger, 2003.

Head, Domonic, *The Modernist Short Story: A Study in Theory and Practice*, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Kaylor, Noel, *Creative and critical approaches to the short story*, Lewiston, E. Mellen Press, 1997

Valerie Shaw, *The Short Story, a Critical Introduction*, Longman, 1983.

Winther, Jakob Lothe, and Hans H. Skei, ed., *The Art of Brevity: excursions in short fiction theory and analysis*, University of South Carolina Press, 2004.