

English 4329

Online: Studies in Short Fiction: Modern and Contemporary American

Contact Information

Instructor: John Wegner

Office: Academic 010C

Hours: M-Thurs 8:00-10:00 and by appointment; all appt. and conferences will take place in Dr. Wegner's Collaborate Office located in our BB course

Phone: 325-486-6165

"A short story is a love affair; a novel is a marriage. A short story is a photograph; a novel is a film." Lorrie Moore

"I love short stories because I believe they are the way we live. They are what our friends tell us, in their pain and joy, their passion and rage, their yearning and their cry against injustice." Andre Dubus

"If we're lucky, writer and reader alike, we'll finish the last line or two of a short story and then just sit for a minute, quietly. Ideally, we'll ponder what we've just written or read; maybe our hearts or intellects will have been moved off the peg just a little from where they were before." Raymond Carver

Required texts:

Carver, Raymond. *Short Cuts*. Penguin, 1993.

Cineros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. Vintage, 1989.

Sachdeva, Anjali. *All the Names They Used for God*. Spiegel & Grau, 2018.

Strout, Elizabeth. *Olive Kitteridge*. Random House, 2008.

So, Anthony Veasna. *Afterparties*. Harper Collins, 2021.

Tomine, Adrian. *Killing and Dying*. Drawn & Quarterly. 2016.

Purpose, Objectives, & Learning Outcomes:

Upon completing this course, students will be able to

1. read and analyze complex works of literature;
2. recognize the importance of detail and supporting evidence when positing ideas;
3. demonstrate the way American short fiction exists within historical, cultural, and social spaces in time.

Other than those SLOs, my goal is that each of you gains a greater appreciation of modern and contemporary American short fiction. I struggled mightily choosing texts for this course. The ugly truth, though, is that if I choose books tomorrow, I would might choose a different Carver collection, we might read E. Annie Proulx, Tobias Wolff, Jayne Anne Philips, or any number of other writers. So many great works but so little time. At the end of this syllabus, you'll see a longer list of modern and contemporary American literature. In your spare time, you should read some (or all) of the works.

Please note: These are modern and contemporary works and they deal with contemporary issues. If you cannot stomach discussions about school shootings, rape, murder, abortion, homosexuality, religion, adultery, or other issues you see daily in the newspaper, you should not take this course. In addition, these works do contain some rough and language some of you might find reprehensible. Be prepared.

Attendance: There is a direct correlation between attendance and performance. In an online class, your attendance is marked by completion of blogs and quizzes. Our assignments for any given week are typically due Sunday at 11:59 pm. However, I also realize that life throws us curveballs. If at any moment you struggle to complete assignments, readings, or other work in this course, you need to email me. We have some measure of flexibility. Each assignment is designed to help us build certain skill sets. I'm more interested in you completing the assignments than I am in deadlines. Note, though, that a summer class has only so much flexibility. In other words, your goal is to finish every assignment on time, but if you struggle for any reason, let me know. We'll work together, in as much as possible, to help you be successful.

Grades:

Students will demonstrate progress on course objectives and learning outcomes via

Two reviews/Short Essays	40%
Final exam	20%
Blogs/quizzes	15%
Research paper	25%

- 1) You will write two book reviews/short essays (500-1000 words). I will provide information about how to write a book review/short essay. Plagiarism will result in an F for the course. These essays are academic responses not personal responses.
- 3) The final exam will be a timed essay and comprehensive.
- 4) Blog Posts/Quizzes: You will blog on all of our works, sometimes more than once. Those blogs are less formal than the books reviews and should give you a great opportunity to try out ideas and take some chances as you discuss the works. Quizzes ask you to provide detailed answers to questions about our works.
- 5) The research paper will be 6-8 pages of text. You should use MLA formatting. Please note that some of our contemporary works will not have direct critical sources. We will discuss how to approach a contemporary text and research. More information during the semester.

Title IX At ASU

The University prohibits discrimination based on sex, which includes pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other types of Sexual Misconduct. Sexual Misconduct is a broad term encompassing all forms of gender-based harassment or discrimination including: sexual assault, sex-based discrimination, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, public indecency, interpersonal violence (domestic violence and/or dating violence), and stalking. As a faculty member, I am a Responsible Employee, meaning I

am obligated by law and ASU policy to report any allegations I am notified of to the Office of Title IX Compliance.

Students are encouraged to report any incidents of sexual misconduct directly to ASU's Office of Title IX Compliance and the Director of Title IX Compliance/Title IX Coordinator:

Michelle Boone, J.D.

Director of Title IX Compliance/Title IX Coordinator

Mayer Administration Building, Room 210

325-942-2022; michelle.boone@angelo.edu

You may also file a report online 24/7 at www.angelo.edu/incident-form. If you wish to speak to someone about an incident in confidence, you may contact the *University Health Clinic and Counseling Center* at 325-942-2173 or the *ASU Crisis Helpline* at 325-486-6345.

For more information about Title IX in general, you may visit www.angelo.edu/title-ix.

Accommodation Statement

If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and, as a result, need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this class or complete course requirements, contact the Student Affairs Office as soon as possible at 325-942-2047 or studentservices@angelo.edu. It is located in the Houston Harte University Center, Suite 112. To receive any academic accommodation, you must be appropriately registered with Student Affairs. Student Affairs works with students confidentially and does not disclose any disability-related information without their permission.

Academic Integrity

Students are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Academic Integrity policy, which is outlined in the *ASU Student Handbook*. Plagiarism is a type of academic dishonesty. It occurs when writers deliberately use another person's language, ideas, or materials and present them as their own without properly acknowledging the source. Students who plagiarize will earn an F for the course.

Observances of Religious Holidays

A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. A student who is absent from classes for the observance of a religious holy day shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within what the instructor deems a reasonable time after the absence.

Rough Calendar of Events: The dates and readings below are approximate. The actual course calendar, reading list, and assignments will be in the BB course. Daily assignments for each week are due Sunday by 11:59 pm. Short Essays, Research paper due date, and final exam are due during the week.

Summer 2 (English 4329): Suggested readings in order to complete the texts. There is no work associated with each day. In order to have time to reflect and complete assignments by Sunday, I'm assuming you will complete the readings by Friday.

Modules/Dates	Assignment
Module 1: July 11 (Monday)	Intro; postmodernism/postcolonial; short story background; Cisneros' <i>House on Mango Street</i>
7-12	Cisneros;
7-13	Carver: "Neighbors"; "They're Not Your Husband"; "Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?"
7-14	"So Much Water So Close to Home"; "A Small Good Thing"; "Jerry and Molly and Sam"
7-15	"Collectors"; "Tell the Women We're Going", "Lemonade"
7-18 (Monday)	Elizabeth Strout: "Pharmacy"; "Incoming Tide";
7-19	"The Piano Player"; "A Little Burst"; "Starving"
7-20	"A Different Road"; "Winter Concert"; "Tulips"
7-21	"Basket of Trips"; "Ship in a Bottle"; "Security"
7-22	"Criminal"; "River"
7-25 (Monday)	Short Essay 1 due; Anjali Sachdeva: "The World By Night"
7-26	"Glass-Lung"; "Logging Lake"
7-27	"Killer of Kings"; "All the Names For God"
7-28	"Robert Greenman and the Mermaid"; "Anything You Might Want"
7-29	"Manus"; "Pleiades"
8-1 (Monday)	Adrian Tomine: "A Brief History of the Art Form Known as 'Hortisculpture'; "Amber Sweet"
8-2	"Go Owls"; "Translated from Japanese"
8-3	"Killing and Dying"
8-4	"Intruders"
8-5	Catch your breath, read ahead, write, sleep one extra hour
8-8 (Monday)	Anthony Veasna So: "Three Women of Chuck's Donuts"; "Superking Son Scores Again"

Modules/Dates	Assignment
8-9	Short essay 2 due; “Maly, Maly, Maly”; “The Shop”; The Monks”
8-10	“We Would’ve Been Princes!” “Human Development”; “Somaly Serey, Serey Somaly”
8-11	Research paper due; “Generational Differences”
8-12 (Friday)	Final Exam (timed in BB)

A Short and Incomplete list of texts and works you should all read.

This list is not exhaustive nor is the list a compilation of great works. As I think about modern and contemporary works students should read, I add them a list of works I’ve read by American authors published since 1985 that I liked. I have no doubt there are more works, and all these writers have more recent works.

Alvarez, Julia. *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents*. (1991)
 Banks, Russell. *Affliction* (1989)
 Beatty, Paul. *The Sellout* (2015)
 Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home* (2006).—graphic memoir
 Bourdain, Anthony. *Medium Raw*. (2010) and *Kitchen Confidential* (2000)—essays
 Carver, Raymond. *Short Cuts* (1993) and every single short story he’s written.
 Chabon, Michael. *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*. (2000)
 Chavez, Denise. *Face of an Angel*. (1994)
 Clifton, Lucille. *Blessing the Boats* (2000)—poetry
 Collins, Max. *Road to Perdition*. (1998)—graphic novel
 Cunningham, Michael. *The Hours* (1998)
 Diaz, Junot. *Drown* (1996; short stories); *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007) novel
 DeLillo, Don. *White Noise*. (1985), *Underworld* (1997)
 Didion, Joan. *The Year of Magical Thinking*. (2005)—essays/memoir; *Play It As It Lays* (1970) but one of the great novels of the 20th century
 Dove, Rita. Any of her poetry books.
 Egan, Jennifer. *A Visit from the Goon Squad*. (2011)
 Eggers, Dave. *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* (2000).
 Erdrich, Louise. *Love Medicine*. (1984)—Her new novel is *The Night Watchman* (2020).
 Eugenides, Jeffrey. *Middlesex*. (2002)
 Flynn, Gillian. *Gone Girl* (2012)
 Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*. (2005)
 Ford, Richard. *The Sportswriter*. (1986)
 Fountain, Ben. *Billy Lynn’s Long Halftime Walk: A Novel*. (2012)
 Franzen, Jonathan. *The Corrections*. (2001)
 Gaddis, William. *A Frolic of His Own*. (1994)
 Garcia, Cristina. *Dreaming in Cuban*. (1999)

Gellhorn, Martha. *The View from the Ground*. (1989). Gellhorn is considered one of the great war correspondents of the 20th century. This collection of essays was rereleased recently.

Gran, Sarah. *Dope*. (2006)

Gruen, Sarah. *Water for Elephants*. (2006)

Haddon, Mark. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*. (2003)

Hamilton, Jane. *Map of the World*. (1994)

Harbach, Chad. *The Art of Fielding* (2011)

Harper, Michael. Any of his poetry books.

Hawke, Ethan. *A Bright Ray of Darkness*. (2021)—Yes. The actor Ethan Hawke.

Hayes, Terence—anything (poetry)

Herrera, Juan Felipe. *Border Crosser with a Lamborghini Dream* (1999—poetry). He also has a novel in verse titled *Crashboomlove* that is great for middle schoolers.

Hijuelos, Oscar. *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*. (1989)

hooks, bell. Read her essays.

Jin, Ha. *Waiting*. (1999)

Johnson, Denis. *Train Dreams* (2011)

Jones, Edward. *The Known World*. (2003)

Karr, Mary. *The Liar's Club*. (1995).--memoir

Klay, Phil. *Redeployment*. (2014)

Kushner, Tony. *Angels in America* (1993)--play

Letts, Tracy. *August: Osage County*. (2008)--play

Maguire, Gregory. *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*. (1995).

McBride, James. *The Good Lord Bird* (2013)

McCarthy, Cormac. *Blood Meridian* (1985) and everything else he's written

McMurtry, Larry. *Lonesome Dove* (1985) or anything else.

Moore, Alan and Dave Gibbons. *Watchman*. (1986)—graphic novel

Moore, Lori. *Birds of America*. (1998—short stories). Moore is a great master.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved* (1987). Anything by Morrison is great.

Nelson, Antonya. *Nobody's Girl*. (1998)—short stories

Oates, Joyce Carol. Anything. She's one of America's most prolific novelists.

O'Nan, Stewart. *Snow Angels* (1994) and *Last Night at the Lobster*. (2007).

Ozick, Cynthia. Read her essays.

Palahniuk, Chuck. *Fight Club*. (2005)

Parks, Suzan-Lori. *Topdog/Underdog* (2001—play)

Perrotta, Tom. *Election*. (1998), *The Abstinence Teacher* (2007), *Mrs. Fletcher* (2017)

Proulx, Annie. *Close Range*. (1999)—short stories, *The Shipping News* (1994),

Accordion Crimes (1996)

Pynchon, Thomas. *Inherent Vice* (2009) but he's most famous for *Gravity's Rainbow* or *The Crying of Lot 49*.

Rich, Adrienne. Any of her poetry books.

Robinson, Marilynne. *Gilead*. (2004)

Roth, Philip. *The Plot Against America* (2004) or anything else.

Russo, Richard. *Empire Falls*. (2000) and everything else.

Sachdeva, Anjali. *All the Names They Used for God*. (2018—stories)

Song, Kathy. Any of her poetry books.

Smith, Zadie. *White Teeth*. (2000)—Her new novel is supposed to be really good.
Strout, Elizabeth. *Olivia Kittredge*. (2008)
Wagner, John. *A History of Violence*. (1997)—graphic novel
Wallace, David Foster. *Infinite Jest*. (1996)
Ware, Chris. *Jimmy Corrigan, the Smartest Kid on Earth* (2000)—graphic novel
Whitehead, Colson. *Harlem Shuffle* (2021, but all his stuff is great)
Wilson, August. *Fences* (1986). Play. Read anything by Wilson.
Winslow, Don. *The Power of the Dog*. (2005)
Wolf, Geoffrey. Any collection of essays.