

Introduction to Literature I, Fiction, ENG 2001 / 5530, Fall 2011

Monday and Wednesday, 11:30 AM – 12:45 PM, Namm 1005

Professor Rebecca Devers (rdevers@citytech.cuny.edu)

Office hours: M/W 2:30–4:00 PM, Th 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM, and by appointment

Office location: Namm 528

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Prerequisites: Students who enroll in this course must have successfully completed English 1101.

Course description and objectives

This course is designed as an introduction to fiction. We will read a variety of texts, including short stories, graphic narratives, and novels, in an effort to understand what “fiction” actually is. The first 2/3 of the semester will be devoted to learning about and mastering the basic elements of the genre; we’ll read classic works by important authors as well as some critical responses to those works. The last 1/3 of the semester will be devoted to a book that self-consciously challenges the definition of fiction; as a class we will apply what we learn about fiction and storytelling to determine which genre(s) best describe(s) this complicated text.

I expect you to participate in class to show that you understand the assigned readings and can analyze them on multiple levels. We will use the elements of fiction (plot, setting, point of view, characterization, theme, and style) to analyze assigned readings. We’ll also discuss various genres and engage in comparative analysis. You’ll be expected to use these skills in formal writing assignments and exams. Please refer to the Outcomes Assessment handout for a full explanation of these goals, since they are key to our class and to each of our assignments.

Required course materials

As soon as possible, please acquire the following (the books have been ordered and should be available through the City Tech book store):

The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros. ISBN: 978-0-679-734772

The Story and Its Writer: An Introduction to Short Fiction by Ann Charters. 8th ed. ISBN: 978-0-312-596231

The Things They Carried by Tim O’Brien. ISBN: 978-0-618-706419

Access to a reliable computer, with internet (email) access and a printer. You will also need a flash drive or some other way to save your work.

An up-to-date collegiate dictionary.

A folder or notebook devoted to this class.

You’ll also receive handouts and photocopied readings in class.

Required assignments (please refer to the department competencies handout)

Three short papers

Midterm exam

Final exam (students must pass the final exam in order to pass the course)

Participation

Unannounced reading quizzes (quizzes cannot be made up; lowest quiz grade will be dropped).

Other requirements of the course

In addition to the materials listed above, this course requires a number of other commitments from you, namely,

Regular attendance: This course is designed as a seminar-type class, which means that active participation is necessary if you and your peers are to succeed in this class. I expect you to come to class prepared (which means you've read the assigned readings and you've completed any homework assignments). I also expect you to come to class on time and stay for the duration of our meeting. Arriving more than 10 minutes late, or leaving more than 10 minutes early will result in half an absence. Distracted and distracting behavior, which includes using cell phones or music devices, will also result in half an absence, since it demonstrates that you are not, in fact, actually present and engaged *mentally* in our classroom. You are allowed 3 absences from this class without penalty. The fourth absence may result in a WU grade. If you do miss a class, please know that you are responsible for the information we covered while you were gone. If your religion is not directly recognized by the school calendar, and you anticipate missing classes for religious reasons, please see me as soon as possible.

Responsible scholarship: I expect you to complete all assignments on time, and to do so honestly. We will discuss academic integrity and plagiarism early in the semester. Know now, however, that I will not tolerate any academic dishonesty in my course. The school's statement on academic integrity is in the box below; in this class, an act of academic dishonesty will result in a grade of zero (0) on the affected assignment and a report filed with the school's Academic Integrity Officer. A second act of academic dishonesty in this class will result in additional sanctions. If you have any questions about plagiarism and how to avoid it, please ask me.

New York City College of Technology Policy on Academic Integrity

Students and all others who work with information, ideas, texts, images, music, inventions and other intellectual property owe their audience and sources accuracy and honesty in using, crediting, and citing sources. As a community of intellectual and professional workers, the College recognizes its responsibility for providing instruction in information literacy and academic integrity, offering models of good practice, and responding vigilantly and appropriately to infractions of academic integrity. Accordingly, academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and at New York City College of Technology and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. The complete text of the College policy on Academic Integrity may be found in the catalog.

Another aspect of responsible scholarship is doing your best to meet course requirements. If you find you are having trouble keeping up with your assignments, please see me during office hours. Requests for extensions will only be considered if they are received at least 24 hours before the original due date. Formal papers are due at the start of class on the days indicated on the course calendar, and must adhere to MLA guidelines. After the due date, late papers will be accepted for seven calendar days with a penalty of a ten point deduction. After seven days, the grade will be a zero.

Writing: This course is designated as writing intensive. We will use writing to help us learn about our literary texts, even as we use literature to teach us about our own writing. Note that, according to the department's list of competencies for this class, you "must submit acceptable papers [...] in order to pass the course."

Students with disabilities

If you have a disability that requires accommodation, please see me as soon as possible so I can accommodate you. If you think you may have a disability that requires accommodation, see the Student Support Services Program in Room A237, or call them at 718-260-5143.

Grading: Your semester grade will be calculated using the following formula:

Participation:	15%
Quizzes:	15%
Midterm exam:	15%
Final exam:	20% (students must pass the final exam in order to pass the course)
Paper 1:	10%
Paper 2:	10%
Paper 3:	15%

Paper grades: Your papers will be evaluated according to the following rubric. Please read it carefully and let me know if you have any questions.

- A, A-** Papers earning an A or an A- are excellent examples of critical literacy in action. They carefully and intelligently respond to the ideas in the readings and are easy and enjoyable to read. Organization is smooth and the argument is well-polished and convincing. These papers demonstrate the student's mastery of the goals for the course as outlined by CUNY. A paper would earn an A- rather than an A if it met these standards but fell short in an area of sentence-level revision (e.g., minor typographical errors, occasional editing missteps).
- B+, B, B-** Papers earning grades in the B range (B+, B, or B-) are good; they set themselves apart by being thoughtful and interesting, though they may still have some rough spots. Overall, the paper succeeds, even if some kinks still need to be ironed out. These papers are more successful than papers earning grades in the C range, because these papers take risks with original analyses or interesting responses to the readings. These papers are less successful than papers earning grades in the A range, because they still need attention to significant paragraph- or sentence-level issues like organization, appropriate use of evidence, appropriate levels of analysis, frequent editing and proofreading missteps, or unclear phrasing. Within this range, papers earn a B+ when these paragraph and sentence level issues occur infrequently but still impede the writer's attempts to communicate; papers earn a B- when the issues occur more frequently, substantially impeding communication.
- C+, C** Papers earn a C+ or a C when they meet the requirements of the assignment, but they do so unspectacularly. Such papers are considered average. These papers often have one or more weaknesses on the global level that substantially affect(s) the paper's readability. If your thesis is unclear, if your argument vacillates, if you summarize more than you analyze... these issues often negatively affect the success of a paper. These papers are more successful than papers earning a D because they do, in fact, meet all the requirements of the assignment; these papers are less successful than papers earning grades in the B range because they don't take risks with original analyses or interesting responses to readings and because they present substantial global weaknesses that impede the writer's ability to communicate his or her ideas.
- D** If a paper earns a D in this class, it is because it clearly failed to meet the requirements of the assignment. It may have dramatically fallen short of the page requirement or have lacked a thesis statement or argument entirely. Papers earning grades in the D range demonstrate an honest attempt to address the assignment, though they need substantial global and paragraph level revisions in order to meet CUNY's requirements for this course. Papers earning a D are less successful than papers earning a C because they don't meet the requirements of the assignment or the course; they are, however, more successful than papers earning an F because they demonstrate a good faith attempt to complete the assignment.
- F** Papers earning an F clearly fall short of meeting the requirements of the assignment. They have no focus and demonstrate no engagement with the assigned readings at all. These papers are less successful than papers earning a D, because they fail to demonstrate any attempt to meet the standards of the course or the requirements of the assignment.

Course calendar (subject to revision if necessary):

Numbers in parentheses indicate the range of page numbers or the starting page of a selected reading. Except for readings from Cisneros and O'Brien, all page numbers refer to the Charters anthology.

- 8/29: Course introduction, discuss syllabus
 8/31: Discuss the elements of fiction (1726-1741)
 9/7: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (462); paper 1 assigned today.
 9/12: Gilman Casebook (1625-1636)
 9/14: Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1115); "The Importance of the Single Effect in a Prose Tale" (1684); Will Eisner, "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1694)
 9/19: Bharati Mukherjee, "The Management of Grief" (938-951)
 9/21: Ray Bradbury, "August 2026: There Will Come Soft Rains" (172)
 9/26: Ambrose Bierce, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" (137)
 10/3: Paper 1 due at the start of class. Watch "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" in class.
 10/5: Angela Carter, "The Werewolf" (188); Zadie Smith, "The Girl with Bangs" (1219)
 10/12: Richard Wright, "The Man Who Was Almost a Man" (1401)
 10/17: Midterm exam
 10/19: Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (3-38). Paper 2 assigned today.
 10/24: Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (39-80)
 10/26: Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (81-110)
 10/31: Anton Chekhov, "The Darling" (256-265) and Guy de Maupassant, "The Necklace" (870-876); graphic narrative presentations assigned today
 11/2: Flannery O'Connor, "Good Country People" (1027); "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" (1042); "A Reasonable Use of the Unreasonable" (1653)
 11/7: Paper 2 due at the start of class. In-class workshop on graphic narratives (bring selected text to class)
 11/9: Ernest Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants" (539); Henry James, "The Figure in the Carpet" (handout)
 11/20: Presentations on graphic narrative
 11/16: Presentations on graphic narrative continue. Paper 3 assigned today.
 11/21: Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (1-63)
 11/23: O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (64-110)
 11/28: O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (111-170)
 11/30: O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (finish)
 12/5: Finish discussing O'Brien
 12/7: Paper 3 due at the start of class. Prepare for debate.
 12/12: Debate in class: is *The Things They Carried* fiction?
 12/19: Review for final exam
 12/21: Final exam *remember: students must pass the final exam in order to pass the course.