

ENGL 151-061:**Critical Writing and Reading: Short Fiction and the Novel**

This course is for students who have demonstrated secondary-school-level competence in the reading and essay writing skills required by most university disciplines. Reading and writing assignments will concentrate on short fiction and the novel, and will emphasize the processes of reading, analysis, reasoning, documentation and the stages of the writing process.

The House of the Short Story

Instructor: Peter McDonald

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Office Hours & Location:

Salmon Arm Campus, Office 151

Mondays 4:30-5:30

Tuesdays 1:30-3:30

Course Description

In the forward to her *Selected Stories* Alice Munro writes that "A story is not like a road to follow ... it's more like a house. You go inside and stay there for a while, wandering back and forth and settling where you like and discovering how the room and corridors relate to each other, how the world outside is altered by being viewed from these windows." This course takes up Munro's idea and examines a number of short stories that both represent houses and invite the reader to inhabit the text. However, not all of these homes are comfortable: some are haunted, some conceal struggling families, and some forbid their owners to ever return. These homes also help construct their inhabitant's identities along gendered, classed, and racialized lines, or they shatter that identity by unexpectedly and drastically changing. In the first half of the class we will take an eclectic path through the history of short stories and try to understand what it means to view a story spatially and all at once. Does this have anything to do with the length of a story? Is this what Poe means when he argues that literature should abide by "a distinct limit, as regards length...the limit of a single sitting"? In the second half of the course we move into two novels that also ask the reader to inhabit them, but use their length to create discomfort, pleasure, anxiety, and terror.

General Policies:

I allow laptops in class, though I will ask students to turn them off, or not bring them if they become disruptive. This outline is subject to change, but I will give you at least two weeks notice if there are any changes. The class will generally be divided up into one hour of lecture and discussion twenty minutes of work shopping and group discussion. Late assignments will be deducted 3% per day including weekends. If your assignment is late you may email it to me provided you submit a hard copy during the next class.

Required Texts:

Colette – *The Pure and the Impure*

Mark Danielewski – *House of Leaves*

Alice Munro – *Selected Stories*

Chris Baldick (ed) - *The Oxford book of Gothic Tales*

In addition *Quick Access for Writers* is a required text for all English department courses.

Timeline:

Important Dates:

January 4th, Classes begin
January 14th, Last day to add or drop a course
February 21st-25th, Spring break, no classes
March 4th, Last day to withdraw without academic penalty
April 8th, Last day of classes
April 11th-21st, Exam Period

Week 1: Introduction

January 4th, Introduction to course
January 6th, Alice Munro - Forward to *Selected Stories*

Week 2: Domestic Space

January 11th, Stephen Crane - "The Stove" on Blackboard
January 13th, Alice Walker - "Everyday Use" on Blackboard

Week 3: Short Fiction as a House

January 18th, Alice Munro - "Vandals" from *Selected Stories*
January 20th, Continued

Week 4: The Haunted House

January 25th, Edgar Allen Poe – "The Fall of the House of Usher" from *Gothic Tales*
January 27th, Angela Carter - "The Lady of the House of Love" from *Gothic Tales*

Week 5: The House of Horrors

February 1st, HP Lovecraft – "The Outsider" - from *Gothic Tales*
February 3rd, Freud – "The Uncanny", on Blackboard

Mapping Project Due

Week 6: Gender in the House

February 8th, Charlotte Perkins Gilman - "The Yellow Wallpaper" from *Gothic Tales*
February 10th, Isak Dinesen "The Monkey" - from *Gothic Tales*

Week 7: Gendered Architecture

February 15th, Alice Munro - "Labor Day Dinner" from *Selected Stories*
February 17th, Luce Girard "*The Nourishing Arts*" on Blackboard
Library Research Visit

Week 8: Reading Break

February 21st, NO CLASSES
February 24th, NO CLASSES

Week 9: The House of Ill Repute

March 1st, Colette – *The Pure and the Impure*
Short Essay Due
March 3rd, Colette – *The Pure and the Impure* Continued

Week 10: Inside or Outside

March 8th, Colette – *The Pure and the Impure* Continued

March 10th, Alice Munro - “A Wilderness Station” from *Selected Stories*

Week 11: The Novel is the Mansion of Short Stories.

March 15th, Mark Danielewski – *House of Leaves* 1-125

March 17th, Mark Danielewski – *House of Leaves* 125-250

Week 12: Possession

March 22nd, Mark Danielewski – *House of Leaves* 270-375

March 24th, Louis Bunuel – *Exterminating Angel* (in class viewing)

Week 13: Shifting Dimensions of the Text

March 29th, Discussion of *Exterminating Angel*

March 31st, Mark Danielewski – *House of Leaves* 375-500

Week 14: Returning to Structure

April 5th Mark Danielewski – *House of Leaves* 500-600

April 7th, Mark Danielewski – *House of Leaves*

Comparative Essay Due

Assignment Descriptions:

Note: students will be using the same short story for the first three assignments, please read all the short stories for the first four weeks before you pick one.

Evaluation:

10% - Participation

15% - Mapping project and explanation (500 words)

20% - Short essay (1000 words)

25% - Comparative essay (1500 words)

30% - Final exam

Mapping project (due week 5): For this project take one of the short stories from weeks 2-4 and make a map of the space in which the story takes place. Place quotes on the map to help demonstrate why you are arranging the space in this way. Within each space map the characters, themes, or images that seem to be specifically associated with that space. Additionally write a short (500 word) write up explaining your arrangement.

Short Essay (due week 9): In a short essay (1000 words), in MLA format, expand upon the short story that you worked with in the mapping project and make an argument that juxtaposes a temporal or narrative aspect of the story to a spatial or structural aspect. You should compose a strong thesis for this project, and underline that thesis in your essay. Your essay should use quotes from the book in a detail oriented manner to make arguments specific to your story.

Comparative Essay (due week 14): In an essay (1500 words), in MLA format, using the short story that you have worked with in the two previous assignments, compare or contrast the ignored, unconscious, or repressed elements of this story with either *The Pure and the Impure*, or *House of Leaves*. You should pick one or two short passages from each text that you think illuminate each other in important ways and use these to make your argument. How do their similarities or differences structure the different narratives? Again underline your thesis, and three sentences that summarize key points of your argument. Use quotes from the passages you select to explain tone, interesting language, or grammatical structures that are important to your argument.

Final Exam: The exam will test your knowledge of the course texts overall. It will include 3-5 short answer questions dealing with the texts that are not part of the previous assignments. You will also have one essay question where you will be asked to compare or contrast one of the short stories from the first weeks that you did not write on with the novel that you did not write on.

Policies

The college's grading system:

A+:90-100%	B+: 76-79%	C+: 64-67%	D: 50-54%
A: 85-89%	B: 72-75%	C: 60-63%	F: 0-49%
A-:80-84%	B-: 68-71%	C-: 55-59%	

The department's policy for grading consistency:

Categories for Essay Evaluation:

1. **Content:** thesis/argument, insight, grasp of concepts, originality
2. **Organization:** logical structure, coherent paragraphs, transitions, introduction, conclusion
3. **Development:** relevant evidence, sufficient detail and quotation, integration of secondary sources
4. **Mechanics:** diction, sentence structure, grammar, spelling, punctuation
5. **Format:** MLA manuscript format, documentation, Works Cited

Letter Grade Profiles:

An **A range (80-100%) Outstanding** essay displays excellence in all (or almost all) five categories: a spark of individuality or originality in the argument; an interesting discussion well supported with evidence from the text; effective integration of secondary sources; a fluid, sophisticated style. Any technical errors must be minor.

A **B range (68-79%) Good** essay reveals strengths in all of the Evaluative Categories but does not always succeed in all areas. It demonstrates an ability to develop an argument with relevant details and integrate secondary sources appropriately. It may have minor mechanical or format errors but not enough to distract the reader from the content.

A **C range (55-67%) Satisfactory** essay meets university standards in most Evaluative Categories. It reveals an effort to structure an argument, but its thesis may be tentative and insufficiently developed. There is a tendency towards vagueness, generalization, and repetition of class material. Support from secondary sources may be awkwardly handled. Mechanical and format problems are sometimes distracting.

A **D range (50-54%) Marginal** essay reveals problems in many of the Evaluative Categories. Although it attempts an argument or focus, discussion of the topic is vague, incomplete, and lacking supportive detail; it displays more summary or paraphrase than analysis; the handling of secondary sources may not adhere completely to the rules of MLA referencing; mechanical and format errors impede readability.

An **F range (0-49%) Unacceptable** essay lacks an argument or focus; it may fail to address the topic or draw evidence from required sources; it may reveal a serious misunderstanding of the text or be of insufficient length. Such a paper may contain too many writing errors to be acceptable at the university level, or it may receive a failing grade due to plagiarism.

Attendance:

Attendance is essential to keeping up with the readings and ideas presented in the class. Students who miss more than two days of classes without relevant documentation will lose 5% of their participation grade per missed day. Please see the College policy on valid reasons for excused absences and holy days at <http://webapps-1.okanagan.bc.ca/ok/calendar/Calendar.aspx?page=Attendance>.

Participation

In addition to attending classes students are expected to contribute to class and group discussion. Students contributions will be graded based on their relevance to the course material, engagement with other students, clarity, and insight. Students who are less comfortable with speaking in groups will have opportunities to participate by taking notes or sending in discussion questions online.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's work or ideas without proper or complete acknowledgment. Acknowledgment for English papers includes using quotation marks around wordings taken from a source and parenthetical citation including the author's name. There are different forms of plagiarism:

- Intentional plagiarism is the deliberate presentation of another's work or ideas as one's own.
- Unintentional plagiarism is the inadvertent presentation of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgment because of poor or inadequate practices. Unintentional plagiarism is a failure of scholarship; intentional plagiarism is an act of deceit.
- Self-Plagiarism is the submission of work that is the same or substantially the same as work prepared or performed by the student for credit in another course (except in instances where the instructor receiving the work has given prior permission). Although self-plagiarism may not involve the intellectual theft that characterizes plagiarism, it is a form of academic misconduct and is subject to the same disciplinary actions as plagiarism.

Penalties

Penalties for plagiarism may include a warning, the rewriting of the assignment or the submission of some other assigned work, the imposition of a reduced mark for the assignment, or the assignment of a mark of zero in the course. For more serious or repeat offenses, the student may be denied admission or re-admission or that the student forfeit Okanagan College financial aid. In any of these cases students have the right to an appeal.

Students who are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism should see the College's policy on academic offenses at <http://webapps-1.okanagan.bc.ca/ok/calendar/Calendar.aspx?page=AcademicOffenses> and refer to the UBC publication *Plagiarism Avoided: Taking Responsibility for your Work*. This guide is available through the College bookstores or online.