

Lecturer: Dr. Rieke Jordan

(I answer emails Mon-Fri)

Tuesdays 10:15am - 11:45 pm

Room: online (so far)

Office Hours: Wednesday 12-1 pm (online, sign up via email)

## Nineteenth-Century American Short Stories

### Syllabus - Covid-19 Version, April 22, 2020 Version 1.1

In this BA-level online seminar, we analyze nineteenth-century short stories that shaped the cultural and literary landscape of the United States. This seminar will be taught online for the most part - let's see if it will be possible to switch to real life conversations. I very much hope so. Due to it being online, I reduced the reading load; we now engage with more canonical texts and adhere to group presentations and small group work.

- 22/04     Introduction  
Syllabus, Course Material and Course Structure, Credit Requirements, Group Assignment
- 29/04     What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Short Stories?
- We will establish our own working definitions of what short stories are and what they do by turning to primary sources. Reading two of the three short stories: Vladimir Nabokov, "Symbols and Signs"; Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery"; Raymond Carver, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love"
  - For the reading journal: What are the characteristics of these two short stories? Can you find commonalities? What are the rhythms of the texts? Look out for narrative arch, perspective, etc.
- 06/05     Hemingway's Iceberg Theory (live meeting)
- Ernest Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants"; "The Art of Fiction #21" (from the Paris Review)
  - Reading journal: Copy the style and tone of one authors that we discussed so far and write a paragraph in their style (good luck with Nabokov ;-))

In these two sessions, we will have developed foundational knowledge of the genre of the short story while working with texts from the twentieth century. We will have established ideas like tone, themes, pacing, etc. This is important to see in what way the genre of the short story expanded and grew. Now it is time to step into the nineteenth century and understand its historical literary roots. Again, we will develop ideas out of the stories itself. An important construct here is to understand literature as an archive.

- 13/05     A Nation Begins to Write Itself
- Washington Irving, "Rip van Winkle"
  - Group presentation: American media landscape of the 1810s/1820s
  - from now on: reading journal entries based on the questions by the groups

- 20/05 Questions on Genre: Romanticism and Dark Romanticism
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Minister’s Black Veil”; “Young Goodman Brown”
  - Group presentation: Why do we need genres? What are the genres of romanticism and dark romanticism?

**First Independent Study Due via email**

- 27/05 Questions on Author: Edgar Allan Poe (live meeting)
- “Mask of the Red Death”; “Purloined Letter”; “Review Hawthorne”
  - Group presentation: What is an author? :-) (we watch the presentation beforehand and subtract it from live meeting time)
  - Answer ONE question in reading journal

- 03/06 Questions of Regionalism: On the Plantation
- Charles W. Chesnutt, “The Goophered Grapevine”
  - Group presentation: Oral traditions in African American literature

By now, we will have focussed on themes such as freedom, individuality, the nation and the individual within it, inequality, and genres. We will now move into a thematic block of different notions of work in the nineteenth century: factory work, office jobs, and readerly work.

- 10/06 Factory Work: Realism and Sentimentalism (live meeting)
- Rebecca Harding Davis, “Life in the Iron Mills”
  - Group presentation: industrialization in the United States and workers’ rights
  - Answer ONE question in reading journal

- 17/06 Office Work: I feel you, Bartleby.
- Herman Melville, “Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street”
  - Group presentation: rise of managerial culture and finance

**Second Independent Study Due via email**

- 24/06 Interpretative Work: what you see is..... uhm... NOT what you get?? (live meeting)
- Henry James, “The Turn of the Screw” (it’s a longer read, please start early)
  - no group presentation (I will send out questions)

Henry James points us toward female subjectivity and agency. I would like to end this seminar on a focus on women writers of the nineteenth century. We will begin with “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Gilman and end on a session of group case studies. You will join a new group; understand the group case studies as “digital museum” - you introduce the author and her short story (possible format: ppt or website) and analyze it regarding guiding principles we will have established.

- 01/07 In Confinement
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper”
  - Group presentation: nineteenth century notions of feminism and women’s liberation movement

- 08/07 Open Session (Group Case Studies or Kate Chopin)

- 15/07 Wrap up and Review (live meeting)  
**Reading journal due via email**