

ENGLISH 466D-004 – Studies in a 20th Century Genre
Society of the Spectacle and Modernist Shorter Fiction
SYLLABUS –WINTER TERM 2, 2014-15

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Course meets: MWF 9-10 am in IBLC-155

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Course Description:

« Tout ce qui était directement vécu s'est éloigné dans une représentation. »
--Guy Debord, *La société du spectacle* (1967)

This course reads modernist shorter fiction—what William Trevor calls "the distillation of an essence" —together with cultural theory and criticism on the relationships between people, objects and images to understand what this genre captures about representation and social struggle during the 20th century. Conceptualizations of identity, scale, urban space and social relations are forged in engagements with commodification, celebrity, surveillance, older notions of private and public and new transnational movements. As technique, shorter fiction promises a particular experience of intensity or excess, combined with its minimalism of scale. As we read, we will debate whether this is the instrument by which modernists kept alive what Walter Benjamin calls "the art of the storyteller," or rather registered its failure in modernity's "new forms of poverty" (Debord).

Texts

Dubliners. James Joyce.
The Shadow-Line. Joseph Conrad.
Society of the Spectacle. Guy Debord.
Course Reader available from the UBC Bookstore.
Other materials available on Connect.

Requirements and Grading

In this course, we will read one novella and a collection of shorter stories and sketches or fragments. Our readings in fiction will be supplemented by some carefully calibrated segments of critical prose. I am also likely to ask you to become familiar with a few works in other media, such as paint and music, and some historical materials, which I will present in class and on Connect. Please visit our course website on Connect regularly, as it fulfills multiple functions in the course.

Requirements consist of a paragraph, a term paper, a midterm and final examination, and participation in a varied set of activities during class meetings, such as group discussions and a prepared solo presentation. I expect to be able to give brief reading quizzes from time to time, in order to be able to reward you for keeping up with the class schedule. For your term paper, please turn in both a hard copy **and an electronic copy uploaded to our course website on Connect**. That way, if I lose your paper, I will have another copy that demonstrates you submitted the assignment on time. If you feel anxious about any exam or assignment, please see me for a personal conference. I will be very happy to welcome you in office hours, or by special arrangement if my office hours don't suit your academic schedule this term.

15% Participation (including a prepared, brief keypoint presentation and reading quizzes)
20% Midterm examination
30% Paragraph and Paper
35% Final examination



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CLASS READING SCHEDULE:

Jan 5 – Course Introduction

❖ **Art of the Storyteller**

Jan 7 – Oscar Wilde. “The Sphinx without a Secret.” Ernest Hemingway. “Big Two-Hearted River.”

Jan 9 – **No Class:** In lieu of a class meeting, please read Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller.”

You are also invited to hear my paper today in Session 268 at the MLA Convention, downtown Vancouver ☺

❖ **A Scrupulous Meanness**

Jan 12 – James Joyce. “Sisters.”

Jan 14 – James Joyce. “An Encounter.” “Araby.”

Jan 16 -- James Joyce. “Eveline.” “After the Race.”

Jan 19 – James Joyce. “Two Gallants.” “The Boarding House.”

Jan 21 – James Joyce. “A Little Cloud.” “Counterparts.”

Jan 23 – James Joyce. “Clay.” “A Painful Case.”

Jan 26 – James Joyce. “Ivy Day in the Committee Room.” “A Mother.” “Grace.”

Jan 28 – James Joyce. “The Dead.”

Jan 30 – **Presentations.** James Joyce. “The Dead.”

Feb 2 – **Paragraph Due.** Katherine Mansfield. “Bliss.” “The Garden Party.” “The Doll’s House.”

Feb 4 – Katherine Mansfield. “The Daughters of the late Colonel.” “Miss Brill.”

Feb 6 – **Presentations.** Katherine Mansfield. “The Singing Lesson.” D.H. Lawrence. “The Horse Dealer’s Daughter.”

Feb 9 – **No class: Family Day, UBC holiday**

Feb 11 – **Midterm examination**

❖ **Ethics of the Story**

Feb 13 – Isaac Bashevis Singer. “Androgynous.”

Feb 16-20 – **No class: Reading Week**

Feb 23 -- Franz Kafka. “Resolutions.” “The Next Village.” “The Bridge.” “A Fratricide.” “A Common Confusion.” “The Truth About Sancho Panza.” “A Hunger Artist.”

Feb 25 – Samuel Beckett. “Dante and the Lobster.” Selections from *Texts for nothing*.

Feb 27 – Frank O’Connor. “Guests of the Nation.”

❖ **“Mediated by Images”**

Mar 2 – Guy Debord. *Society of the Spectacle*.

Mar 4 – Guy Debord. *Society of the Spectacle*.

Mar 6 – Virginia Woolf. “The Mark on the Wall.” “Kew Gardens.”

Mar 9 – Virginia Woolf. “Monday or Tuesday.” “Blue & Green” “A Haunted House.” “The String Quartet.”

Mar 11 – Virginia Woolf. “Moments of Being: Slater’s Pins Have No Point.” “The Lady in the Looking Glass: A Reflection.”

Mar 13 – **Presentations.** Virginia Woolf. “Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street.”

❖ **That Undiscovered Country**

Mar 16 – Joseph Conrad. *The Shadow-Line*.



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Mar 18 – Joseph Conrad. *The Shadow-Line*.

Mar 20 – Joseph Conrad. *The Shadow-Line*.

Mar 23 – George Orwell. “Shooting an Elephant.” Brian O Nuallain (Flann O’Brien). “Revenge on the English in 2032!” “John Duffy’s Brother.”

Mar 25 – Ernest Hemingway. “Hills Like White Elephants.” James Thurber. “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty.”

Mar 27 – Gertrude Stein. “Miss Furr and Miss Skeene.” Julia O’Faolain. “First Conjugation.”

Mar 30 – **Final paper due**; include an abstract of your paper. Discussion of papers.

Apr 1 -- **Presentations**.

Apr 3, 6 – **No class, Good Friday and Easter Monday**

Apr 8 -- .Jorge Luis Borges. “The Garden of Forking Paths.” “The Library of Babel.”

Apr 10 -- Catch-up; final student presentations; final exam review.

Exam period Apr 14-29-- **Final examination, TBA**

The course adheres to the university’s strict rule against plagiarism. *If you represent the words, productions or ideas of anyone else as your own, you become subject to the disciplinary processes of the university concerning plagiarism, and may fail the course or be expelled from the university.* If you have any questions about what counts as plagiarism, please ask me (before you submit the assignment).

Anyone with a documented disability is gently encouraged to contact the Access and Diversity Office in Brock Hall, 1203- 1874 East Mall (tele: 604.822.5844) for accommodations and support services. Other helpful programs available to all registered students are UBC Counselling Services tele: 604.822.3811 or, after hours, Vancouver Crisis Line, tele: 800.784.2433.

