ENGE3290 Reading and Writing Short Stories

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Course description

The aim of the course is to introduce students to the art of the short story. Through reading well-crafted stories, students will learn how to appreciate short fiction and become familiar with the different elements of the short story form: plot, point of view, dialogue and action, character development as well as language, voice and style. A main focus of the course will be to look at how language is used and manipulated to create meaning in the texts.

Human beings tell stories to find meaning and make sense of their lives. We are born with the need to listen to stories – and to tell them. Students who are interested in writing short stories will be able to apply the techniques discussed in class to their own work and have their stories workshopped.

Learning outcomes:

After completing this course, students should:
- Be able to appreciate the short story form and its structure and style
- Be aware of the different elements that go into a short story
- Be able to discuss and analyze the effectiveness of a short story
- Be interested in writing and workshopping original short stories.

Assessment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing journal</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecturer attendance &amp; participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tutorial discussion &amp; participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-home writing task</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay / Short Story</td>
<td>40%</td>
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Details of assessments:

**Writing journal**: Answer short questions about the stories and try out various creative writing tasks, including a Twitter fiction assignment also to be posted on Blackboard.

**Attendance/participation**: Do the readings before class and come to lecture ready to contribute to the discussion.

**Tutorial discussion (10%) and participation (5%)**: Make use of tutorial meetings to exchange and deepen ideas on the stories. You will be responsible for the discussion of ONE story and will be given a prompt to help you structure the discussion. You will open and lead the discussion, offering your own ideas, referring us to the text, and inviting follow-up comments from your classmates.

Your opening remarks should not be longer than FIVE minutes. You will be assessed based on content, clarity, fluency and engagement.

Come to tutorials ready to participate in the discussion and to workshop each other’s original short stories.

**Take-home writing task**: At the end of class in Week 10, you will receive a set of questions for response writing. Hand in your answers before 5pm on Friday.

**Essay (8 pages)**: You can choose to write on any story or author covered in class. You can write on one single story, compare stories in the syllabus, or discuss an author and include his/her other works as well.

**Original short story**: Instead of writing a final essay, you can choose to write your own short story, drawing from the different elements of a short story covered in class. Those of you opting to work on a short story will need to **start early**, have your story **workshopped** and be prepared to write two to three **drafts** for your story.

**Late submission of assignments will be penalized half a grade for each day late.**
# Course schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Stories</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Overview / Why short stories?</td>
<td>“The Necklace” by Guy de Maupassant (1884)</td>
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<td>Jan 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>What makes a short story? / Change we can – or not?</td>
<td>“The Story of an Hour” by Kate Chopin (1895)</td>
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<td>Jan 18</td>
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<td>“Eveline” by James Joyce (1914)</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>What makes a story work? / Initiation</td>
<td>“Araby” James Joyce (1914)</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Chinese New Year holiday – no class</td>
<td>“Indian Camp” by Ernest Hemingway (1924)</td>
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<td>Feb 1</td>
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<td>“Death of the Right-Fielder” Stuart Dybek (1990)</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>What makes a story honest? / Expressing the inexpressible</td>
<td>“A Small, Good Thing” by Raymond Carver (1989)</td>
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<td>Feb 8</td>
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<td>“Miles City, Montana” by Alice Munro (1985)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Why write stories? / Turning point</td>
<td>“Gravel” by Alice Munro (2011)</td>
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<td>Feb 15</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>How to write stories? / Evil and savagery</td>
<td>“The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson (1962)</td>
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<td>Feb 22</td>
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<td>“The Shawl” by Cynthia Ozick (1980)</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Writing short stories: Point of view</td>
<td>“I Stand Here Ironing” by Tillie Olsen (1961)</td>
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<td>March 1</td>
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<td>“Reunion” by John Cheever (1962)</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Writing short stories: Plot and characters</td>
<td>“Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid (1978)</td>
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<td>March 8</td>
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<td>“Powder” by Tobias Wolff (1996)</td>
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<td>March 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Writing short stories: Tone and voice</td>
<td>“The Lady with the Pet Dog” by Anton Chekhov (1899)</td>
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<td>Mar 22</td>
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<td>“A Rose for Emily” by William Faulkner (1931)</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Writing short stories: Language</td>
<td>“Hills Like White Elephant” by Ernest Hemingway (1927)</td>
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<td>Mar 29</td>
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<td>“Why Don’t You Dance?” by Raymond Carver (1978)</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Meta-fiction</td>
<td>“Say Yes” by Tobias Wolff (1985)</td>
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<td>April 5</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Writing short stories: Language</td>
<td>“Happy Endings” by Margaret Atwood (1983)</td>
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<td>April 12</td>
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<td>If On A Winter’s Night a Traveller by Italo Calvino (1980)</td>
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<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
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<td>April 19</td>
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<td>Week 16</td>
<td>Essay / Original Short story due April 26 (Wed)</td>
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<td>April 26</td>
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<td>5pm</td>
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More stories for extended reading:

Margaret Atwood  “Death by Landscape”
John Barth  “Autobiography”
Donald Barthelme  “The Balloon”
Jorge Luis Borges  “The Garden of Forking Paths,” “Funes the Memorious”
Italo Calvino  “The Feathered Ogre”
Raymond Carver  “Fever,” “Cathedral,” “A Small, Good Thing”
John Cheever  “The Swimmer,” “The Enormous Radio”
Anton Chekhov  “The Darling”
Kate Chopin  “Désirée’s Baby”
Colette  “The Other Wife”
Isak Dinesen  “The Blue Jar,” “The Sailor-Boy’s Tale”
Nikolai Gogol  “The Overcoat,” “The Nose”
Nadine Gordimer  “Terminal,” “Is There Nowhere Else Where We Can Meet?”
O Henry  “The Gift of the Magi,” “The Cop and the Anthem”
Peter Ho Davies  “What You Know”
Ha Jin  “Saboteur”
James Joyce  “The Dead”
Franz Kafka  “A Hunger Artist”
D. H. Lawrence  “The Rocking-Horse Winner”
David Leavitt  “Braids,” “Territory”
Gabriel Garcia Marquez  “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings”
Katherine Mansfield  “The Garden-Party,” “Bliss”
W. Somerset Maugham  “Rain,” “A String of Beads”
Guy de Maupassant  “The String”
Alice Munro  “How I Met My Husband,” “Wild Swans,” “Vandals,” “The Office”
Joyce Carol Oates  “Heat,” “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?”
Tim O’Brien  “The Things They Carried”
Flannery O’Connor  “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” “Everything that Rises Must Converge”
Grace Paley  “A Conversation with My Father”
Anne Proulx  “Brokeback Mountain”
Susan Sontag  “The Way We Live Now”
Elizabeth Tallent  “No One’s A Mystery”
Amy Tan  “Two Kinds”
William Carlos Williams  “The Use of Force”
Virginia Woolf  “Kew Gardens”
Recommended short story anthologies:

Fiction: A Pocket Anthology, edited by R. S. Gwynn
The Story and Its Writer, edited by Ann Charters
The Art of the Short Story, edited by Dana Gioia and R. S. Gwynn
Telling Stories: An Anthology for Writers, edited by Joyce Carol Oates
On Writing Short Stories, edited by Tom Bailey
The Oxford Book for American Short Stories, edited by Joyce Carol Oates
The Vintage Book of Contemporary American Short Stories, edited by Tobias Wolff
American Short Story Masterpieces, edited by Raymond Carver and Tom Jenks
Sudden Fiction: 60 Short Short Stories, edited by Robert Shapard and James Thomas
New Sudden Fiction: Short-short Stories from America and Beyond, edited by Robert Shapard and James Thomas

Examples of short story cycles

One Thousand and One Nights (one of the tales is the"Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves")
The Decameron, Giovanni Boccaccio (1353)
Canterbury Tales, Geoffrey Chaucer (1387)
Dubliners, James Joyce (1914)
Winesburg, Ohio, by Sherwood Anderson (1919)
In Our Time, Ernest Hemingway (1925)
Lives of Girls and Women, Alice Munro (1971)
Woman Warrior, Maxine Hong Kingston (1976)
Love Medicine, Louise Erdrich (1984)
The Joy Luck Club, Amy Tan (1989)
The Things They Carried, Tim O’Brien(1990)
The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven, Sherman Alexie (1993)
Drown, Junot Diaz (1996)
Olive Kitteridge, Elizabeth Strout (2008)

Some studies on the craft and history of short stories:

Feedback for evaluation:

Students will be asked to complete Course Evaluations for both the lectures and tutorials of ENGE3290 at the end of the semester. Comments and suggestions about the course content, teaching method and learning tasks are most welcome at any time during the semester.

Academic honesty:

The University has implemented a zero tolerance policy against plagiarism and has required all written work to be submitted via VeriGuide at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/veriguide.

To comply with University regulations, you are therefore asked to:

1) submit your written work via VeriGuide before due date and print the receipt issued by VeriGuide

2) submit a hard copy of the work, along with the receipt from VeriGuide and the declaration of honesty (which comes with the VeriGuide receipt but is also attached here for your use).

Assignments without the receipt from VeriGuide and the signed declaration of honesty will not be graded.