

Prof Susan Perabo
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Office Hours (tentative)
Tues 11:30-1, Thurs 4-5
and by appointment

ENGL 339: Craft of the Short Story

Required Books:

Anton Chekhov's Short Stories (Norton Critical Edition)

Dubliners, Joyce

The Snows of Kilimanjaro, Hemingway

The Collected Stories of Flannery O'Connor

Nine Stories, Salinger

The Stories of John Cheever

Where I'm Calling From, Carver

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is mandatory. There are no "excused" absences. If you miss class more than twice, your final grade will suffer.

Grade Breakdown:

Exercises/Reading Quizzes*: 30%

Paper One**: 20%

Imitation: 20%

Final Paper: 30%

*This category includes *any* in-class or out-of-class work other than the three required writing assignments. Reading quizzes and exercises can not be made up. No exceptions.

**Due dates for the major writing assignments will be announced at least 2 weeks in advance. No papers will be accepted late.

This class requires *extremely* careful reading and intense analysis of and reflection about the assigned works. Lazy reading will not be tolerated. In addition, enthusiastic and thoughtful participation is expected from each of you.

Craft of the Short Story

Paper 1

Due Tues, Oct 26

600-1000 words

You are Anton Chekhov.

Yesterday, in the afternoon post, you received packets of stories from two young writers. The first, from an Irish fellow named Joyce, is a collection of stories entitled *Dubliners*. The second is from the American writer Hemingway, a collection he's calling *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*. Both of these men have enormous respect for you; they anxiously await your response to their work.

You must write each of them a letter. Each letter should be between 300-500 words. You should respond to them as you've responded to many other writers — making specific comments regarding individual stories, but also making broader comments about the nature of the work in general. You should focus on both positives and negatives, all the while keeping in mind (*obviously! it's your letter!*) your strong, clear opinions about what makes a great short story.

Because these letters need to be relatively brief, I humbly suggest you focus only on one or two stories in detail per letter, in order that you may delve deeply into those stories' strengths and weaknesses. You may certainly mention other stories, but don't try to do *too* much, lest you are unable to develop any substantial argument and wind up with a shallow critique. Not that you would ever do such a thing.

The most important thing about this assignment, Dr. Chekhov, is that you hold true to who you are and to what you believe. Your responses to the work of Masters Joyce and Hemingway will say as much about you as an artist as it does about them.

Imitation

Due Tuesday, Nov 23

Minimum of 1000 words

Write a short story in the style of one of the authors we're reading in this class. Consider what makes this writer unique in terms of structure, voice, point-of-view, setting, character, plot, theme, etc, etc, etc. Of course, do not simply paraphrase one of the stories we've read, change names and a few plot details, and call yourself done. The story must be your own. And it must be a *complete* story, not merely an opening; it must have some type of conflict and offer some type of resolution to that conflict – the *way* in which it does these things will be a reflection of the author you choose to imitate.

It might help, before you begin writing, to make a list of the elements you'll want to include/employ in the story. This way you won't have to go back after a first draft and force them in; instead, they'll seem organic to the story. That said, be prepared to write at least a few drafts. Because you'll be melding two styles (yours and your author's) into one, it will take some work to get the balance right.

I will not read drafts of this assignment. However, feel free to “workshop” drafts with fellow class members before the due date. I can almost guarantee this will improve your story.