

The American Short Story

Summer 2009
(1st Term)

M-F 10:00 AM

"The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means."
– William Faulkner

"The truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it."
– Flannery O'Connor

"Fiction is the truth inside the lie"
– Stephen King

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Description

While this course will focus primarily on the 20th/21st Century American short story, we'll begin at the beginning to see how we got where we are. That means surveying the various "isms," from Romanticism and Realism (including regionalism and naturalism) to Modernism and Postmodernism, and wending our way to fiction too hot off the presses to have yet been *ism-ed*.

We'll be looking at what these works have to say about the individual/ community/nation as well as about the nature and purpose of literature. We'll pay attention to the way that American writers have developed new strategies to describe ever-changing environments, and to the ways in which authors have influenced one another. We'll be studying these texts to understand not only what they mean, but how they're done—that is, how they achieve

their effects. And we'll be investigating and evaluating some of the key arguments that critics have made about American short fiction.

In addition to regular reading responses, undergraduates will take a midterm and final, and write one 8-10 page paper. Graduate students will take a midterm, final, and write one 12-15 page paper.

Required Texts

American Short Stories, 8th Edition (Hitchcock, Kouidis, and Current-Garcia, Eds.)

Additional stories and criticism will be made available on MyCourses.