

The American Short Story

Fall 2019

M/W 2:00-3:15 pm

“The truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it.”

– Flannery O'Connor

“Fiction is the truth inside the lie”

– Stephen King

“Fiction is a kind of compassion-generating machine”

– George Saunders

Questions?
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EN 4833/6833

**James Baldwin!
Flannery O'Connor!
Raymond Carver!
Henry James!
Denis Johnson!
Jhumpa Lahiri!
Louise Erdrich!
Charlotte Perkins Gilman!
Tim O'Brien!
Edgar Allan Poe!
George Saunders!
Eudora Welty!
And more!**

While this course will focus primarily on the 20th/21st Century American short story, we'll begin quite a bit earlier 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

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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.

Students will take a midterm and final, and write one shorter paper and one longer one. Some reading responses, too, because that's important.