**English 242 E** **Reading Prose Fiction: Short Fiction and our Global Cultural Mosaic**

**Course Syllabus**

## Important Info

**Instructor:**Norman Wacker

Class Meets: M,T,W,Th – 9:40 – 11:50 a.m., BLD 286

**Office Hours:**M/W 2:20 – 3:20 p.m.

**Office**: Padelford Hall A18

**E-mail:**nwacker@uw.edu

**Did you know that**: This course Counts toward the English Minor and W-Course VLPA

## Objectives:

The primary objective of this course is to establish an interactive classroom community to look hard at the way we read stories and their impact on the lives of readers, writers and their societies.

We will exchange in conversation and in writing our experiences of stories that have shaped the short story, an artform dating back to ancient times, yet as pervasive and influential in the lives and times of its readers over many centuries as cinema, animation, computer games and social media are in our own.

## Overview:

Particularly since the 19th century, stories from many societies and times have, through print and translation, had far reaching distribution within and across world cultures. The short story, and short story collections, offer windows on culture, sensibility and personal conduct. Along the way the craft of organizing and reflecting on human experience through fiction surged in influence, as print media, popular literacy, the magazine and book trades created mass and global readerships.  The short story, serialized stories and novels began to be freely available, inexpensive and popular. In the process, they became mirrors which readers held up to themselves and their own times, even as they engaged the times and places of others.

## Key Questions Raised by Our Course:

What are the impacts of craft and innovation in this medium on its readers, their sensibility, sense of fashion and conduct? How do writers and their approach to character, point-of-view, social convention, plot, use of narration, and dialogue, frame the inner and the social experience of the reader?  We will use discussion of these fundamental questions, informal writing about our reading experience and analysis of the way our writers construct that experience, to document our experience as readers, even as we explore and analyze the practice of the writer.

## Core Questions for Reading Notes:

1. Name and highlight or mark-up the things that capture your attention as you read.
2. Upon reflection, what are some of the ways the patterns you noticed matter?
3. What did you learn as you worked with this text about the range of approaches that can be employed in writing a short story?

## Requirements and Grading Policy

Class Participation – 20 %

* Engaged preparation and active participation in each class meeting, including: Canvas HW assignments, sharing informal responses to the assigned reading for each class meeting, informal reading notes, crafting impromptu short stories of your own and bringing written *work-in-progress* for each of our three writing assignments (two short essays and a short story).

Three Major Projects

* Two short analytical papers on 1) what we *see* and experience when we read and / or the writer’s hand in what we read, 2) analysis of the way one of our required stories works and why it matters,
* A short story of our own invention.

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| **Course Component** | **% of Total Grade** |
| Major Essay 1 | 20% |
| Major Essay 2 | 30% |
| Major Essay 3 | 30% |
| Class Participation  (aggregated hw and in-class activity) | 20% |

Reading List:   
Ted Chiang, “The Story of Your Life”

Ursula Le Guin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelos”

Anton Chekov, “The Lady with the Pet Dog”

Anton Chekov, “Gusev”

James Joyce, “The Dead;”

Ivo Andrić, “Letter from 1920;”

Muharem Bazdulj, “Another Letter;”

Drago, Jančar,“Joyce’s Pupil;”

Phillip Roth, “The Conversion of the Jews,”

Alice Munro, “The View from Castle Rock;”

Lydia Davis, “Five Stories;”

Octavia Butler, “The Evening and the Morning and the Night,” and “Speech Sounds,”

Haruki Murakami, "Yesterday,"