**English 297** **A Intermediate Interdisciplinary Writing -Humanities**

**Course Syllabus**

## Important Info

**Instructor:**Norman Wacker

**Class Meets**: M, W, F 11:30-12:20 MEB 235

**Office Hours:**Monday and Wednesday 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.

**Office**: Padelford Hall, A14

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Course Objectives:

The primary objective of this course is to establish an interactive classroom community to look hard at ways in which modernist writers engage, document, and analyze the sorrows and wonders of a 20th Century rooted in the massive exploitation and disruption of the non-European world by European colonial powers and post-colonial wars for hegemony conducted among those powers well into the present, often fueled by exponential advances in their technological and economic development at the expense for much of the era of its former colonies.

What emerges in this body of work are innovative uses of narrative technique, experiments in language and pensive documentaries of the human and material legacies of industrialization, global warfare among the great powers, exploitation of surviving civilian populations, and a holocaust waged against minority communities as great powers, pushed to the margins by global warfare, enslaved, impoverished and conducted a war of terror on non-combatant populations, with a fury that mirrored the weapons and methods of mass destruction employed against cities, at sea and in the air, waves of material and human destruction visited on non-combatants with the same means as employed against warring armies.

Words and new ways of employing them, it will turn out, often prove a medium capable of documenting and speaking the unspeakable and constructing both soulful, ironic and effective humanitarian rejoinders (even persuasive)l trials of the institutions, ideologies and practices that perpetrated and rationalized decades of 20th century war and its decades long aftermath. They can also memorialize and invoke forms of civility, grace, tradition, invention, survival and eloquence that accompanied the era and remain ready standards for articulating liberating forms of opposition and memorialization and accountability.

## Course Overview:

The Eurocentrism of the passages above may not have escaped you. There is a enormous body of literature, history and memoir employed in every culture, often with the same objective of preserving, heritage, faith and language.

Particularly since the 19th century, stories from many societies and times have become increasingly globalized and plural, coexisting with a circulating, many-cultured, international body of memoir, , through print and translation. The short story in particular, 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 have 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. It is a small sampling of this mirrors (and others class members will nominate, or otherwise share) that we will engage throughout our course.

We will have 3 major themes that will be engaged over the course of the quarter: 1) the connection between short fiction and *Intercultural Communication (2 Major Essays); 2) The immediacy and impact with which Poetry can articulate and access the human and the humane in and against the grain of disturbance and loss (1 Major Essay), and 3) the role of the Holocaust* narratives in recovering and preserving the tales and thoughtful examination of its victims, its perpetrators and bystanders (1 Major Essay).

## Key Questions Raised by Our Course:

What would you argue are some of the impacts on the craft and innovation of these media on its readers, their sensibility, their sense of moral and ethical practice, of inner life and public conduct? How would you argue these writers and their approach to character, point-of-view, social convention, plot, narration, and dialogue, interact with the reader’s the larger perspective on his or her historical context?  How might you argue a writer might shape the larger understandings and perspectives of the community addressed?

We will consistently couple these fundamental questions, informal writing about our reading experience, and share in discussion and discussion board posts our fine-grained formal analysis of the way our writers construct the readers experience, in particular the perspective, emphasis and reconstruction of the exposition of events and their meaning, documenting in the process document our experience as readers, and the significant we attribute to it in the process.

**Reading Notes**:

1. Name, highlight, narrate, or mark-up the things that capture your attention as you read.

How would you say our narrator shapes your comprehension and appraisal of the cultural contexts and social behavior she or he narrates?

1. Upon reflection, what are some of the ways the patterns you noticed matter? For example, what contributions to perspective, character, plot development and exposition of ambiguity do you identify with key passages, narrated events and their consequences.
2. What did you learn as you worked with this text about the range of approaches that can be employed in using this genre (short story, poem, critical essay, memoire, or the graphic novel)?

## Requirements and Grading Policy

*Class Participation*

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, weekly debriefs on new facts about the author, time period, cultural context, and bringing written *work-in-progress* for each of our four major critical papers.

*4 Major Projects*

You will write 4 major essays. Three short analytical papers on 1) what we *see* and experience when we read a particular text / and the writer’s hand in what we read, 2) analysis of the way one of our required stories works and why it matters. See more details in the **When You Start to Write Your Major Paper** document.

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| **Course Component** | **% of Total Grade** |
| Major Essay 1 | 20% |
| Major Essay 2 | 20% |
| Major Essay 3 | 20% |
| Major Essay 4 | 20% |
| Class Participation  (aggregated hw and in-class activity) | 20% |

Reading List:   
Lydia Davis, “Five Stories”

Anton Chekov, “The Lady and Her Pet Dog”

Andric, “Letter from 1920”

Bazdulj, “The Other Letter”

James Joyce, “The Dead”

Jamaica Kincaid, “On Seeing England for the First Time”

Chimamanda Adiche, “The Danger of a Single Story”

Chimamanda Adiche, “The Thing Around Your Neck”

Octavia Butler, “Speech Sounds”

Octavia Butler, “The Evening and The Morning and The Night”

Alice Munro, “The View from Castle Rock”

TS Eliot, “The Wasteland”

Wislawa Szmborska “View with a Grain of Sand”

David Albahari, “Gotz and Meyer”

Primo Levi, “Survival in Auschwitz”

### Other Requirements

**Post all homework to Canvas by attaching an MS Word file or pasting your text directly into the assignment drop box. No-PDF’s or Pages please!** Use APA formatting.Bring each day’s homework to class on a device (if possible) or as hardcopy to exchange with classmates. Regular class attendance absolutely required. In-class-activities will be posted and receive homework credit. In-class work cannot be made-up in the case of un-excused absences.

Don’ts: No texting in class. No earbuds in class. No non-class content on your devices while in class. If we do this right, we will be too engaged in collaboration with each other to interrupt the flow of exchange during class time.

Dos:Participate! Collaborate! Engage! I have never met a student or a colleague who has not had important perspectives, questions, aspirations or experiences to contribute to their own success or fellow classmates and colleagues. Disengagement, silence or opting out can be toxic, undermining our sense that we matter and others matter to us. Please join in and keep in mind that even low key public speaking and presentation are challenging for almost all of us, but among the awards are overcoming the subtle forms of self-censorship we can impose on ourselves in the process. It’s rare for my students to pass the quarter without doing something that either myself or their peers find awesome, so don’t hide!

### Religious Accommodations

“Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW’s policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy (https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/)](https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Request](https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/).”