

Studies in the Short Story, Spring 2026

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Office hours: Monday 1:00-2:00pm, Wednesday & Friday 10:00-11:00am & 1:00-2:00pm; Tuesday 10:00am-1:00pm; digitally for two hours on Thursday, by appointment.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- *Labyrinths*, Jorge Luis Borges.
- *The Bloody Chamber*, Angela Carter.
- *At the Bottom of the River*, Jamaica Kincaid.
- *The Interpreter of Maladies*, Jhumpa Lahiri.
- *Points of View*, ed. James Moffet.
- *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*, Alice Munro.
- *The Elephant Vanishes*, Haruki Murakami.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The short story combines the old and the new like few other fictional forms. It echoes the folktale in its brevity and power, while also being the medium in which much modern formal experimentation takes place. By surveying a variety of works written by authors from different backgrounds and with different styles, we will survey a wide range of the form, discerning what unifies and distinguishes each work, coming to a better understanding of this versatile literary mode.

This course will focus on the modern short story and how it serves as a space of inquiry about our consciousnesses and identities, our societies and beliefs, and our understanding of what narrative art does when refined into one of its purest forms. A **major focus of this course is critical reading**: the ability not only to **understand what the text says**, but also to **interpret what the text does on a deeper level**. To do so we will examine **how the text is operating as an object of experience and art** as well as determining **what it has to tell us about ourselves and our world**. Your insights and interpretations will be the building blocks of our class sessions; it will be a forum for exploring . You will be expected to articulate your perspective on the texts and engage with other perspectives in a respectful and productive manner. In addition, we will develop analytical writing skills, preparing you for complex intellectual tasks useful both in academic and professional settings.

Central to the course will be your **cohort**, a group of fellow students in your class with whom you will work throughout the semester. Together you will discuss the texts, develop interpretations, and select class readings. Make sure you communicate with, provide support to, and are supported by your cohort-mates.

COURSE GOALS

- Develop critical thinking and critical reading skills

- Understand cultural texts in their historical context, and to engage in comparative consideration
- See our readings in conversation with one another
- Understand literary devices and techniques, and identify how writers use them
- Analyze literary texts both orally and in writing
- Develop strategies for effective academic discourse

TEXTS BY WEEK

Week 1/5 *Points of View* (various authors)

Week 1/12 *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* (Alice Munro)

Week 1/20 *Labyrinths* (Jorge Luis Borges)

Week 1/26 *At the Bottom of the River* (Jamaica Kincaid)

Week 2/2 *The Elephant Vanishes* (Haruki Murakami)

Week 2/9 *The Bloody Chamber* (Angela Carter)

Week 2/16 *The Interpreter of Maladies* (Jhumpa Lahiri)

Week 2/23 Project Week

****Project due 3/1*****

ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING

Presence and Preparation - 25%

Reflections, Questions and Contributions - 40%

Interpretive Project - 35%

Grading: A 95-100, A- 90-94, B+ starts at 87, B 83, B- 80, C+ 77, C 73, C- 70, D* 69 and below

Presence and Preparation (25%): Your participation in each class session will be vital for the overall experience. Come to every class on time, prepared with your pre-class prep (a simple task, completed online) and your book, and be ready to contribute to our discussion. You will be expected to play an active role in your cohort as well as in the class, sharing your ideas, building on those of other students, and asking questions that contribute to our discussion. As well, throughout the semester your cohort will choose readings for the class from one or more of our collections. Engaging with the texts, working with your cohort, and contributing to the class will secure this part of your grade.

Thoughts and Discussion (40%): The outcome of class discussion, after sharing reflections about the assigned reading within your cohort, is the production of prompts which you will answer as the ongoing writing requirement of the class. On the last class discussion of each collection of stories you will reflect on the reading by writing an analysis on the designated discussion board, using direct textual reference to support your assertions.

Interpretive Project (35%): A week at the end of the quarter will be set aside for you to work on your final projects. These can be anything from an analytical paper to a video essay to a creative work in whatever medium, as long as it engages with one or more of the texts we read during the quarter; the key is that they be *interpretive*, either enriching our understanding or transforming the text. They will be graded on a simple scale of A (100), B (85), C (70) with an adapted rubric, focusing on effort and sophistication evident in the product.

Where applicable, projects will need to use **MLA citation** to cite the literary works both in-text and in a Works Cited page. We will go over this in class, but if you have questions please ask me or visit the OWL Purdue website. **Most importantly, make sure the words and ideas in your paper are your own.**

COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE: Regular and punctual class attendance is expected and required of all students. If you are not in class when it officially begins, you will be marked tardy. If you show up to class ten or more minutes late, you will be marked absent for the day. You will also be marked absent if I see you sleeping.

LATE WORK: Late assignments will not be accepted without an in-person discussion and a clear plan for timely submission. I will collect your reading assignments in class and major papers will be turned in electronically, unless otherwise stated; if I do not have your assignment when it is due, and we do not discuss a plan for, you risk receiving no credit for it. Please make every effort to make sure assignments are timely, and that you meet the deadlines as outlined in the syllabus. **If you must miss a class, plan ahead to get your work in before the deadline.** In the rare case of an excused absence (those deemed so by the school), you will need to contact me via email to make arrangements to get your missed work in.

TECHNOLOGY: Phones will be turned in to the designated container at the front of class, to be returned at class' end. Keep other electronic devices, such as laptops and iPads, in your bag and off your desk. Be ready to take all notes by hand. **Exceptions can be made upon request or based upon formal accommodations.**

CLASS CONDUCT: No earbuds or headphones. No work exterior to the course; sketching and doodling is fine. Please keep your head raised and remain conscious; if you cannot keep your head off the desk or stay awake, you must report to the nurse. **Exceptions may be made based upon formal accommodations.**

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT

You are responsible for the integrity of your work and you are required to produce work that is academically honest. This means that all of your work for this course must be your own and must be created specifically for this course. Failing to maintain the integrity of your work will have serious consequences. Submitting someone else's paper, including papers you obtain online, as your own writing is fraud. Attempting to take credit for someone else's words or ideas without properly citing them is plagiarism. Direct and indirect plagiarism, both of which we will discuss in class, are unacceptable and have serious academic consequences. If you are even remotely uncertain about whether or not any part of your work is academically honest, contact me and we can sort it out. Please refer to the student handbook for additional information, including information that is new this year.

APPROPRIATE USE OF LLM/‘AI’ TECHNOLOGY

Official Humanities Division Statement:

The Humanities Division recognizes that artificial intelligence (AI) provides some exciting new tools for academic work. However, AI also poses significant dangers for academic integrity. Passing off as your own any research, words, or ideas which you did not create is plagiarism. That is always the case whether the source is print, internet content, or generated by AI. It is vital to read the policies your individual humanities instructors have regarding AI, and ask them any questions you may have about the use of AI in their course.

Instructor Statement:

Large language models (more colloquially known as AI chatbots) are powerful tools which are rapidly altering the landscape of humanities scholarship. As with many such devices, there are benefits and drawbacks. Take for example motorized transport: automobiles made remarkable things possible for transit and logistics. It has also fostered a sedentary lifestyle, with all the concomitant health problems (i.e. driving instead of walking causes your legs to wither, your heart to weaken, your lifespan to contract).

Similarly, while large language models can accelerate a number of tasks, **it risks replacing invaluable skills and leading to the atrophy of the very capacities this class is meant to exercise and refine.** Letting an LLM write for you will not only produce mediocre, intellectually vacuous work, it will also cause your own abilities to shrivel precisely when they should be developing. It is also a priori plagiaristic: **all the words a LLM uses are drawn from uncredited, uncompensated sources.** It is not a voice from nowhere; it is stolen language. I want you to use your own words and ideas, and credit the words and ideas of others when you use them.

For the purposes of this class, **LLM/AI chatbots cannot be used for any purpose**; this includes machine-learning assisted tools like Grammarly and other integrated mechanisms. You will instead be asked to engage in archival research, engaging directly with the credited intellectual labor of human beings; you will also be responsible for your own style and syntax. This has the benefit of ensuring an unbroken chain of acknowledgement and avoids the pitfalls of LLM ‘hallucinations’ and other emergent confabulations, as well as allowing you to further develop your voice and mode of personal expression.

LITERATURE NOTE

Important literature is often about the deepest and most difficult struggles of humans to live authentically in a complex world. Through the thoughts and experiences of literary characters, we can examine and evaluate our personal responses to life's mysteries, complexities, disappointments, and joys. In addition, we begin to understand how a writer, in his or her own struggle to experience creatively, has responded to the social, political, and artistic environment of his/her times. The English Department at the Academy selects reading material that reflects these human struggles, has endured the test of time, and has earned a respected place in the universe of letters. The instructors will often include recently published poems, stories, and articles that reflect the diversity of contemporary cultures and experiences.

If, because of the powerful nature of the reading experience, you are unable to read and study a specific text with reasonable analytic objectivity, please confer with your instructor. Alternative texts are available.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains a diverse faculty, staff, and student body. We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse as expressed in our Beneficence Pledge and through university resources found at <http://cms.bsu.edu/campuslife/multiculturalcenter>. As such, it is important to ensure that your comments and behavior in class is respectful and inclusive. Discriminatory comments or behavior will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action, in accordance with Indiana Academy and Ball State University policy.

DISABILITY SERVICES

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. The [Office of Disability Services](#) coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at **765-285-5293** or **dsd@bsu.edu**.