



European Short Fiction: From Boccaccio to Contemporary Literature

LLCU 210 - Fall 2024

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Meeting Times and Location: MW 4:05-5:25 p.m., SH680 395

Office Hours: W 3-4 p.m. or by appointment

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the study of European literature and culture through an examination of short fiction from Boccaccio--considered to be the father of the European short story--to the innovations in contemporary literature. Stories are drawn from Italian, Spanish, French, German, and Russian traditions.

We will consider the literary history of the genre, the impact of romanticism, realism, modernism and impressionism as well as the varieties of style and narrative techniques characteristic of contemporary literature. How has the genre changed and what are its distinctive literary features throughout the centuries? How does the short story fare as a distinct form today?

We will examine the short stories internally, from several thematic perspectives, including, identity--the self, loneliness and anxiety, the woman question, sexuality, gender, alterity and otherness, individuality and collectivity, love, and death. We will also appraise the short stories in relation to socio-historical and cultural contexts, for example: the changing questions of femininity, sexuality, motherhood, and/or marriage and domesticity, or the shift in worldviews from Christian humanism to Kafka's and Camus' modern existentialist view of human existence. How has a small narrative space felt suited to explore social and individual concerns?

The course traces main points of development of the genre through close reading of primary texts and comparative textual analysis. Class time will be a mixture of lecture, presentation, and discussion, which are designed to hone your skills in literary analysis and interpretation. All readings will be in English translation.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, students will:

- Identify and discuss central aspects of short fiction theory, for example, the concepts of narrative unreliability, omniscience, or focalization;
- Broaden and deepen their knowledge and understanding of the themes and topics that have dominated and influenced European literature;

- Gain understanding of some of the masterpieces of continental short fiction through close and comparative reading;
- Develop and apply skills of critical analysis in both the written and spoken format;
- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with peers on the themes discussed in the short stories such as identity--the self, loneliness and longing, sexuality, marginality and universality, alterity and otherness, individuality and collectivity, love, death, and/or gender, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Assessment

- **Participation and Attendance:** This course is based on the premise that literature cannot be passively absorbed but must be actively engaged with. To that end, attendance and class participation are essential components of the course. You are expected to have completed the assigned reading before coming to class and to **arrive to class prepared** to discuss it. Please bring the reading to class. To obtain a good grade, you must **actively and regularly** participate in small-group discussions and, most importantly, in **class discussions**. More than three (3) absences must be discussed with me. Afterwards, you will be penalized 1% for each unexcused absence. More than ten absences will result in failing the course regardless of the performance of any other component of the course.
- Throughout the semester, you will also participate in online discussions. See assignment description on myCourses.
- **Presentation:** Individually or in pairs, you will present on a given reading (about 15 minutes) followed by a discussion (about 10-15 minutes). The presentations should focus on the assigned topic and develop a point of view/argument about the topic; biography of authors in briefest form possible. Conduct research using scholarly sources accessible through McGill Library Catalogue (for example, JSTOR for scholarly articles). GradeSaver, Wikipedia, SparkNotes, and other similar online sites are not scholarly sources. Provide a bibliography of sources at the end of the presentation. You will be graded on the quality of research. In the discussion prompt, you should direct attention to an interesting, resonant, and/or troubling aspect of the text that you would like to discuss in class. A strong prompt will briefly outline and contextualize the issue to be discussed and point to a passage or aspect of the text that warrants further critical reflection; it will explain why the passage seems significant. It might refer to other texts we have read and offer a possible approach to resolving the issue. **The goal is to open an insightful discussion.** You may indicate your preferences for a topic, otherwise assignments are done at random by the instructor. See assignment description on myCourses.
- **Reflections:** You will write two reflections in class (about 4 pages, double-spaced). Reflections will comprise 1) passage identification from the readings (to ensure that you have done the readings) and 2) a short-answer question about the passage's relevance in terms of the text as a whole, its social background, and/or literary context, as discussed in class (to see how you understand the readings). **No use of computers or notes is allowed.** Dates: Monday, Oct. 21 and Wednesday, Dec. 2. See assignment description on myCourses.

- **Final Paper:** The final paper (6-8 pages, 2000-2500 words, double-spaced) is a take-home assignment that consists of short and long-answer questions. The questions comprise a compare-and-contrast culmination of your thoughts, in which you develop your own interpretations of the readings. You will have to quote from the texts to support your thesis. You will submit the paper on myCourses. Deadline to submit the paper: Dec. 11, 11:59 p.m.
- All assessments are required for the successful completion of the course.

Final Grade Breakdown

- Participation: 15%
- Online participation (2 x 2.5%): 5%
- Presentation: 25%
- Reflection (x 2): 20%
- Final Paper: 35%

Grade	Percentages
A	100%-85%
A-	84%-80%
B+	79%-75%
B	74%-70%
B-	69%-65%
C+	64%/-60%
C	59%-55%
D	54%-50%
F	49%-0%

Required Materials

All readings will be made available on myCourses.

Course Policies

Use of AI

This class maintains a policy that you may use AI writing tools to assist you in the writing process but that all artificially generated text needs to be **explicitly labeled**. You may use artificial intelligence tools for gathering information from across sources and assimilating it for understanding, for critiquing and editing an assignment for purposes of revision, but the first draft must be original work produced by the individual student alone. The new ideas introduced by the AI during the critique or editing process must be appropriately cited as generated by the AI tool. In handing in your assignment, you agree to disclose the extent to which you used #chatGPT or other AI writing tools in your assignment. All text written by AI must be quoted with the source of the model in parentheses (chatGPT). At the end of your paper, please include the following statement. "This paper used (did not use) AI for the following components of the writing process:" Choose none to three of the following: brainstorming, editing, sentence generation. Failure to adequately disclose your AI use will result in a 0 for the assignment.

- I am available and always happy to see you in my scheduled office hours, or by appointment, if you have a conflict that does not allow you to come at those times. I can be reached by email as well. However, I have a 48-hour email rule, meaning that I may not respond to any given email before 48 hours. If I do not respond before that point, you may email me with the title 48-Hour Rule, and I will respond as quickly as possible.
- No late assignments will be accepted without prior written consent. If you feel you may need an extension, please speak to me well in advance of the deadline.
- You may bring a laptop to class, but please restrict use to class-related activities. Under no circumstances should you be texting, playing games, checking social media, checking your email, surfing the web, talking on the phone, or otherwise engaging in activities that are unrelated to what is happening in class. This is distracting and thus disrespectful to other students.
- Please turn off your phone when you enter the classroom.

McGill Policy Statements

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see <https://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest> for more information). (Adopted in Fall 2024)

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As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009.

End-of-course evaluations are one of the ways that McGill works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student's learning experience. You will be notified by e-mail when the evaluations are available on Mercury, the online course evaluation system. Please note that a minimum number of responses must be received for results to be available to students.

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives. (Approved by Senate on 21 January 2009 - see also the section in this document on Assignments and Evaluation.)

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

Health and Wellness Resources at McGill

Student well-being is a priority for the University. All of our health and wellness resources have been integrated into a single Student Wellness Hub, your one-stop shop for everything related to your physical and mental health. If you need to access services or get more information, visit the Virtual Hub at mcgill.ca/wellness-hub or drop by the Brown Student Services Building (downtown) or Centennial Centre (Macdonald Campus). Within your faculty, you can also connect with your Local Wellness Advisor (to make an appointment, visit mcgill.ca/lwa).

Additional policies governing academic issues which affect students can be found in the McGill Charter of Students' Rights" (The Handbook on Student Rights and Responsibilities is available here <https://www.mcgill.ca/deanofstudents/rights>).

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.