

Literature 3312: True Stories (Studies in Prose Narrative)

Dr. Shari Goldberg
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Office JO 4.916
Office hours* M 2:00-3:00
T 12:30-1:00
W 4:45-5:15

Spring 2011
M W 5:30-6:45
GR 4.301

*reserve meeting times at <<http://tungle.me/sharigoldberg>>

Course description

How can a story tell the truth? This course will begin with two possible answers to this question: one, the story can represent a reality outside of the text, and two, it can present a world that is more real and compelling than that one outside. We will read a variety of critical, fictional, and non-fictional texts that will allow us to more thoroughly understand the spectrum these two answers present. Readings will range from the 19th to the 21st century and will allow us to gauge how conventions of truth-telling have evolved through time.

Student learning objectives

This course aims to have students:

1. understand different approaches to the question of how writing provides truthful accounts of the world.
2. discern how those approaches have changed from the 19th century to the 21st.
3. apply insights from class discussion to an additional text of their own choosing.
4. write about texts by interpreting and analyzing quotations from them.

Required texts

Available at Off-Campus Books on Campbell Road and at the on-campus bookstore:

Louisa May Alcott, *Civil War Hospital Sketches* (Dover)

Edwidge Danticat, *The Dew Breaker* (Vintage)

James Dawes, *That the World May Know: Bearing Witness to Atrocity* (Harvard)

Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed with Our Families* (Picador)

Henry James, *Ghost Stories of Henry James* (Wordsworth)

The Alcott and the James texts may be available online; if you use these, please draw texts from academic (.edu) or other reputable sites (e.g., gutenberg.org or books.google.com).

Reading Practices

What matters to me is not whether you have a bound or printed or screen copy; as long as it is a reliable, legible one, I insist only that:

1. you bring it to class.
2. you read it closely, engage with its ideas, and think seriously about what and how it means before class. You are responsible for providing yourself with reading materials and an environment that will allow you to do so.
3. you number the paragraphs of the texts to make passages easy to find in class (unless you have a searchable text with you on your laptop).
4. you use the edition on e-reserves for texts marked <ER>. The e-reserves site is: <<http://www.utdallas.edu/library/services/reserves/reservesvc.htm>>; you may also navigate there from the library homepage. Our course page is: <<http://utdallas.docutek.com/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=999>>. The password is: falsity.

Assignments

Each Monday: A brief (at least 300-word) writing assignment answering a specific question about the reading is due in class. These will be an opportunity for you to demonstrate your engagement with the texts as well as your involvement in the class discussions. Grades for these will be a check (grade equivalent of 85%), check plus (grade equivalent of 95%) or zero. Keep in mind that work must be above average to receive credit.

- ◇ *a check* means that the assignment reflects an adequate reading of the text (usually, 1-2 hours of reading). Check papers demonstrate a basic understanding of the terms of the question and/or a deliberate effort to make sense of them. They are polished but may contain (limited!) factual or grammatical mistakes.
- ◇ *a check-plus* means that the assignment reflects a serious engagement with the text (usually, 2-3 hours of reading). Check-plus papers answer the question thoroughly and with good prose. Often, they also ask "So what?". This means that they grapple with the consequences of their answers and attempt to extend them to other aspects of the text or to class discussions.
- ◇ *a zero* means that the assignment presents no information that could not be gleaned from a cursory search about the text on the Web (10 minutes of reading). A paper that reflects more time reading, but does not answer the question asked, will also be a zero. Finally, a paper with seriously sloppy writing will be a zero. In other words, assignments that might be graded C or D in other contexts will be zeroes here—so don't bother turning in such work.

Late assignments will not be accepted. In case of illness or emergency, they may be emailed to me before the class meeting time if a hard copy is also delivered in or by the next class. Assignments will be posted each Thursday at: <<http://goldbergundergrad.edublogs.org>>.

Monday, 2/28: Midterm writing assignment is due in class. The midterm assignment will be an extended version of the weekly assignments (750 words) that demonstrates analytic skills studied in class.

Various dates: A 1,200-word analytic paper and 10-15 minute presentation on a true story not included in the syllabus is due in class. The text may be written, filmed, or otherwise recorded; it must be at least 100 pages or one hour in length. More detailed instructions will be provided on 1/31.

Monday, 5/9: Final exam is due in my office by 10 am. The exam will consist of three questions about key texts engaged during class and will be handed out and explained one week prior to the due date. Each question should generate a 700-800 word response, for a total length of 2,100-2,400 words; exams should demonstrate proficiency with the texts as well as familiarity with ideas discussed in class.

Course requirements

Students must:

- ◇ Act respectfully towards the viewpoints of others—those present in class and those whom we will read.
- ◇ Be prepared and present in all class sessions. Four absences, latenesses, or unprepared presences will result in the final grade being lowered by one full grade. More than four absences may result in failure of the course.
- ◇ Use personal technology responsibly. Looking up an unfamiliar word is okay; texting your friends is not. In general, I prefer phones to be off desks.
- ◇ Complete all assignments on their own and on time.

Evaluation

Student performance will be evaluated on an A-F grading scale, with components weighed as follows:

Weekly writing assignments	30%
Presentation & paper	20%
Contribution to class	15%
Midterm writing assignment	10%
Final	25%

University Policies

For important information about university-wide policies such as academic integrity, grievances, incompletes, disability services, and plagiarism, please see the provost's Web site:

<<http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>>.

This syllabus is subject to change at the instructor's discretion. Please see me in the event that its terms become difficult to meet.

Schedule of readings and assignments, DUE ON THE DATE LISTED

<ER> indicates that the text is available on e-reserves

M 1/10	Introduction to subject matter & expectations for success in the course
W 1/12	Plato, "Allegory of the Cave" <ER>, "The Sisters Fox" at < http://thememorypalace.us/2010/03/episode-27-the-sisters-fox/ >
W 1/19	Henry James, "The Real Thing" <ER>
M 1/24	Friedrich Nietzsche, "Truth and Falsity in an Ultramoral Sense" <ER>
W 1/26	Alcott, <i>Civil War Hospital Sketches</i> , chapters 1-4
M 1/31	Alcott, <i>Civil War Hospital Sketches</i> , chapters 5-6 Presentations & papers assigned
W 2/2	Snow day
M 2/7	Whitman, <i>Specimen Days</i> , pages 707-727, 748-749, and 759-760 <ER>
W 2/9	Trachtenberg, "Photography: the Emergence of Keyword" <ER>
M 2/14	<i>Hospital Transports</i> , Introduction & chapters I & II <ER>, review in the <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> <ER>
W 2/16	Presentations 1-5
M 2/21	Reading on spiritualist photography <ER> (details to be announced)
W 2/23	James, "The Jolly Corner"
M 2/28	James, "The Friends of the Friends" & "The Real Right Thing" Midterm assignments due
W 3/2	James, <i>Turn of the Screw</i> chapters 1-11
M 3/7	Henry James, <i>Turn of the Screw</i> chapters 12-24
W 3/9	Presentations 6-10
3/14-3/18	O'Brien, "The Things They Carried," "How To Tell A True War Story"
M 3/21	SPRING BREAK
W 3/23	Gourevitch, <i>We Wish To Inform You...</i> chapters 1-7
M 3/28	Gourevitch, <i>We Wish To Inform You...</i> chapters 8-13
W 3/30	Gourevitch, <i>We Wish To Inform You...</i> chapters 13-17
M 4/4	Gourevitch, <i>We Wish To Inform You...</i> chapters 18-22
W 4/6	Presentations 10-15
M 4/11	Dawes, <i>That the World May Know</i> , Introduction & chapter 1

	READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS, continued
W 4/13	Dawes, <i>That the World May Know</i> , chapters 2 & 3
M 4/18	NO CLASS
W 4/20	Dawes, <i>That the World May Know</i> , chapter 4 & Afterword
M 4/25	Danticat, <i>The Dew Breaker</i> , "The Book of the Dead," "Seven," "Water Child"
W 4/27	Danticat, <i>The Dew Breaker</i> , "The Book of Miracles," "Night Talkers," "The Bridal Seamstress"
M 5/2	Danticat, <i>The Dew Breaker</i> , "Monkey Tails," "The Funeral Singer," "The Dew Breaker" Final assigned
M 5/9	Final papers due in my office by 10 am.