

Literature 3312: True Stories (Studies in Prose Narrative)

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Office JO 3.924
Office hours* W 12-12:45
R 3:00-3:45

Fall 2011
M W 1-2:15
JO 4.124

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

Course description

How can a story tell the truth? This course will begin with three possible answers to this question: one, the story can represent a reality outside of the text; two, it can present a world that is more real and compelling than that one outside; and three, it can't—it can only try. We will read a variety of critical, fictional, and non-fictional texts that will allow us to more thoroughly understand the field that these three answers delineate. 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 and effectively explain their work in an oral presentation.
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)

Reading Practices and Course Requirements

Students must:

1. bring reading assignments to every class session. If you do not have a printed version of a text, you must bring a laptop or e-reader so that you can access it.
2. read assigned texts closely, engage with their ideas, and think seriously about what and how they mean before class. You are responsible for providing yourself with materials and an environment that will allow you to do so.
3. act respectfully towards the viewpoints of others—those present in class and those whom we will read.
4. 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.
5. you use the edition on e-reserves for texts marked <ER>. There is a link to the e-reserves site on the class blog: <<http://goldbergundergrad.edublogs.org/>>. The password is: phantom.

Attendance

Students are expected to be present and prepared in all class sessions. Semester grades will reflect this expectation as follows:

Four absences 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. Coming late to class twice is the equivalent of being absent once.

A sign-in sheet will be circulated at the start of every class session. It is your responsibility to make sure that the sheets accurately reflect your attendance, as they are my only means of determining absences at the end of the semester. If a sheet is not circulated, please remind me to take attendance at the conclusion of class.

Evaluation

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

Weekly writing assignments*	25%
Presentation & paper	25%
Contribution to class	15%
Midterm writing assignment	10%
Final take-home exam	25%

*Only one may be missed without penalty.

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>>.

Assignments

Every Monday (except on presentation days): 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, 10/17: 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 15 minute presentation on a true story not included in the syllabus is due in class. More detailed instructions will be provided on 9/19.

Monday, 12/12: 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.

*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

Fundamentals of the course

- M 8/29 Irving, "Rip Van Winkle" <ER>; Rice, "The Long Interrogation" <ER>
Brief writing assignment #1 due
- W 8/31 Plato, "Allegory of the Cave" <ER>
- M 9/5 LABOR DAY
- W 9/7 Henry James, "The Real Thing" <ER>
- M 9/12 Friedrich Nietzsche, "Truth and Falsity in an Ultramoral Sense" <ER>
Brief writing assignment #2 due

19th Century #1: Civil War accounts

- W 9/14 Alcott, *Civil War Hospital Sketches*, chapters 1-4
- M 9/19 Alcott, *Civil War Hospital Sketches*, chapters 5-6
Brief writing assignment #3 due
Presentations & papers assigned
- W 9/21 Whitman, *Specimen Days*, pages 707-727, 748-749, and 759-760 <ER>
- M 9/26 Poe, "The Daguerreotype" <ER> & Holmes, "The Stereograph and the Stereoscope" <ER>
Brief writing assignment #4 due
- W 9/28 **Presentations 1-5: Documentary film**

19th Century #2: Ghost stories

- M 10/3 James, "The Jolly Corner"
Brief writing assignment #5 due
- W 10/5 James, "The Friends of the Friends" & "The Real Right Thing"
- M 10/10 **Presentations 6-10: Television news magazine**
- W 10/12 James, *Turn of the Screw* chapters 1-11
- M 10/17 Henry James, *Turn of the Screw* chapters 12-24
Midterm assignments due

20th Century: War + ghosts

- W 10/19 O'Brien, "The Things They Carried," "How To Tell A True War Story" <ER>
M 10/24 **Presentations 11-15: Long-form journalism**
W 10/26 Gourevitch, *We Wish To Inform You...* chapters 1-7
M 10/31 Gourevitch, *We Wish To Inform You...* chapters 8-13
Brief writing assignment #6 due
W 11/2 Gourevitch, *We Wish To Inform You...* chapters 13-17
M 11/7 Gourevitch, *We Wish To Inform You...* chapters 18-22
Brief writing assignment #7 due
W 11/9 **Presentations 16-20: Podcast or radio show**

21st Century: Complications

- M 11/14 Dawes, *That the World May Know*, Introduction & chapter 1
Brief writing assignment #8 due
W 11/16 Dawes, *That the World May Know*, chapters 2 & 3
M 11/21 Dawes, *That the World May Know*, chapter 4 & Afterword
Brief writing assignment #9 due
W 11/23 **Presentations 21-25: Memoir**
M 11/28 Danticat, *The Dew Breaker*, "The Book of the Dead," "Seven," "Water Child"
Brief writing assignment #10 due
W 11/30 Danticat, *The Dew Breaker*, "The Book of Miracles," "Night Talkers," "The Bridal Seamstress"
M 12/5 Danticat, *The Dew Breaker*, "Monkey Tails," "The Funeral Singer," "The Dew Breaker"
Brief writing assignment #11 due
Final assigned
M 12/12 **Final papers due in my office by 10 am.**