

In this Course Outline (“Syllabus”) you will find:

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**ENGL 2220G Studies in Narrative Theory  
Department of English and Writing Studies  
Faculty of Arts and Humanities  
Western University Canada  
Winter 2015  
Tuesdays 7-10pm, KB-K103**

*This course fulfills 0.5 credits towards the honors, major, and specialization requirements of 1.0 credits from the following suite of course: English 2200F/G, 2210F/G, 2220F/G, 2230F/G, 2240F/G, 2250F/G*

**Antirequisite(s):**

**Prerequisite(s):** At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020E or 1022E or 1024E or 1035E or 1036E or both English 1027F/G and 1028F/G, or permission of the Department.

**Corequisite(s):**

**Pre-or Corequisite(s):**

**Extra Information:** 3 hours, 0.5 course.

**Instructor:** Professor D. Palmateer Pennee, PhD

Office: 2G19A Arts & Humanities Building (the “Old” Ivey Building)

Office Hours: tba, by appointment and by additional hours posted prior to due dates for assignments

E-mail: [dpennee@uwo.ca](mailto:dpennee@uwo.ca) (preferred method of contact outside of office hours)

**Graduate Teaching Assistant:** Thomas Stuart, PhD Candidate, English

Office: tba

Office Hours: tba

E-mail: [tstuart9@uwo.ca](mailto:tstuart9@uwo.ca)

*Course Policy on e-mail from students:* *e-mail correspondence to the instructor should be copied to the GTA, and e-mail correspondence to the GTA should be copied to the instructor, for co-mentoring and transparent communication. You are advised not to use the e-mail function of the OWL Sakai course website (it may not be checked as regularly as the personal accounts of the instructor and GTA, which could delay response; also, the course website has a public e-mail function, so you might inadvertently “go public” to the whole class with a message from the course site)*

## Course Description:

### *In brief:*

This course provides an introduction to the study of narrative theory, primarily through a semiotic (Saussurian) approach to understanding language and a semiotic and narratological approach to understanding narrative and narrativity.

*Narratives require close study because stories structure the meanings by which a culture lives. Our culture depends upon numerous types of narrative: novels, short stories, films, television shows, myths, anecdotes, songs, music videos, comics, paintings, advertisements, essays, biographies, and news accounts. All tell a story. [. . .] [T]he events making up a story are only available to us through a telling. (Cohan and Shires, *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction*, 1)*

We will focus on learning and applying vocabulary and concepts for understanding and analyzing *how* texts mean, more so than on the more typical or casual reading practice of paraphrasing *what* they mean. As we build our repertoire for identifying semiotic and narratological features of texts and understanding how they work, we will return anew to the more typical expectation of analysis of what texts mean. We want to reach a point where we are competent in analyzing and articulating not only what we think texts mean, but the larger question of how “stories structure the meanings by which a culture lives.”

The theories and methods studied in this course will provide you with a deepened appreciation for the complexity of story as a formal and social structure, through studying how language and narratives encode and structure not only our understanding of what we read but also how conventions establish the possibilities and the limits that shape our understanding of narrative as a form. The course also studies theory and method applicable to analysis beyond the literary form of signification and narrative.

### **What and How are We Going to Teach and Learn in this Course?**

The **required** text *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction*, by Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires (London: Routledge, 1988; multiple reprintings) provides concepts and terminology that will be introduced in mini-lectures, discussed, applied in in-class and out-of-class work throughout the term, and tested in the final examination.

The *Telling Stories* text is core to the course: it requires a willingness to engage in abstract, conceptual thinking about every-day interpretive practices. Reading this textbook requires time, which is one of the reasons why there are so few books required for this course. Be prepared for re-reading both this textbook and the creative texts assigned. Re-reading is imperative for developing and refining your understanding of and facility with the narrative theory studied in this course.

As much as possible, teaching and learning will occur by facilitated discovery, application, and practice in class, with mini-lectures for concepts and examples followed by discussion and other forms of in-class work. In the main, we will *learn by doing* in this course, and methods of assessment will correspond to the means by which teaching and learning occur during class time. The weight and length of assignments start small: as we build knowledge of narrative theory over the term, and hone our analytical reading and writing skills through hands-on work in the classroom and feedback on out-of-class work, the weight and length of assignments will increase.

The structure of the course and individual classes will provide as much opportunity as possible for:

- reading closely to discover, identify, and explain the components of semiotics, textuality, and narrativity at work in selected short stories and two novels (one graphic, one historiographic metafiction or “postmodern”)
- applying semiotic and narrative theory in detailed analyses in in-class work and discussion
- demonstrating your knowledge and comprehension of, and ability to apply, semiotic and narratological terms in class and in out-of-class work
- applying and synthesizing components of semiotics and narrative theory in short out-of-class essays and / or for those students who wish it, in one short in-class oral presentation instead of one short out-of-class essay (see Types and Weights of Assessment below)
- evaluating your own and others’ work using guidelines provided (this activity does not determine your grades; it is designed to help everyone improve their writing and self-editing skills, through the defamiliarizing practice of studying others’ writing on the same topics)

Following on these methods for building your knowledge of and facility with concepts of how narratives work, you will have the opportunity in the final examination

- to demonstrate and synthesize your course learning on a work of literature not studied in class or analyzed in out-of-class work (or perhaps on a work of literature only partially studied in class)

Because the learning activities for this course both provide and require time for reading *and re-reading* the assigned materials, you will be given advanced notice of the work of literature to be analyzed during the final examination; that is, you will have the opportunity to study this work of literature prior to writing an analytical essay about its narrative features in the final examination time slot (scheduled by the Registrar’s office). Other components of the final examination will be determined and announced during the course.

*More detailed information (weekly schedule, etc.) about this course will be available via the on-line (OWL) course site at the beginning of the W15 term. When necessary, the Instructor and/or GTA will communicate with the class as a whole through the OWL site, but inquiries from individual students should be sent directly to the instructor’s e-mail address: [dpennee@uwo.ca](mailto:dpennee@uwo.ca) and copied to the*

GTA's e-mail address: [tstuart9@uwo.ca](mailto:tstuart9@uwo.ca) for administrative communication and co-mentoring between instructor and GTA.

## **What Are We Going to Read for this Course?**

### **Required Texts:**

Cohan, Steven and Linda M. Shires, *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1988. This text has been reprinted many times, including transfer to digital print in 2003: those of you who have an e-reading device may wish to purchase the text as an e-book. This text is also available in used form at a reduced cost in Western's bookstore or through on-line vendors.

Gaunce, Julia et al., eds., *The Broadview Anthology of Short Fiction*. Second edition. Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2012.

Lemire, Jeff. *Collected Essex County*. Atlanta and Portland: Top Shelf Productions, 2009.

Findley, Timothy. *The Wars*. 1977. Modern Penguin Classics. Toronto: Penguin, 2005.

## **Why This Course Design, Why These Readings?**

### **Learning Objectives:**

The readings, teaching, in-class activities, and methods of assessment (assignments) for this course have been designed with the following intentions and learning objectives (in bold print) in mind:

- To facilitate students' **knowledge and comprehension** of selected concepts and terminology appropriate to the study of narrative, narration, and narrativity
  - Forms of assessment of knowledge and comprehension would ask you, for example, to identify, define, and differentiate terms and concepts, and to demonstrate recognition and understanding of them at work in sample readings
- To provide opportunities for **analysis**, and for **application**, and **synthesis** of students' knowledge and comprehension of the course materials
  - For example, forms of assessment would be designed to determine if you can select and use the appropriate terminology and concepts to illustrate and explain *how* the components of a given passage of writing function to create meaning and/or other effects; and what that meaning and/or other effects are
- To enable students to bring all of these learning objectives together in the **evaluation** of students' own and others' work on narrative, narrativity, and narrative theory (in draft written form and in oral presentations, for those of you who choose an oral presentation)

- For example, can you differentiate between and rank others' analyses of given passages or whole literary works that employ the terminology and concepts used in the course? And can you provide an explanation for the ranking and provide informed feedback for improvement?

By the end of this course you will have had ample opportunity to work toward meeting these learning objectives, and to hone your writing skills.

Your part in meeting these learning objectives will be to bring the following to your own learning:

- a willingness to make and take the time to read more than once the literature and theory studied in this course (the reading list is limited to accommodate this necessity): re-reading is imperative for the depth of analysis required; and
- an ethic of preparedness, attentiveness, engagement, discipline, rigor, and commitment to what is studied and taught, all the while recognizing that writing, reading, and other skills vary from individual to individual, and may vary within a single individual's own work over time.

Needless to say, regular attendance can also facilitate success, though attendance alone may not suffice without the other items listed above as part of *your* role in meeting the course learning objectives. Absences from class may hinder your progress in meeting the learning objectives (as well as prevent you from being able to write the final examination).

### **How Will Grades Be Earned and Learning Assessed in this Course?**

Details about each type of assessment will be provided in advance of the due date in the OWL course website. Rubrics for grading of out-of-class essays and in-class oral presentations will be posted to the OWL site in advance for use as guidelines for preparation of assignments.

**60%** 3 short essays (from 500 to 1500 words) of increasing weights due in Weeks 3, 7, and 10 during the term (students will have the option of one oral presentation instead of an essay)

**40%** Final examination to be written in the time slot scheduled by the Registrar's office

**NOTE on submitting out-of-class work:** *Unless otherwise indicated, out-of-class assignments must be submitted to the OWL course site Drop Box.*

**NOTE on naming your Assignment documents to upload to the OWL course drop box:** When naming your documents for uploading, please use your last name and the assignment number (e.g., "Pennee 1" would be Pennee's Assignment 1). Do not slide papers under office doors or deposit papers in the departmental drop box.

If your documents cannot be “opened” from the Drop Box, we may ask you to resubmit your work in some other form.

Written work prepared outside of class must conform to the most recent edition of MLA formatting guidelines. Links to guides for MLA usage will be posted in the course site.

### **Official Stuff You Need to Know for this Course**

#### ***Senate, Departmental, and Course Policies:***

STUDENTS MUST PASS BOTH TERM WORK AND THE FINAL EXAMINATION (IN COURSES WITH FINAL EXAMINATIONS) IN ORDER TO PASS THE COURSE. STUDENTS WHO FAIL THE FINAL EXAMINATION (REGARDLESS OF THEIR TERM MARK) AUTOMATICALLY FAIL THE COURSE.

Students are responsible for knowing and abiding by the relevant Senate and departmental policies on such matters as:

- when and how to request academic accommodation for missed or late work;
- what constitutes plagiarism and how to prevent it;
- consequences of absenteeism;
- and other rights and responsibilities.

These and other policies and helpful information are conveniently publicized for students on the Department of English website: select the “Undergraduate” item on the top horizontal tool bar on the Department of English website, then select “Information and Resources” from the drop-down menu, or go directly to the following URL:

**<http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergrad/info-for-students.html>**

**Late work** will be penalized at a rate of 10% (of the value of the late assignment) per day or part thereof, including Saturdays, Sundays, and religious and statutory holidays, except where academic accommodation is granted by the Academic Counselling Office. (I.e., An assignment worth 20% of your grade will be penalized 2% per day or part-day late.)

For **missed work** for grades, accommodation must be sought through the Academic Counselling Office. *Instructors and departments do not grant academic accommodation: it must be sought using the appropriate procedures, documentation, and forms through the Academic Counselling Office.*

Students who are in **emotional/mental distress** should refer to MentalHealth@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

See "Weekly Schedule" in the OWL course site (vertical menu at the left of the screen) for required readings and class preparation. The schedule will be posted as access to OWL permits, but not later than 24 hours after our first class.

**Any changes to the schedule arising from unexpected contingencies or class discussion of a need for a change (for example, a unanimous decision to adjust the pace of learning), will be announced in the OWL site and an e-mail message sent to the class accordingly. (At no time will a change of schedule result in work being due sooner than currently identified in the outline or weekly schedule.)**