

ENGL 2420: The Short Story
Prof. Brian Glover
The New Story Assignment

This semester, we'll read many of the best-known short stories in the English language (among others). We'll also read some really new stories – so new, in fact, that I don't even know what they are! Your task is to read a whole bunch of stories and pick one that you like. We'll then spend two class days talking about that story. Here's how it'll go:

- 1. Sign up for ONE of the five groups.** Each group will consider stories from a single journal. Think about what kind of journal/magazine you might most enjoy reading.
- 2. Browse the last couple of years** of back issues and read a whole lot of stories. Anything published since January 1, 2012 is fair game.
- 3. Write annotated bibliography entries** for FOUR stories and upload the annotated bibliography to Blackboard under “assignments.” Each bibliographical entry should include a citation for the story in proper MLA style (style guide: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/search.php>). At this time, you should also...
- 4. Pick your single favorite story** and submit it to your group as a .pdf (please use your group's file exchange).
- 5. Meet with your group** to discuss the stories you've picked. As a group, **decide on the one story that you'd like the class to discuss.** *Record your conversation as an audio file.* Your goal here should be to articulate *why you find a story appealing* – that is, you should show your partners what you actually see and appreciate in the story as a piece of art. Talk about what moves you – remember that if you're bored, the class will certainly be bored.
- 6. Post the group's chosen story to Blackboard** (in “New Stories FOR THE WHOLE CLASS TO READ”). The audio recording of your group's conversation is also due at this time.
- 7. Present the story to the class.** Each member of the group should choose one aspect of the story – a single literary technique, a single sentence, word, or moment – and be prepared to lead the class for at least five minutes. Plan your presentations so that you do not duplicate what the other members of your group are going to talk about. Think, first, of **what you find appealing** about that facet of the story – identify and show us exactly what it is about the writing that makes you say “gosh.” Then, give us a **question to discuss – a how/why question that may be answered in more than one way.** You may, if you like, do some research into the contexts of your story, though such research is not required – if you do so, please make sure to submit an appropriate bibliography to Dr. Glover.
- 8. After we spend two days talking about the story as a class, you will write an analytical essay of 750-1500 words** (around three to five pages) paying close attention to the story your group chose and explaining how it works to create its artistic effects. I will provide models of good student essays. You are required to meet with me outside of class **at least three business days before the essay is due.** We'll talk about your ideas, and how to articulate them in an analytical form.

You may, if you choose, revise your essay. The revision grade will replace the initial grade. The revision due date is specified on the syllabus.

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About the journals:

- 1. *The New Yorker*.** Not just for New Yorkers – this is the magazine of record for America’s educated middle classes, the mainstream of establishment U.S. literary culture. If you publish here, you’ve made it to the big time (or what’s left of the big time). The *New Yorker* is available in its paper form on the Joyner Periodicals stacks. You’ll also find a selection of recent issues on one of the shelves in the English Department Lounge (Bate 2136). The magazine is also available online (at this time, anyway); fiction may be found at <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/fiction> . However, the Web format does not print well and does not work well for our class discussions. As an individual subscriber I can also get access to PDFs of the print edition -- so once the group has chosen a story, please tell me your choice and I’ll send you what you need.
- 2. *The Southern Review*.** In the 1930s and ‘40s, the critics Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks made this among the most influential of all American literary magazines, ushering in (arguably) the golden age of the American English department in the postwar years. It remains an important arbiter of academic literary taste. Its focus is by no means exclusively Southern. The *Southern Review* is no longer available in its paper form on the Joyner Periodicals stacks, but you can get it in PDF form through several databases including *Academic Search Complete*.
- 3. *African American Review*.** This is arguably the leading academic journal dedicated to new African-American literature and criticism. That’s a remarkably broad field. It generally only publishes one story per issue. Joyner no longer subscribes to *African American Review* on paper, but it is available in PDF form through several databases including *Project MUSE*.
- 4. *AGNI*.** This is a smaller academic literary journal, run from Boston University, often featuring newer and more experimental writers. Joyner does not subscribe to *AGNI* on paper, but it is available in PDF form through several databases including *Humanities International Complete*. While *AGNI* makes a small number of stories available on its website, the vast majority are not to be found there – so please do browse the database, not the website.
- 5. *North Carolina Literary Review*.** *NCLR* is a leading academic journal dedicated to writing from and about North Carolina. It is produced right here at ECU – so we’re able to borrow the last few issues for you. If you choose to work on *NCLR*, Dr. Glover will provide you with paper copies of the journal. You should scan your chosen stories yourself (scanners are available in most ECU computer labs, as well as in Joyner Library).