

Introduction to Prose Fiction

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Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Fall and Spring semesters, 2018-19

Course # 132-1-217, 132-1-227
Monday 14:15-15:45, Building 72, Room 209

Teaching Assistants (TAs):

TAs are here to help you with everything that relates to this course and the work you do for it.

Sign up for their office hours on the Workshop Moodle site. You may also email them:

Liza Futerman lifuter@gmail.com
Nitzan Halperin halpnitz@post.bgu.ac.il

Neta Kline klinenet@post.bgu.ac.il
Priel Cohanin priel27@gmail.com

If at any point you need to discuss issues that relate to your studies or life in general (not particularly to this course or your work in it), email Yael: yaelbz@bgu.ac.il

Course description

This course will introduce you to the study of prose fiction. You will acquire a critical vocabulary that will enable you to understand and engage with prose fiction texts within the academic field of literary studies. You will become acquainted with the processes through which meaning is produced as people read texts, and with diverse modes of narration, plotting, characterization, and representations of perspective. We will consider the functions of narrative structures, themes, symbolism, imagery, and style, and we will attend to the contexts of literary production and the ways that texts address social, cultural, historical and political issues. This course is taught in tandem with the Academic Writing Workshop in which you will write about the primary texts you will read here. You must take both classes together.

Texts

- Kelly J. Mays, ed. *The Norton Introduction to Literature* (Portable Eleventh Edition, 2013; or Portable Twelfth Edition, 2016)
- Sherman Alexie, *Flight* (2007)
- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818 version, Norton Critical Edition)

The books are available at Tsomet Sfarim on campus and some copies are available in the library. You may also ask second-year students if they want to sell their first-year books.

Requirements and grade distribution

- Attendance is mandatory because this course is taught as a conversation; you are allowed up to 5 unexcused absences throughout the year.
- Participation: 5%
- Second-semester papers: 45% (only second-semester papers count toward the final grade, but all assignments written throughout the year are required)
- Mid-year revision: 20%
- Final revision: 30%
- To continue to the second year in literature, you will need a grade of 70 or above in each of the required first-year courses, and a passing grade in the Academic Writing Workshop.

Reading and Understanding

Reading is the core of literary studies. Students and scholars of literature read texts attentively and respond to them critically. Therefore, we ask you to read each text twice before the class meeting in which we will discuss that text. Come to class with the text and with your own questions or ideas about it. Then, re-read each text for the Academic Writing Workshop.

- When you read, make an effort to understand the text as well as you can. This will require you to look up every unfamiliar word in a good dictionary; we recommend the online editions of the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (<http://www.m-w.com/>; also available as an app called Merriam-Webster Dictionary) and the unabridged *Oxford English Dictionary*, or *OED* (<http://www.oed.com/>). In addition, if the text refers to some actual thing, look it up on the web (google images can help too).
- You should not look for summaries or interpretations of the text on the web or anywhere else, as such materials will hinder you from developing your own analysis of the text, and may lead to plagiarism (see explanation below).
- As you read, ask yourself *what* the text says or does, *how* it says or does it, and *why* this may be interesting (or not) for you. Whether you like the text or not, try to develop your own understanding of it.
- The most important lesson you will learn here is to develop your ideas and analyses of the texts and support them. Remember that every argument is valid if it is supported effectively with evidence from the text.
- This course is given over two semesters, and we will read longer texts in the second semester. You should plan to read the second-semester texts in advance, so you will be able to read each of them at least twice before we start discussing them.

Participating

This class is taught primarily through conversations about the texts because when you contribute to class discussions, you make them more meaningful to you and your classmates. Take notes as you read to start formulating thoughts that you can later express in class. Many students feel uncomfortable talking in class, and you can start participating by asking questions. Remember that every misunderstanding is a learning opportunity. Since we are a large class you may not always have the opportunity to talk, so we will consider your participation in the Academic Writing Workshop as well.

Writing

The assignments you write for this course will be supported by the Academic Writing Workshop. We coordinate these classes in order to help you integrate your literary analysis and writing skills. Submit all assignments in this course by email to intro2lit.bgu@gmail.com. Assignments must be submitted no later than the due dates specified in the schedule below. We will return your assignments with comments that will help you improve your work. It is essential that you read and understand all the comments on each assignment. If anything is not clear, go to a TA at office hours to learn how to improve your work.

Help

This is a difficult class because it requires you to develop your own ideas about the texts and communicate them effectively.

- Come to TAs' office hours to get help and feedback on your work. This important part of the course will help you improve your work.
- With the help of Dikanat Hastudentim we will offer two small-group tutorials for Arab students (also known as *دروس المجموعة* or *תגבור*): one in Introduction to Prose Fiction and one in the Writing Workshop (including grammar). Students who took *Durus al majmu'ah* seriously succeeded in their studies, and we recommend that all Arab students take both. We

wish we could have offered *Tigbur* to all students, but financial constraints prevent us from doing so.

- If you have a disability that requires our consideration, if you experience difficulties that impact your studies, or if you have a problem that prevents you from attending class regularly, contact Yael to discuss it with her as soon as possible.
- Students who have taken this course wrote tips that will help you succeed in this course. The tips are on Moodle (next to the syllabus) and we recommend that you read them.
- If you need to discuss anything beyond your work for this course, email Yael: yaelbz@bgu.ac.il

Communication

This syllabus and other class materials are available on the course's Moodle site, and you should read them. We will occasionally email additional information about the course to your BGU address. Therefore, you must check your BGU email regularly. If you use another email service, forward your BGU emails there to make sure you don't miss important information. If you need to contact us at any point, email Yael or a TA at our individual addresses (we do not check the course email address regularly).

Screens

Classes work best when each one of us is fully present; using electronic devices during class may hinder you from sharing your ideas and listening to others. In addition, writing ideas by hand is more beneficial to your learning process than typing on your computer. Therefore, we do not use electronic devices in class. If you have a disability that prevents you from writing by hand, talk to Yael about it.

Plagiarism

When we read your papers we care about what *you* want to say; we don't really care what someone else might have said. Plagiarism, or "literary theft" (*OED*), happens if you represent someone else's words or ideas as your own. This is a serious academic crime. If someone else wrote something that you want to include in your paper, you must use quotation marks and indicate the source of the quotation clearly. To avoid plagiarism, distinguish your own words and ideas clearly from those of other people, and avoid looking for ideas on the web. Papers with plagiarized portions will receive a grade of zero and we may file a complaint with the university's disciplinary committee *even if you did not mean to commit plagiarism*.

Fall Semester Schedule

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|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 15/10 | Introduction: Expectations, Directions, Framework
Literature, prose, fiction; what is a text? What is meaning? |
| 22/10 | Linda Brewer, "20/20" (published 1996; pages 17-18 in the <i>Norton Introduction to Literature</i>).
How do you read texts, and what are texts made of?
Plot, structure, theme; narration, point of view, conflict, characters |
| 29/10 | Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour" (1894, 277-80 in the 11 th edition / 287-9 12 th)
Exposition, point of view, characters' consciousness, cultural conventions, tensions |
| 5/11 | Ernest Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants" (1927, 114-18 / 122-6)
Dialogue, narrative gaps, characterization, irony (verbal and situational/structural), figurative language |

- 12/11** **Playing with narration and point of view; narrator-character relations**
- **Sunday, 18/11: first assignment due: question/discussion (1 paragraph).**
Email the assignment to intro2lit.bgu@gmail.com
- 19/11** **Hemingway, “Hills,” and David Foster Wallace, “Good People” (2007, 149-55 / 156-62)**
Dialogue vs. focalization, plot vs. theme, character development
- 26/11** **Why do we do what we do the way we do it?**
- Purpose: developing your own critical voice
 - Issues: the world beyond the text; abstract, generalized readers; characters as people; authorial intent
 - How to move from phase 1 to phase 3
 - How to formulate questions and claims
 - Comments on papers: what are they good for, and how should you respond?
 - Grades, dialogues, and differences between high school and university
 - How to avoid plagiarism
- 3/12** **Wallace, “Good People”**
Point of view, characterization, setting, themes
- **Sunday, 9/12: second assignment due: question/discussion (3 paragraphs).**
Email your paper to intro2lit.bgu@gmail.com
- 10/12** **Raymond Carver, “Cathedral” (1983, 34-46)**
Chronology (*fabula* and *sujet*), stereotypes
- 17/12** **Carver, “Cathedral”**
Metafiction, narrative gaps, characterization, juxtaposition
- 24/12** **Carver, “Cathedral,” and Toni Morrison, “Recitatif” (1983, 131-47 / 138-55)**
Thinking some more on first-person narration, juxtaposition, and stereotypes
- 31/12** **Toni Morrison, “Recitatif” (1983, 131-47 / 138-55)**
Character development, narrative gaps, ambiguity
- **DATE TBA: come to Workshop with thesis statement and outline for the paper**
- 7/1** **Morrison, “Recitatif”**
Cultural assumptions, contexts, race, motherhood
- **Thursday, 18/1: third paper due: analyzing a passage (3 pages).**
This paper will get a numerical grade that will *not* count toward the final grade in the course (only second-semester grades count toward the final grade).
Email your paper to intro2lit.bgu@gmail.com

Preparing for the Second Semester:

In the second semester we will read five texts:

- Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birth-Mark" (1843)
- William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" (1930)
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892)
- Sherman Alexie's *Flight* (2007)
- Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818)

Frankenstein is much longer than the other texts, and quite difficult. Please start reading these texts early on, so that by the time we discuss each of them you will have read it at least twice.