

# LT220 – THE SHORT STORY: A MODERN GENRE?

Seminar Leader: Laura Scuriatti

Course times: Wednesday and Friday, 10:45 am - 12:15 pm

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Office Hours: by appointment

## Course Description

What is the difference between tales, fables, parables and short stories? How have these short forms evolved in the history of literature, and in what way have they shaped other literary forms and literary criticism?

Starting from early examples of tales in folklore and early modern literature, the course will centre on the short story as a modern genre in the 19th and early 20th century in (mostly) European literature, and will offer in parallel a survey of major currents of literary criticism and theory, including Russian formalism, narratology, structuralism, theories focused on close and distant reading, cultural history, psychoanalytic criticism, critical theory and reader-response criticism.

A particular focus of the course will be the modernist (early twentieth-century) short story and its circulation: with its roots in the commercial world of popular magazines and newspapers, the short story evolved in the 20th century into a genre that was seen as particularly suited for experimental narrative techniques. What was perceived as a shift from a plot-driven to a more formal or analytical format also produced specific theories about short forms and their relation to the novel. The short story came to be regarded as a genre peculiarly well suited to addressing aspects of modernity.

Among the authors read in class are: Edgar Allan Poe, Guy de Maupassant, Anton Chekhov, Henry James, Giovanni Verga, Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, James Joyce, Lydia Davis, Chinua Achebe, Jamaica Kincaid.

## Requirements

Students are required to attend all classes, to come to class prepared and with the relevant materials and textbooks. Participation consists in contributing productively to class discussion in a respectful manner, and in demonstrating a sound knowledge of the texts assigned.

Please note that in seminars we will work on printed texts: NO COMPUTERS OR TABLETS allowed in

class. Texts which are made available in digital format should be printed for use in class.

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

### Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

### Accommodations

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, ([accommodations@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:accommodations@berlin.bard.edu)) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangements directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the [Bard College Berlin Accessibility page](#). Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker ([j.harker@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:j.harker@berlin.bard.edu)) or Maria Anderson-Long ([m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu](mailto:m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu)).

### Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one

absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

### Assessment

Students are required to attend all classes, to come to class prepared and with the relevant materials and textbooks. Participation consists in contributing productively to class discussion in a respectful manner, in demonstrating a sound knowledge of the texts assigned.

### Assignments

Assignments for this course consist in:

- 1 in-class exam on 19 March (circa 1500 words)
- 1 presentation on chosen assigned texts: max 20 minutes. Students should submit their presentation notes after delivering the presentation (circa 1500 words).
- 1 final essay (circa 3000 words). Deadline: Saturday 10 May, 23:59 hrs

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. Should a student be sick during the exam day or on the day of their scheduled presentations, it will be possible to schedule an alternative date for the missed assignment.

An unexcused absence on the day of the assigned presentation or exam will result in a F for that assignment.

### **Essay Deadlines**

In-class exam: 19 March

Final essay: 19 May, 23:59 hrs

### Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to

make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

## Library and Book Purchase Policies

All assigned texts will be made available in digital format.

A reserve shelf with critical readings is available in the library.

## Grade Breakdown

Participation:	30%
In-class exam:	25%
Presentation (20 minutes max., 1000 words):	15%
Final essay (3000 words):	30%

## Schedule

### Week 1 – Introduction: Parables, Fairy tales, Fables, Short Stories

#### Wednesday, 29 January

Readings: Aesop, *Fables* (selection); selection from *One Thousand and One Nights*; the parable of the Prodigal Son (Gospel of Luke, ch. 15)

Tobias Kaup and Tilmann Köppe, “Telling vs Showing”, *The Living Handbook of Narratology*  
<https://www-archiv.fdm.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/node/84.html>

#### Friday, 31 January

Readings: Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron* (selection); V. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (selection); T. Todorov, “The Structural Analysis of the Folktale”

### Week 2 – Theories

#### Wednesday, 5 February

Readings: Wendell M. Ayccock, *The Teller and the Tale: Aspects of the Short Story* (selection);

#### Friday, 7 February

Readings: Charles May, *The Short Story: The Reality of Artifice* (selection); Cortazar, Julio, 'Some Aspects of the Short Story' and 'On the Short Story and its Environs'

### Week 3 – The Modern Short Story I

Wednesday, 12 February

Readings: Edgar Allan Poe, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”, “The Purloined Letter”

Friday, 14 February

Readings: Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (selection); Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (selection)

### Week 4 – The Modern Short Story II

Wednesday, 19 February

Readings: E.T.A. Hoffmann, “My Cousin’s Corner Window”; Cay Dollerup, ‘Concepts of “Tension”, “Intensity” and “Suspense” in Short-Story Theory’, *Orbis Litterarum: International Review of Literary Studies*, 25 (1970), 314-37; V. Byrd, “Regarding the Cousin: Surveillance and Narration in Hoffmann's “Des Vettters Eckfenster”, *German Studies Review*, May 2012, Vol. 35, No. 2 (May 2012), pp. 249-264

Friday, 21 February

Readings: Henry James, “The Beast in the Jungle”, “The Figure in the Carpet”; J. Dewey and Brooke Horvath, *The Finer Thread, the Tighter Weave: Essays on the Short Fiction of Henry James* (selection)

### Week 5 – The Modern Short Story III

Wednesday, 26 February

Readings: Guy de Maupassant, selected short stories; Giovanni Verga, selected short stories

Friday, 28 February

Readings: W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.). *On Narrative* (selection)

### Week 6 – The Case of Anton Chekhov

Wednesday, 5 March

Readings: Anton Chekhov, “The Lady with the Dog”; Vladimir Nabokov, “A Reading of Chekhov”

Friday, 7 March

Readings: Joyce Carol Oates, “The Lady with the Pet Dog”; Matthew C. Brennan, “Plotting Against Chekhov: Joyce Carol Oates and ‘The Lady with a Dog.’” *Notes on Modern American Literature* 9, no. 3 (1985), 13.

### Week 7 – Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper”

Wednesday, 12 March

Readings: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"; C. Perkins Gilman, "Why I Wrote the Yellow Wallpaper"

**Friday, 14 March**

Readings: S. Gilbert and S. Gubar, "A Feminist Reading of Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper'", in *The Story and Its Writer: An Introduction to Short Fiction*, pp. 1629-631.

**Week 8 – Exam**

**Wednesday, 19 March**

**In-class exam**

**Friday, 21 March: NO CLASS DUE TO CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE**

**Week 9 – The Modernist Short Story II – Virginia Woolf**

**Wednesday, 26 March**

Readings: Virginia Woolf, "Kew Gardens" and "The Mark on the Wall"; Ann Banfield, *Narration and Representation* (selection)

**Friday, 28 March**

Readings: Virginia Woolf, "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown"; "An Unwritten Novel"; Dominic Head, *The Modernist Short Story* (selection); Katie Greulich, "Garden Work: Prosaic Alightments in Modern Ecology and 'Kew Gardens'", *Modernism/modernity*, Volume 28, Number 2, April 2021, pp. 333-353

**Week 10 – The Modernist Short Story II – Katherine Mansfield I**

**Wednesday, 2 April**

Readings: Katherine Mansfield, "Prelude", "At the Bay"; Adrian Hunter, "Katherine Mansfield", in *The Cambridge Introduction to the Short Story in English*, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 72-83.

**Friday, 4 April**

Readings: Katherine Mansfield, "The Doll's House", "The Man without Temperament"; Elsa Morante, "Un uomo senza carattere" (rewriting of "The Man without Temperament")

**Week 11 – The Modernist Short Story II – Katherine Mansfield II**

**Wednesday, 9 April**

Readings: Dominic Head, "Katherine Mansfield: The Impersonal Short Story", in *The Modernist Short Story. A Study in Theory and Practice*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 109-138.

**Friday, 11 April**

Readings: Pamela Dunbar, *Radical Mansfield: Double Discourse in Katherine Mansfield's Short Stories* (selection)

#### SPRING BREAK

#### Week 12 – The Modernist Short Story III – James Joyce – GUEST LECTURE TBC

Wednesday, 23 April

Readings: Joyce, *Dubliners* (selection);

Friday, 25 April

Readings: Richard Ellmann, “A Biographical Perspective on Joyce’s ‘The Dead’”; Frank O’Connor, “Style and Form in Joyce’s ‘The Dead’”

#### Week 13 – Contemporary Authors I – Jamaica Kincaid

Wednesday, 30 April

Readings: Jamaica Kincaid, *At the Bottom of the River* (selection)

Friday, 2 May

Readings: Lisabeth Paravisini-Gebert, *Jamaica Kincaid. A Critical Companion* (selection)

#### Week 14 – Contemporary Authors II – Lydia Davis – GUEST LECTURE TBC

Wednesday, 7 May

Readings: Lydia Davis, *Collected Short Stories* (selection)

Friday, 9 May

Readings: James Wood, “Lydia Davis’s Short Fiction”, [The New Yorker](#) 19 October 2009, pp. 88-89; Anderson, “Form, Not Plot, in the Short Story”

**Saturday 10 May: Final essay deadline**

#### Week 15 – Completion week

**Monday, 12 May (9:00-10:30 am) – MAKE-UP CLASS**

Open session

