

# GONZAGA-IN-FLORENCE SYLLABUS

Course: Studies in Fiction (ENG.202)  
Credits: 3 Credits  
Instructor: Gabriela Dragnea Horvath ; gab\_drag@yahoo.it



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**OFFICE HOURS: THURSDAY, 9:30-10:30**

**SCHEDULE: MON, WED 2:00- 3.30**

**ROOM:**

## **PREREQUISITES**

English 101 and 102 or the equivalent must be completed.

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Fiction as part of literature and life, its role in cultural memory and the configuration of imaginary worlds will be addressed together with the exploration of the basic elements of narration: plot, character, point of view and stylistic devices. Students are stimulated to refine their analytical abilities and sense of beauty by reading and interpreting short stories and novels belonging to other literary traditions and ultimately embark on an adventure of self-discovery.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The course opens with a discussion on fiction as meta-literary concept connected to reality and imagination and as word construction and literary genre. We will further focus on the short story and the novel addressing elements of fiction like subject, plot, character and narrative techniques, illustrated by readings of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century European, South-American, Israeli and Chinese authors. The choice of authors illustrates a diversity of cultures and fictional options and follows a second aim of the course: a debate on the encounter with the other and the self in its symbolic and existential coordinates. The encounter as adventure and the written text as place of encounter will also be examined in an essay on the role of fiction in our pursuit of happiness.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Sessions consist in a brief introductory lecture, text analysis, oral and/or written reports and debates. The students are expected to read the texts in advance, following certain guidelines and present written and/or oral reports. Personal interpretations of the texts under analysis are encouraged. Group work in class is also included. Students will thus acquire the capacity to increase their knowledge of the anatomy of fiction, develop their taste for artistic invention with words, but also appreciate the entertaining, edifying and cognitive value of fiction.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of the course, students are expected to be able to:

- give a complex reading of fiction, by bringing together elements of emotional identification with a knowledgeable insight into its means of expression
- integrate the concept of 'encounter' and its illustration in the various texts with their own experience and 'encounters' abroad.

- acquire background knowledge about European culture and cultures on other continents through fiction
- reflect on the importance of imagination, emotions and words in our lives and the way fiction helps to illuminate them.
- develop their critical faculties, including self-criticism
- improve their creative writing abilities

## GRADING AND OTHER POLICIES

The final grade takes into account the following requirements:

### Attendance and Participation – count 20%

Regular attendance and punctuality are mandatory. Arriving late will lower your grade; two arrivals behind schedule will count as an absence. Absences are considered as such, excused or unexcused. It is the students' responsibility to make up for missed classes. More than five absences will result in an F for the course. More than four will result in an F for attendance and participation.

Participation means bringing the reading material to class and the written reports when required, presenting oral reports of readings, being active in debates and group work. Participation also refers to regular behaviour in class, thus the evaluation of attendance and participation includes deportment.

### Deportment

Mutual respect is essential for a good collaboration. Being physically present, but doing things that have nothing to do with the class (listening to music, checking emails, private conversation, etc) will have a negative effect on the grade. Disrupting behaviour will be followed by warning and/or dismissal from class and will result in a D or F for attendance and participation and/or dismissal from class. Food and beverages are not accepted in class. Cell phones must be off.

### Reading Assignments – count 10%

Due on the dates designated in the syllabus, the reading assignments will be checked by oral and/or written reports, group work in class and unannounced quizzes throughout the semester.

### Paper Assignments – count 40 %

Two formal papers are required: the first is due on October, 21, the second on December 14. Late papers will be lowered a grade for each class period late. Hard copies typed in standard format are to be handed in to the professor at the beginning of class and an electronic copy readable by Word- Windows or Microsoft Word is to be submitted by email.

The topics will be chosen from a list of suggestions distributed in class in time. Free chosen topics are accepted after being discussed with the professor.

The first paper counts 15% and refers to the readings discussed in class by Oct, 19, the second counts 25 % and will be based on the readings analyzed between Oct 30 and Dec 9.

The evaluation is done according to the following criteria:

- well formulated argument (rhetorical strategy)
- inquisitive approach and creative thinking.
- ability to transpose into mentalities of other times and countries.
- good use of bibliography: citing sources for paraphrases, quotations and summaries. Class notes can build the frame of your argumentation, but will not be cited as primary sources.
- clarity of expression including quality of style (grammar, spelling).

With the authors' accord excellent papers will be submitted to the director of The Florence Newspaper in view of publication.

**Plagiarism** (claiming credit for the work or efforts of another, downloading papers, presenting an older paper, copying from other students' work or library books without citing sources) will result in an

**F grade** for the course. Internet plagiarism software and the professor's own knowledge of written sources in the library are instruments to check your work.

### **Exams – count 30 %**

Two exams are scheduled: **October 26** and **December 16**

- Mid-term exam – counts 10% and is a written test consisting in ten questions on elements of fiction in the analyzed texts. (100 points)
  
- Final exam - counts 20% of the final grade and is a written test consisting in:
  1. two questions out of four on two fragments chosen from the readings (50 points)
  2. an essay (no less than one page) on a larger topic regarding two titles in the bibliography (50 points)

### **Special Accommodation**

Requirements of special accommodation due to specific problems are to be notified on the first day of class.

## **REQUIRED READINGS**

### Novels

- Niccolò Ammaniti – *I'm not scared*
- Dai Sijie – *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*
- Abraham Yehoshua – *The Lover*

### Metafictional essay

- Alain de Botton, *How Proust Can Change Your Life*

### Short stories

- James Joyce – *An Encounter*
- Edna O'Brien – *Sister Imelda*
- D. H. Lawrence – *The Dance*
- Katherine Mansfield – *A Dill Pickle*
- Honoré de Balzac – *A Passion in the Desert*
- Gabriel Garcia Marquez – *The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World*

**Students are expected to purchase the three novels and *How Proust Can Change Your Life* by Alain de Botton.**

The short stories are available at Gonzaga in Florence in photocopies.

## **COURSE OUTLINE & SCHEDULE**

- Sept** Mo, 21 Introduction to the course. Defining fiction.  
 We, 23 James Joyce, *An Encounter*  
 Mo, 28 Edna O'Brien, *Sister Imelda*
- Oct** We, 30 Edna O'Brien, *Sister Imelda*  
 Mo, 5 Niccolò Ammaniti, *I'm not scared*.  
 We, 7 Niccolò Ammaniti, *I'm not scared*.  
 Mo, 12 D.H. Lawrence, *The Dance*  
 Wed, 14 Katherine Mansfield, *A Dill Pickle*  
 Mo, 19 Katherine Mansfield, *A Dill Pickle*  
**We, 21 EXAM REVIEW- 1<sup>st</sup> PAPER DELIVERY**  
**Mo, 26 MID-TERM EXAM**  
 We, 28 Honoré de Balzac, *A Passion in the Desert*
- Nov** Mo, 2 Honoré de Balzac, *A Passion in the Desert*  
 We, 4 Dai Sijie, *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*  
 Mo, 9 Dai Sijie, *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*  
 We, 11 Dai Sijie, *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress*  
 Mo, 16 Abraham Yehoshua, *The Lover*  
 We, 18 Abraham Yehoshua, *The Lover*  
 Mo, 23 Abraham Yehoshua, *The Lover*  
 We, 25 Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World*  
 Mo, 30 Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *The Handsomest Drowned Man in the Worl*
- Dec** We, 2 Alain de Botton, *How Proust Can Change Your Life*  
 Mo, 7 Alain de Botton, *How Proust Can Change Your Life*  
 We, 9 Alain de Botton, *How Proust Can Change Your Life*  
**Mo 14 EXAM REVIEW; 2<sup>nd</sup> PAPER DELIVERY**  
**We, 16 FINAL EXAM**