

English 185: Critical Reading and Writing
Fall 2011
MWF 10:40-11:30
Language Hall 107

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Office hours: MWF 2:30-3:30
and by appointment

The Art of Storytelling

Based on readings inspired by oral practices, this course explores the complex dynamics of storytelling, focusing, in particular, on the role of myths, legends, and folktales in the framing of narratives. It aims to reveal language as a tool by exposing the ways in which certain rhetorical and stylistic techniques shape, even constitute, a text's very meaning. What, after all, makes a scientific or historical document potentially more truthful than myths, folktales, or personal reminiscences? Why do some kinds of prose move us emotionally and incite wonder, curiosity, or contemplation, while others don't?

Required Texts

Patrick Chamoiseau, *Solibo Magnificent*

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*

N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*

Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*

Objectives

The goal of this course is to help you master the art of engaged, responsive reading, thinking, listening, and questioning in order to produce clear, argumentative writing. You will work on frequent short assignments—rhetorical analyses, summaries, reviews, commentaries, presentations for class discussion—along with two longer assignments: an analytical paper and a research project. The course will provide training in analyzing and understanding rhetorical situations, teach you how to write college-level essays, develop your research skills, and allow you to gain practice and confidence in public speaking.

Attendance

Regular attendance is mandatory. You will be allowed a maximum of three absences. Your final grade will drop one third of a letter for each absence after the third. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. Don't be late to class. If people are consistently late for class, I reserve the right to create a late policy.

Deadlines for Assignments

Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date. I will accept one late assignment which will be graded down one letter grade for each day it is late.

Academic Honesty

All work which you submit for this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented using MLA format. The unacknowledged borrowing of others' words or ideas—whether from books, the internet, or other sources—constitutes the serious academic crime of plagiarism. Your name on any assignment submitted in this course indicates that you abide by the Oxford College Honor Code. It

is your responsibility to understand the Honor Code. If you have any questions about this policy, please ask before you turn in work that is not your own.

Class Participation

Participation in class forms an essential part of this course. It is therefore expected that you come to class prepared in order to contribute actively to discussions and group activities.

Classroom Conduct

The use of mobile devices such as laptops, smart phones, cell phones, and iPads is not allowed during class (unless special permission is granted in advance). These devices should be turned off or silenced before class begins. If I am late and there is no notice at the door, you should wait fifteen minutes before leaving. Prepare the assignment for the next meeting.

Formal Class Presentations

You will give two formal presentations in the course of the semester. The first one will consist of a 5-minute summary of a recent article or book chapter on one of the texts we discuss in class that could serve as the starting point for your final research project. The second one comprises a 5-minute presentation of work in progress in which you articulate the central argument of your final research paper and present key scenes or passages that support your argument. The presentation should include a directed discussion with the class to help clarify your ideas.

Oral Storytelling

You will choose one memorable scene or incident from the assigned readings and retell it in your own words. The class will be your audience.

Rhetorical Analyses

You will write four short papers (1-2 pages) addressing the assigned readings as well as themes and issues discussed in class. These short exercises have to be well-structured, advance claims, and present clear arguments in support of those claims. They are designed to help you focus your writing, articulate a thesis, organize your thoughts logically, and learn how to support your ideas with textual evidence.

Formal Papers

You will write two formal papers: an analytical paper and a research paper. While the first one (3-4 pages) will entail a rhetorical analysis of a particular text, the second one (5-7 pages) will consist of a more elaborate analysis of a text drawing on secondary sources. You are expected to present a re-write of both papers.

Research Prospectus

You will write a prospectus (1-2 pages) that explains the issues you would like to pursue in your research essay, presents the work of one or two critics who have addressed similar issues, and proposes the secondary sources you will use to explore your ideas.

Peer Review of Prospectus

You will write a 2-paragraph response to a peer's proposal that evaluates its argument, organization, and rhetoric and provides suggestions for how to develop the topic.

Response to Peer Review

You will explain in one paragraph how you will incorporate your peer's suggestions, if you choose to do so, or improve your writing otherwise.

Grading

Participation	10%
Presentations	20%
Rhetorical Analyses	15%
Formal Papers	30%
Oral Storytelling	5%
Research Prospectus	10%
Peer Review of Prospectus	5%
Response to Peer Review	5%

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Aug 24	Course Introduction
Aug 26	N. Scott Momaday, "The Man Made of Words" (available on e-reserve) Lecture and Discussion
Aug 29	N. Scott Momaday, <i>The Way to Rainy Mountain</i> Discussion and In-Class Writing
Aug 31	Momaday, continued Discussion
Sept 2	Draft of Rhetorical Analysis 1 due Writing Workshop: Focus on Outlining, Drafting, Writing, and Rewriting
Labor Day Holiday	
Sept 7	Rhetorical Analysis 1 due Toni Morrison, <i>Song of Solomon</i> Lecture and Discussion
Sept 9	Morrison, continued Discussion
Sept 12	Morrison, continued Discussion
Sept 14	Writing Workshop: Focus on Self-Editing and Close Reading Skills
Sept 16	Rhetorical Analysis 2 due Morrison, continued Discussion
Sept 19	Morrison, continued Discussion and In-Class Writing
Sept 21	Morrison, continued Discussion
Sept 23	Writing Workshop: Focus on Grammar and Style In-Class Preparation for Oral Presentations
Sept 26	Rhetorical Analysis 3 due Maxine Hong Kingston, <i>The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts</i> Lecture and Discussion
Sept 28	Kingston, continued Discussion
Sept 30	Oral Storytelling

Oct 3	Kingston, continued Discussion
Oct 5	Rhetorical Analysis 4 due Kingston, continued Discussion and In-Class Writing
Oct 7	Library Research Workshop
Mid-Semester	Break
Oct 12	Writing Workshop: Focus on Thesis Statement
Oct 14	Student Presentations: Article or Book Chapter Summary
Oct 17	Student Presentations: Article or Book Chapter Summary
Oct 19	Student Presentations: Article or Book Chapter Summary
Oct 21	Patrick Chamoiseau, <i>Solibo Magnificent</i> Lecture and Discussion
Oct 24	Draft of Analytical Paper due Chamoiseau, continued Discussion
Oct 26	Chamoiseau, continued Discussion and In-Class Writing
Oct 28	Writing Workshop: Focus on Advanced Close Reading Skills, Writing, and Rewriting
Oct 31	Analytical Paper due
Nov 2	Arundhati Roy, <i>The God of Small Things</i> Lecture and Discussion
Nov 4	Oral Storytelling
Nov 7	Writing Workshop: Focus on Argumentation and Connecting with an Audience
Nov 9	Research Prospectus due Roy, continued Discussion
Nov 11	Oral Storytelling
Nov 14	Peer Review of Prospectus due Discussion of Research Projects
Nov 16	Roy, continued Discussion
Nov 18	Response to Peer Review due Roy, continued Discussion and In-Class Writing
Nov 21	Draft of Research Paper due Roy, continued Discussion
Thanksgiving	Break
Nov 28	Student Presentations of Work in Progress
Nov 30	Student Presentations of Work in Progress
Dec 2	Student Presentations of Work in Progress
Dec 5	Student Presentations of Work in Progress and Conclusion (last day of class)
Dec 8	Research Paper due

This syllabus is subject to change if necessary. I reserve the right to amend or modify anything on this statement by means of future hand-outs.