

short stories

thology of Italian short stories curated and in part translated by a master of the genre. We will also talk about collections of stories that are organized like catalogues, like alphabets, like arguments. We will reflect on how stories interact with each other in a book, and on how translation can enrich or jeopardize the power of fiction. We will look at the micro-cosmos of one or two stories each week, learning how to analyze, describe, and deconstruct mini-masterpieces from a strange culture.

Emily Balch Seminar 2019 · Section 013 · Bryn Mawr College · Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11.25 - 12.45

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Regular office hours
Tuesdays 4.00-5.00
Wednesdays 11.15-12.15

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Learning Goals of the Emily Balch Seminars

- To teach critical thinking about broad intellectual questions within and/or across disciplines through close reading, re-reading, and interpretation of substantial written, visual and material texts.
- To give students instruction and practice in writing as a flexible tool of inquiry and interpretation; and to introduce students to college-level writing, moving them beyond the formulaic writing they learn in high school. To teach them: (1) to respond thoughtfully in writing to course texts; (2) to construct clear, convincing written arguments based on non-obvious claims; (3) to develop these arguments through reasoning and evidence; (4) to communicate in clear, readable prose.
- To make students conscious of writing as a process: to help them develop effective writing habits; to teach them to assess strengths and weaknesses of their writing in draft stage; to guide them to rethink and revise as a result of faculty and peer feedback; and to teach them copy-edit carefully.
- To teach students to use written and visual sources fairly and effectively; to teach the logic and practice of citation and documentation; and to insure that students understand how to avoid misusing sources.
- To model effective discussion strategies and to create a dynamic learning community, teaching students to participate effectively in small-group conversation.

Some of the greatest works of fiction are only a few pages long. Through those tiny windows, you can see an entire existence or just witness a fleeting, apparently insignificant moment. Some stories feel like entire novels, others are akin to poetry; some follow traditions and rules that are as old as storytelling, others shock us with their unexpected form. In this seminar, we will try to understand what makes short fiction great. We will focus on a new an-

Reading

Short stories from *The Penguin Book of Italian Short Stories*, edited by Jhumpa Lahiri (US edition, 2019, available at the bookstore);

Essays from *The Edinburgh Companion to the Short Story in English*, edited by Paul Delaney and Adrian Hunter (electronic edition, 2019, available through the library website);

Gordon Harvey, *Writing with Sources* (copies handed out in class);

Adam Jhonson, *Fortune Smiles* (copies handed out in class);

Other essays and short stories on moodle.

Writing

Five papers (first draft and revision, only the final version is graded);

One creative assignment (not graded).

Speaking

One “one word lecture” (5-10 minutes on 1 word that synthesize your reading experience);

Final reading (not graded).

Assessment

papers 50% · presentation 20% · participation 30%

This class is designed as a collaborative seminar with five one-on-one conferences, short lectures by students, and interactive lecturing by the instructor. In order to make this seminar effective and comfortable, on our first day of class we agreed on this **class covenant**:

Disagreeing is healthy and expected, it makes conversations evolve and it is conducive to learning. However, we will always cultivate respect and avoid aggression, especially when disagreement emerges. Ideas can always be challenged, but people should never be put in the position of feeling threatened, judged, excluded, or attacked by other members of the seminar. We will constantly make an effort to make our class a safe space. Class discussion is not about having right answers or performing knowledge: it is an exercise of radical listening, sharing, and collective understanding. No opinion is taboo, as long as it is based on the class material and contributes to the discussion. We shall take pride in our skills, achievement, and efforts. When reading other people's work or responding to their comments, we will make an effort to first of all acknowledge their positive qualities. Criticism is always welcome as long as it is constructive and is based on productive suggestions. Creative work by the participants will be used in this class, but not graded.

Alessandro's expectations and assessment

1. Papers

I expect you to always submit the first draft and final version of each paper **on the due date** (see the calendar); please, print a copy and hand it to me in class. I will not accept late submissions, except for extreme documented cases. Revision is a crucial component of this course, and I expect you to bring an intermediate version of the paper that you are working on to our one-on-one conferences. Only the final version of each paper is graded.

2. Participation

Attendance is crucial for the success of this class. If you absolutely cannot attend a class meeting I expect you to inform me well in advance and ask to be excused. We will figure out together how to make up for the missed class. If something completely unexpected comes up (for instance a documented issue related to health or family), I expect you to let me know about it as soon as you can.

It is also crucial to **come to class prepared**. If serious reasons prevent you from completing the assigned readings before class, please be present anyway and inform me about such reasons. Not all readings demand the same level of attention and investment, but you are expected to come to class with impressions and, ideally, questions about them.

Actively participating in discussions and activities during class time is the best way to show your participation. You are always encouraged to be vocal, and to let me know how to make it easier for you to speak in class. However, listening is a fundamental aspect of any seminar, and there are many other ways to show that you are participating. You can, for instance, take good notes (which may include drawings, photos of marginalia on your copy of the readings, quotes from class discussion) in class and attach them to your papers submission, as a separate document that will not be graded. You can, sometimes, integrate the papers themselves with elaborations of things that you have learned in class, and with reflections about how class discussion has changed or confirmed your ini-

tial perspective on the readings. You can also come to my office hours or schedule an appointment just to have a conversation about what we discussed in class. In sum, I expect you to find your own way to make your participation visible, and I am always available to give you feedback and suggestions on this part of the assessment.

3. One Word Lecture

Most weeks will include this exercise, which is entirely led by a student or a small group of students. The task is to think of one word (or one image, or a combination of one word and one image) that has the potential of connecting the week's readings and defining the main topic(s) of the week. In no more than ten minutes, the lecturer will explain why (s)he/they chose that specific word and/or image, and will open a general discussion on the readings and themes of the week. I will include a slide with the word and/or the image in my powerpoint, so please send it to me in advance (no later than 9 am on the day you are lecturing, please!).

When more than one student is lecturing on the same day, they are encouraged to share their experience and collaborate but they are not expected to choose the same word and/or image. This portion of the grade is not determined by your performance, but by the generativeness of both the word (and/or image) that you chose and the way you offer your reflection to the class as a starting point for discussion.

If you are uncomfortable speaking in public, you can provide me or another student with a written version of your lecture or a one-on-one oral explanation of the word and/or image: the designated speaker, on behalf of the lecturer, will read the text or report to the rest of the class about the conversation (s)he/they had with the lecturer. If you conclude your lecture with questions, such questions should be clear, succinct, and, ideally, they should be 'real questions' (i.e. questions to which you don't have an answer yet).

Practical notes

1. Office Hours and E-Mails

In addition to our scheduled one-on-one meetings, which will always be focused on your writing, you can take advantage of my office hours to talk about the class material and anything that comes up in discussions and in the readings. If you are busy during my office hours, feel free to ask me to schedule an appointment. It is always okay to ask about your performance in class and to give suggestions about how to make class better (more clear, more comfortable and inclusive, more focused, more effective). Office hours should also be a safe space to admit that you are lost and go over material that you did not understand. Come to office hours with a specific goal in mind and please, help me understand how I can help you with it.

I'll do my best to respond to emails in a timely fashion. However, I receive an average of 50-75 messages a day, and on most days I only read emails twice a day between 9am and 5pm. Please be patient if I am not able to respond on the same day. I am always happy to briefly talk after class in my office, which is very close to our seminar room.

2. Access

Bryn Mawr College is committed to providing equal access to students with a documented disability. Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Access Services.

Students can call 610-526-7516 to make an appointment with the Access Services Director, Deb Alder, or email her at dalder@brynmawr.edu to begin this confidential process. Once registered, students should schedule an appointment with the professor as early in the semester as possible to share the verification form and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement. More information can be obtained at the Access Services website. (<http://www.brynmawr.edu/access-services/>). Any student who has a disability-related need to tape record this class first must speak with the Access Services Director and to me. Class members need to be aware that this class may be recorded.

3. Honor Code and Plagiarism

In completing all your assignments for this course, you are expected to abide by the Bryn Mawr College Honor Code. See sga.blogs.brynmawr.edu/honor-board/honor-code/ for more information. Note in particular that using someone else's ideas or words without quotation marks and/or bibliographic references is not acceptable in writing texts for college classes. When in doubt about what to do with a source (and within reason), ask me. To avoid plagiarism, be sure to consult *Writing with Sources* (especially pp. 32-35) and always mention your sources (including classmates and class discussion in general). If you fail to quote your sources, you will have to report to the Bryn Mawr Honor Board.

Calendar

Week 1

September 3 - 5

STORY

Readings

- Anna Maria Ortese, *A Pair of Eyeglasses* [moodle]

Week 2

September 10 - 12

PERSPECTIVE

Readings

- Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Boundary* [moodle]
- Jhumpa Lahiri, *Interpreter of Maladies* [moodle]
- W.E.B. DuBois, *Of Our Spiritual Strivings* [moodle]

Paper 1 (3-4 pp.) is due by **Thursday** morning. This paper is an analysis of Ortese's short story based on a statement developed through seminar discussion.

Presenters: _____

Week 3

September 17 - 19

DIALOGUE

Readings

- Luce D'Eramo, *Life as a Couple* [PBISS]
- Italo Calvino, *Dialogue with a Tortoise* [PBISS]
- Adam Johnson, *Nirvana* [moodle]

The 2019 Emily Balch Speaker, Adam Johnson, will meet us on **Tuesday at 6:30.**

Conference week

Revised **Paper 1** is due by **Thursday** morning.

Presenters: _____

ANTHOLOGY

- Readings** : Jhumpa Lahiri will visit our class on **Thursday morning**. An event on her anthology will be held at 4:30 on the same day.
- Jhumpa Lahiri, *Introduction* [PBISS]
 - Giorgio Manganelli, *Sixteen from Centuria* [PBISS]
 - Elke D'hoker, *The Short Story Anthology* [ECSS]
- Paper 2** (5 pp.) is due by **Thursday morning**. This paper is about the role of non-authors (curators, translators, editors, publishers, readers, etc.) in the creation and reception of stories. Suggested secondary readings are on moodle.

RELATIONS

- Readings** : Creative assignment due on moodle by Thursday morning.
- Alberto Moravia, *The Other Side of the Moon* [PBISS]
 - Elsa Morante, *The Ambitious Ones* [PBISS]
 - Natalia Ginzburg, *My Husband* [PBISS]
- Conference week**
- Presenters:** _____

READING

- Readings** :
- Stories written, re-written, or translated by members of the seminar [moodle]
- Revised Paper 2 is due by Tuesday morning.**

Fall Break · October 11 - 21

OTHERS

- Readings** : **Paper 3** (5 pp.) is due by **Thursday morning**. This paper is an analysis of one of the stories written, re-written, or translated by members of the seminar. It includes a comparative part and the use of at least one secondary source as previously discussed in class. Resources are available on moodle.
- Alberto Savinio, *Bago* [PBISS]
 - Grazia Deledda, *The Hind* [PBISS]
 - Donna Haraway, from *When Species Meet* [moodle]
- Presenters:** _____

Week 8

October 29 - 31

SELF

Readings

- Cristina Campo, *The Golden Nut* [PBISS]
- Anna Banti, *Miss* [PBISS]
- Umberto Saba, *The Hen* [PBISS]

Conference week

Presenters: _____

Week 9

November 5 - 7

ELSEWHERE

Readings

- Ennio Flaiano, *A Martian in Rome* [PBISS]
- Massimo Bontempelli, *The Miraculous Beach, or, Prize for Modesty* [PBISS]
- Deborah Lilley and Samuel Solnick, *The Short Story and the Environment* [ECSS]

Revised Paper 3 is due by Tuesday morning.

Presenters: _____

Week 10

November 12 - 14

HERE

Readings

- Fausta Cialente, *Malpasso* [PBISS]
- Romano Bilenchi, *A Geographical Error* [PBISS]
- Luciano Bianciardi, *The Streetwalker* [PBISS]

Paper 4 (5 pp.) is due by Thursday morning. This paper is on a topic of your choice based on reading experiences through the past ten weeks.

Presenters: _____

Week 11

November 19 - 21

TRANS-

Readings

- Primo Levi, *Quaestio de Centauris* [PBISS]
- Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *The Siren* [PBISS]
- Donna Haraway, *The Cyborg Manifesto* [moodle]

Conference week

Presenters: _____

Week 12

November 26

MEDIUM

Readings

- Pier Paolo Pasolini, *La ricotta* [short film]

No class on Thursday (Thanksgiving Break)

Revised Paper 4 is due by Tuesday morning.

Week 13

December 3 - 5

WRITING

Class workshop on Paper 5

Conference week · Bring abstract for Paper 5 at
your conference meeting

Week 14

December 10 - 12

PRIDE

This week we will hold a collective reading open to auditors to celebrate the best work you did throughout
the semester. Italian refreshments will be served...

Paper 5 is due on moodle during examination week, due date TBD