



VNIVERSIDAD  
D SALAMANCA

CAMPUS OF INTERNATIONAL EXCELLENCE

## ***‘The One and the Many’: The Short Story and the Short Story Composite***

**3 credits**

**1<sup>st</sup> semester**

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### **Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this module is to introduce students to the complexities and pleasures of a genre that has experienced great proliferation: the short story cycle—also often called short story composite, short story sequence, novel-in-stories, etc. The course traces the development of the short story cycle in American literature, asking several central questions: Is the short story cycle a legitimate genre or a “hybrid form” subordinated to the novel? What are the distinctive features of the story cycle in relation to the novel and the short story collection? What directions have short story cycles been taking in recent years?

While the course is devoted to a poetics of the genre, it will also focus on the cultural uses of the form to articulate the concerns of “the one and the many” in a society as diverse as the United States.

By the end of this course, students will have achieved the following objectives:

- Become familiar with the works of major practitioners in the field of short story cycles in the United States.
- Sharpen critical faculties with regard to the analysis and appreciation of the short story and the short story cycle.
- Have a sound understanding of the central aspects of contemporary short fiction theory.
- Explore the role of the short story in the contemporary world of book- and magazine-publishing and culture in relation to national and ethnic identities.
- Demonstrate a recognition of the short story cycle as a narrative form with distinct interests, patterns and characteristics, while exploring related literary and cultural issues.
- Develop an awareness of the specificity of the genre of the short story and the short story cycle and their importance in American literary culture.
- Provide students with detailed expertise in the nature, possibilities and limits of the short story genre.
- Be able to interrelate theoretical debate with close textual analysis.
- Write a publishable critical essay (or a master’s thesis) and present an oral defense.

## Course Program

A selection of short story cycles will be specified for class discussion on designated dates. An updated reading list will be issued at the beginning of the course. Texts will be read alongside relevant literary and cultural theory, although emphasis will be placed on the poetics of the short story cycle. The recommended short story cycles represent advanced stages in the development of the genre, as each text exploits the fragmentation and lack of cohesion of the form and depicts the complex interaction between the individual and the community, as well as the opposite impulses in any society towards unity (integration) and diversity (alienation). Students will be encouraged to develop an understanding of, and ability to analyze, particular texts, and to relate them to the wider discussion of the social and theoretical issues.

## Methodology

The aim of each seminar will be to discuss the literary value of short story cycles by representative authors that have used this form to explore notions of identity, memory and place. Through detailed analysis of individual texts and the contexts in which they were produced, the module will promote an informed awareness of some of the key developments in the theory and practice of short fiction. Students are expected to read all required texts and come to class prepared to discuss the assigned material. The course ends with a workshop consisting of 3/4 thematic panel presentations on a range of contemporary short story cycles that articulate the fractured narratives of community, based on their individual research interests.

- Individual oral report / presentation: Each student will present a critical and personal reflection on a short story cycle related to their research paper. They will be judged on the quality of their works as well as on the delivery of the information.
- Research assignments: These individual assignments will consist of integrative questions, asking the student to critically comment on one or two scholarly articles related to a short story cycle.
- Essay / Final paper. Students are expected to submit one academic essay of approximately four thousand words on a topic agreed with their lecturer who will, if necessary, suggest further lines of research and argument. This analytical paper will be graded on content, organization and style (MLA 9<sup>th</sup> ed.).

## Assessment

Assessment for this course will be based on effective class discussion, a detailed analysis of individual texts, a fully documented paper, class presentations and research assignments.

The **course grade** will be determined on the basis of these four components:

- Seminar preparation, class participation: 10%
- Oral presentation: 25%
- Research assignments: 15%
- Essay (or Final paper): 50%

## Bibliography and Resources

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- Lister, Rachel. "Female Expansion and Masculine Immobilization in the Short Story Cycle." *Journal of the Short Story in English*, vol. 48, 2007, pp. 43–58.
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