



VNIVERSIDAD
DSALAMANCA

CAMPUS OF INTERNATIONAL EXCELLENCE

'The One and the Many': The Short Story and the Short Story Composite

*3 creds.,
1st semester, 2026-27*

*Dr. Mercedes Peñalba García
Universidad de Salamanca
mpg@usal.es*

Aims and Objectives

This course explores the short story cycle as one of the most dynamic narrative forms of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Moving beyond earlier debates about whether the form constitutes a “hybrid” or a genre in its own right, the module approaches it as a mode of collective storytelling, in which meaning emerges through fragmentation, repetition, and relationality.

Focusing on contemporary short fiction from diverse cultural and diasporic contexts, the course examines how interlinked stories articulate the tension between individual and community—“the one and the many.” Particular attention is given to how the form engages questions of migration, race, memory, gender, and belonging in a globalized world.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Analyze the formal properties of the short story cycle as a composite narrative structure.
- Apply key theoretical frameworks to close readings of literary texts.
- Examine how short story cycles function as sites of cultural negotiation and collective identity formation.
- Situate primary texts within broader literary, historical, and theoretical contexts.
- Conduct independent research and produce a sustained, theoretically informed critical essay.
- Communicate complex ideas effectively in both oral and written form.

Course Program

The course is organized into three thematic units that reflect key contemporary concerns and critical approaches:

- Diaspora, Displacement, and the Ethics of Belonging
- Race, History, and the Politics of Narrative Repair
- Queer Urban Belonging and the Fragmented Self

Across these units, the short story cycle is studied as a form that produces coherence through discontinuity, linking formal experimentation with questions of identity, memory, and social

experience. Primary texts are studied alongside selected theoretical materials, with emphasis on close reading and critical interpretation.

Methodology

The course is seminar-based and centers on discussion, critical inquiry, and collaborative analysis. Students are expected to engage closely with the assigned readings and contribute actively to class discussions.

A key component is a final workshop structured around three thematic panel presentations, in which students present research on selected story cycles in relation to broader theoretical frameworks. This format encourages dialogue, comparison across texts, and the development of independent critical perspectives.

Course activities include:

- Guided close reading of primary texts
- Engagement with theoretical frameworks and critical debates
- Student-led presentations within thematic panels
- Development of a research-based seminar paper

The final paper requires a sustained critical analysis combining textual interpretation, theoretical application, and engagement with scholarly research.

Assessment

Assessment is based on continuous engagement and the development of independent research:

- Seminar preparation and participation: 10%
- Oral presentation (panel format): 30%
- Final research paper: 60%

The final paper (approx. 3,000 words) must demonstrate:

- Strong close reading skills
- Effective use of theoretical frameworks
- Engagement with peer-reviewed scholarship
- Coherent argumentation and academic writing (MLA 9)

Bibliography and Resources

Ardoin, Paul and Fiona McWilliam. "Introduction: On the Stickiness of the Short Story and the Cycle." *Journal of the Short Story in English*, vol. 66, 2016, pp. 21-9.

- D'Hoker, Elke and Bart Van den Bossche, editors. *Interférences Littéraires / Literaire Interferenties: A Multilingual e-Journal of Literary Studies*, Special Issue: *Cycles, Recueils, Macrotexts: The Short Story Collection in Theory and Practice*, vol. 12, 2014.
- D'Hoker, Elke. "The Short Story Cycle: Broadening the Perspective." *Short Fiction in Theory & Practice*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2013, pp. 151-59.
- Davis, Rocío G. *Transcultural Reinventions: Asian American and Asian Canadian Short-story Cycles*. TSAR, 2001.
- Ducyk, Mathijs. "The Short Story Cycle in Western Literature: Modernity, Continuity and Generic Implications." *Interférences Littéraires/Literaire Interferenties: A Multilingual e-Journal of Literary Studies*, vol. 12, 2014, pp.73-86.
- Dunn, Maggie and Ann Morris. *The Composite Novel: The Short Story Cycle in Transition*. Twayne, 1995.
- Ferguson, Susan. "Sequences, Anti-sequences, Cycles and Composite Novels: The Short Story in Genre Criticism." *Journal of the Short Story in English*, vol. 41, 2003, pp. 103–17.
- Gill, Patrick and Florian Kläger, editors. *Constructing Coherence in the British Short Story Cycle*. Routledge, 2018.
- Harde, Roxanne, editor. *Narratives of Community: Women's Short Story Sequences*, Cambridge Scholars, 2007.
- Head, Dominic, editor. *The Cambridge History of the English Short Story*. Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Hogan, Patrick C., Gerald Lynch et al. "Roundtable: Affect, the Short Story, and the Cycle." *Journal of the Short Story in English*, vol. 66, 2016, pp. 163-213.
- Ingram, Forrest L. *Representative Short Story Cycles of the Twentieth Century*. Mouton, 1971.
- Kelley, Margot. "Gender and Genre: The Case of the Novel-in-Stories." *American Women Short Story Writers: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Julie Brown, Routledge, 1995, pp. 295–310.
- Kennedy, J. Gerald. "Introduction: The American Short Story Sequence – Definitions and Implications," *Modern American Short Story Sequences: Composite Fictions and Fictive Communities*, edited by J. Gerald Kennedy, Cambridge UP, 1995. pp. vii-xv.*
- 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.
- Lundén, Rolf. *The United Stories of America: Studies in the Short Story Composite*. Rodopi, 1999.
- Luscher, Robert M. "The Short Story Sequence: An Open Book." *Short Story Theory at a Crossroads*, edited by Susan Lohafer & Jo Ellyn Clarey, Louisiana State University Press, 1989, pp. 148-67.
- Lynch, Gerald. "Short Story Cycles: Between the Novel and the Story Collection." *The Cambridge History of the English Short Story*, edited by Dominic Head, Cambridge UP, 2016, pp. 513-29.

- Lynch, Gerald. *The One and the Many: English-Canadian Short Story Cycles*. University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- Mann, Susan. *The Short Story Cycle: A Genre Companion and Reference Guide*. Greenwood, 1989.
- March-Russell, Paul. "Story Cycles." *American Literature in Transition: 1990-2000*, edited by Stephen J. Burn, Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 154-68.
- Nagel, James. *The Contemporary American Short-Story Cycle*. Louisiana State University Press, 2001.
- Pacht, Michelle. *The Subversive Storyteller: The Short Story Cycle and the Politics of Identity in America*. Cambridge Scholars, 2009.
- Redling, Erik and Oliver Scheiding, editors. *Handbook of the American Short Story*. De Gruyter, 2022.
- Smith, Jennifer J. *The American Short Story Cycle*. Edinburgh UP, 2018.
- Zagarell, Sandra. "Narrative of Community: The Identification of a Genre." *Signs*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1988, pp. 498-527.
- Zagarell, Sandra. "Reflections: Narrative, Community, Narrative of Community." *Narratives of Community: Women's Short Story Sequences*, edited by Roxanne Harde, Cambridge Scholars, 2007, pp. 433-48.

Schedule

The course meets twice weekly and consists of six sessions, delivered during the first teaching period (first semester).