

English 304B
Genre Studies in Am. Lit.
Fall 2010
Rollins College

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Genre Studies in American Literature: Fiction

It's only a mystery if you believe in ghosts.

—Gil Grissom, *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*

In the *CSI* episode “Turn of the Screws,” investigators Gil Grissom and Sara Sidle debate interpretations of Henry James’s short story “Turn of the Screw,” arguing over who is responsible for the little boy’s death, the governess or ghosts. Grissom’s final comment on the subject reveals a major narrative tension that runs through a genre of American literature labeled fantastic fiction: is there a rational explanation for these seemingly irrational occurrences? Tales of fantasy are evident throughout the country’s literary history, found in the Puritanical writings of the country’s first European settlers to the Romantic writings of Poe and Hawthorne to the contemporary fiction of Stephen King and Michael Chabon. In this course, we will survey this literature and consider how it illustrates cultural anxieties as it asks readers to find fantasy in their realities.

Course Requirements

The bulk of the coursework will revolve around the required readings and subsequent class discussions. Lectures and additional materials will help to supplement the primary texts, but successful participation in the course requires students to prepare for class by reading the assigned works and involving themselves in class discussions. **Weekly quizzes** will be given *at the start of each class* to measure your retention of the readings. These quizzes cannot be made up.

Students will also be required to write a one-page, double-spaced **reading response** on selected texts. These responses should act as an impetus for class discussion and will be graded on a check-plus, check, and check-minus basis. In these papers, you should construct a close reading of a selected work, focusing on word choice, point of view, and/or the way form affects content. While you do not need to summarize the material, you should use quotes from the work to back up your argument(s).

To satisfy your **class participation** grade, you will be expected to contribute to class discussion each period. You will also lead discussion on one of the readings. To prepare, you should look to secondary sources and develop a list of discussion questions; these should be emailed to me on the Tuesday before class. While you might prepare a brief biography of the author and/or a conversation about the text’s critical reception, your job is to lead the class in a discussion of the text. You should be prepared for some of your questions to fail so you will need to develop additional strategies to engage the class. A part of your grade, then, will be determined by the engagement of your classmates.

The course will also include a **midterm** and **final examination**. The former will focus on the texts we have discussed up to the midway point of the semester, while the latter will be cumulative, asking you to demonstrate knowledge on all the works we have studied in the course. The exams will be divided into two parts: the first part will consist of short answer questions that force you to deal with selected texts individually and the second half will ask you to construct a longer essay focusing on multiple works.

Finally, you will construct a **researched essay** in which you will examine and analyze a text from the syllabus. The essay will be 8-10 pages and should incorporate at least four sources of scholarly criticism. Papers produced out-of-class must be typed, 12-point Times New Roman or 11-point Arial, double-spaced, and formatted according to MLA guidelines. Incomplete or late work will not be accepted.

Grades

Your grade will be determined as follows:

Participation and Quizzes	15%
Response Papers	10%
Midterm Examination	25%
Final Examination	25%
Researched Essay	25%

For most assignments, you will be assigned numeric grades. The numeric grading scale and its letter equivalent is as follows: 100-94 A, 93-90 A-, 89-87 B+, 86-84 B, 83-80 B-, 79-77 C+, 76-74 C, 73-70 C-, 69-67 D+, 66-64 D, 63-60 D-, 59-0 F.

Required Texts

Brown, Charles Brockden. *Wieland and Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist*. New York: Oxford UP, 2009.

Gibson, William. *Neuromancer*. New York: Ace, 2000.

Straub, Peter, ed. *American Fantastic Tales: Terror and the Uncanny from Poe to the Pulps*. New York: Library of America, 2009.

---, ed. *American Fantastic Tales: Terror and the Uncanny from the 1940s to Now*. New York: Library of America, 2009.

Handouts will also be distributed.

Policies

Attendance is required at all class meetings. More than one absence *for any reason* will result in a grade reduction. If you have three or more absences, you will fail the course. If you must miss class, send work with a classmate; before the next class period, copy someone's notes and see me during my office hours to learn what you missed and how to prepare for the next session.

Throughout the semester, it may be necessary for us to communicate via email. It is your responsibility to check your Rollins email account daily, especially before class begins. Class emails may be used to inform you of changes in the schedule, class cancellations, or other important announcements. You should also be adept at checking FoxLink to see an electronic copy of the syllabus, view announcements, and participate in additional web-based resources.

Academic honesty is essential for your successful completion of this course and is an integral part of the *Academic Honor Code*. Membership in the student body of Rollins College carries with it an obligation, and requires a commitment, to act with honor in all things. Because academic integrity is fundamental to the pursuit of knowledge and truth and is the heart of the academic life of Rollins College, it is the responsibility of all members of the College community to practice it and to report apparent violations.

The following pledge is a binding commitment by the students of Rollins College:

The development of the virtues of Honor and Integrity are integral to a Rollins College education and to membership in the Rollins College community. Therefore, I, a student of Rollins College, pledge to show my commitment to these virtues by abstaining from any lying, cheating, or plagiarism in my academic endeavors and by behaving responsibly, respectfully and honorably in my social life and in my relationships with others.

This pledge is reinforced every time a student submits work for academic credit as his/her own. Students shall add to all papers, quizzes, tests, lab reports, etc., the following handwritten abbreviated pledge followed by their signature:

“On my honor, I have not given, nor received, nor witnessed any unauthorized assistance on this work.”

Material submitted electronically should contain the pledge; submission implies signing the pledge.

Please remember: *plagiarism is illegal and dishonest*. Complete information on how to identify ideas, words, and larger passages drawn from other sources is available in Olin Library. When in doubt, ask me for clarification.

Rollins College is committed to equal access and does not discriminate unlawfully against persons with disabilities in its policies, procedures, programs or employment processes. The College recognizes its obligations under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 to provide an environment that does not discriminate against persons with disabilities.

If you are a person with a disability on this campus and anticipate needing any type of academic accommodations in order to participate in your classes, please make timely arrangements by disclosing this disability in writing to the Disability Services Office (box 2613) - Thomas P.

Johnson Student Resource Center, 1000 Holt Ave., Winter Park, FL, 37289 or call 407-646-2354 for an appointment.

Grading Criteria for Papers

Acceptable standards for college-level writing are defined by these virtues:

Characteristics of an A Paper

- Excellence in all respects—conceptual, rhetorical, grammatical. Highest quality work, revealing superiority of thought and insight as well as knowledge.
- Clear subject and framework of interpretation throughout.
- Keen understanding of needs and expectations of a particular audience.
- Skillful organization—unified, ordered, coherent, and complete.
- Variety: sentence type/length to meet rhetorical demands (topic & audience).
- Effective word choice—precise denotation, connotation, and tone.
- Correctness in grammar, mechanics, and usage.

Characteristics of a B Paper

- Subject & interpretive framework clear. Superior approach to topic.
- Clear understanding of needs and expectations of a particular audience.
- Clear organization with rare lapses in unity and/or coherence.
- Clear focus on framework, subject, and details for each paragraph—fresh, appropriate examples and supporting evidence.
- Variety: sentence type/length to meet rhetorical demands (topic & audience).
- Language use imaginative and appropriate.
- Correctness in grammar, mechanics, and usage.

Characteristics of a C Paper

- Examination or argument presented clearly with no deviation from stated or implied focus/intention.
- Though subject & framework evident, paper may not seem consistent and/or forceful in presentation or interpretation.
- Organization acceptable, though less clear or forceful than in A or B paper.
- Quality of support details uneven; examples and supporting evidence adequate.
- Few errors in sentence structure, but sentences ineffective, unvaried.
- Word choice generally correct; diction rarely imprecise or monotonous.
- No major sentence level errors; few mistakes in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and mechanics.

Deficient papers fail to meet college-level writing standards as follows:

Characteristics of a D Paper

- Adequate or only marginally acceptable examination of topic or idea.
- Rational paragraphing, but body paragraphs underdeveloped or disorganized—marked problems with unity, order, coherence, and completeness.

- Use of generalization without detail or detail with no controlling idea.
- Sentence level errors frequent enough to distract the reader.
- Inattention to audience needs.
- Marginal grasp of rhetorical and grammatical principles.

Characteristics of an F Paper

- Failure to address assigned topic or change topic in a manner satisfying to both writer and audience.
- Superficial attention to topic or attention to a trite or obvious topic.
- Gross assertions taking the place of carefully developed evidence/examples.
- Simplistic sentence structure; frequent errors in grammar, mechanics, usage.
- Inappropriate use of sources, including failure to provide documentation.

Course Calendar

The course calendar is fairly set; if changes do need to be made, I will notify you of them in advance. Each major reading may be accompanied by some supplemental readings; these readings will be distributed to you the week before they are due. You are responsible for preparing for class each week by completing the readings and assignments in the “Class Meeting” column. Failure to do so will result in an “F” for the particular assignment and a reduction in your class participation points.

Date	Class Meeting
8.23	Syllabus and course introduction Discuss American Literature: The Big Picture
8.30	Read Brown’s <i>Wieland</i> (pp. 1-117) Response paper due
9.6	No class—Labor Day
9.13	Read Brown’s <i>Wieland</i> (pp. 117-224) Response paper due
9.20	Read in <i>American Fantastic Tales: Poe to the Pulps</i> , Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown” (pp. 35-48), Melville’s “The Tartarus of Maids” (pp. 49-62), and Harte’s “The Legend of Monte del Diablo” (pp. 77-89) Read Peter Straub’s interview on <i>American Fantastic Tales</i> (handout) Discuss the characteristics of the short story

9.27	Read in <i>American Fantastic Tales</i> , Jewett’s “In Dark New England Days” (pp. 112-130), Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” (pp. 131-147), Chopin’s “Ma’ame Pélagic” (pp. 153-161), and Atherton’s “The Striding Place” (pp. 232-237) Response paper due
10.4	Read in <i>American Fantastic Tales</i> , Bierce’s “The Moonlit Road” (pp. 302-311), James’s “The Jolly Corner” (pp. 337-370), and Wharton’s “Afterward” (pp. 386-417)
10.11	Read in <i>American Fantastic Tales</i> , Cather’s “Consequences” (pp. 416-435), Fitzgerald’s “The Curious Case of Benjamin Button” (pp. 510-535), and Lovecraft’s “The Thing on the Doorstep” (pp. 654-680) Response paper due
10.18	Midterm Examination
10.25	Read in <i>American Fantastic Tales: 1940s to Now</i> , Williams’s “The Mysteries of the Joy Rio” (pp. 29-40), Capote’s “Miriam” (pp. 61-72), and Jackson’s “The Daemon Lover” (pp. 96-111)
11.1	Read in <i>American Fantastic Tales</i> , Nabokov’s “The Vane Sisters” (pp. 134-147), Bradbury’s “The April Witch” (pp. 148-157), and Ellison’s “I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream” (pp. 197-212) Topic proposal due
11.8	Read in <i>American Fantastic Tales</i> , Oates’s “Family” (pp. 325-350), Straub’s “A Short Guide to the City” (pp. 389-400), and King’s “That Feeling, You Can Only Say What It Is in French” (pp. 406-422) Response paper due
11.15	Read in <i>American Fantastic Tales</i> , Chabon’s “The God of Dark Laughter” (pp. 463-482), Hill’s “Pop Art” (pp. 483-503), and Link’s “Stone Animals” (pp. 579-622) Draft of researched essay due; peer review
11.23	Read Gibson’s <i>Neuromancer</i> (pp. 1-150)
11.29	Read Gibson’s <i>Neuromancer</i> (pp. 151-261) Researched essay due; exam review

12.6	Final Examination
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