

Professor: Pablo García Loaeza

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**TEXT:** *The Oxford Book of Latin American Short Stories*, Ed. Roberto González Echevarría, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.

**DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:** This course will provide an overview of an extremely important genre in Latin American literature: the short story. We will read and discuss a wide array of brief narratives in order to gain an understanding of development of a literary history that is over five-hundred years old. Taking into account the feedback loop between literature and culture through an examination of the assigned texts' contexts (historical, geographical, ideological, etc.), we will reflect on their many common traits, as well as on their significant particularities. Thus, based on the assumption that *storytelling is a key constituent of character*, we will also gain an understanding of Latin American cultural identities as manifested in the literary production of the region.

**REQUISITES:** Attendance and *active* participation (15%), 1 in-class presentation (15%), 3 reaction papers (20%), a midterm exam (20 %), a final paper and presentation (30%). Students are expected to strictly abide by WVU's code of conduct; plagiarism will not be tolerated (<http://www.arc.wvu.edu/rightsa.html>). In accordance with WVU's commitment to social justice, we will maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination ([http://socialjustice.wvu.edu/policies\\_and\\_training/syllabus\\_statement\\_for\\_faculty](http://socialjustice.wvu.edu/policies_and_training/syllabus_statement_for_faculty)).

- Attendance to every session is mandatory. There will be no excused absences. However, you have an allowance of four (4) absences which you may use at your discretion. Missing more than four sessions will have an impact your final grade (2 percentile points off the final grade / absence). If for any reason you expect to miss five or more sessions, you should seriously consider dropping the course. Please be on time. Repeated tardiness will amount to one or more absences.

- Active participation is a very important component of this course; the following criteria will be used to evaluate course participation:

**A range:** Very dynamic engagement in all class activities: Student is always well prepared for class sessions, very often begins interaction, participates actively and promotes participation in partnered and group activities, collaborates keenly in the creation of the learning environment.

**B range:** Active engagement in all class activities: Student is consistently prepared for class sessions, often begins interaction, participates actively in partnered and group activities, collaborates in the creation of the learning environment.

**C range:** Moderate engagement in class activities: Student is generally prepared for class sessions, sometimes begins interaction, participates moderately in partnered and group activities.

**D range:** Very little engagement in class activities: Student is seldom prepared for class sessions, never begins interaction, participates little in partnered and group activities.

**F** No visible engagement in class activities: Student is usually unprepared for class sessions, doesn't participate in partnered and group activities, interferes with the creation of the learning environment.

- In-class presentations will cover specific topics (countries, characters, events); they should be thoroughly researched and adequately illustrated. Further instructions will be provided in class. Presentations will be graded according to the rubric provided below.

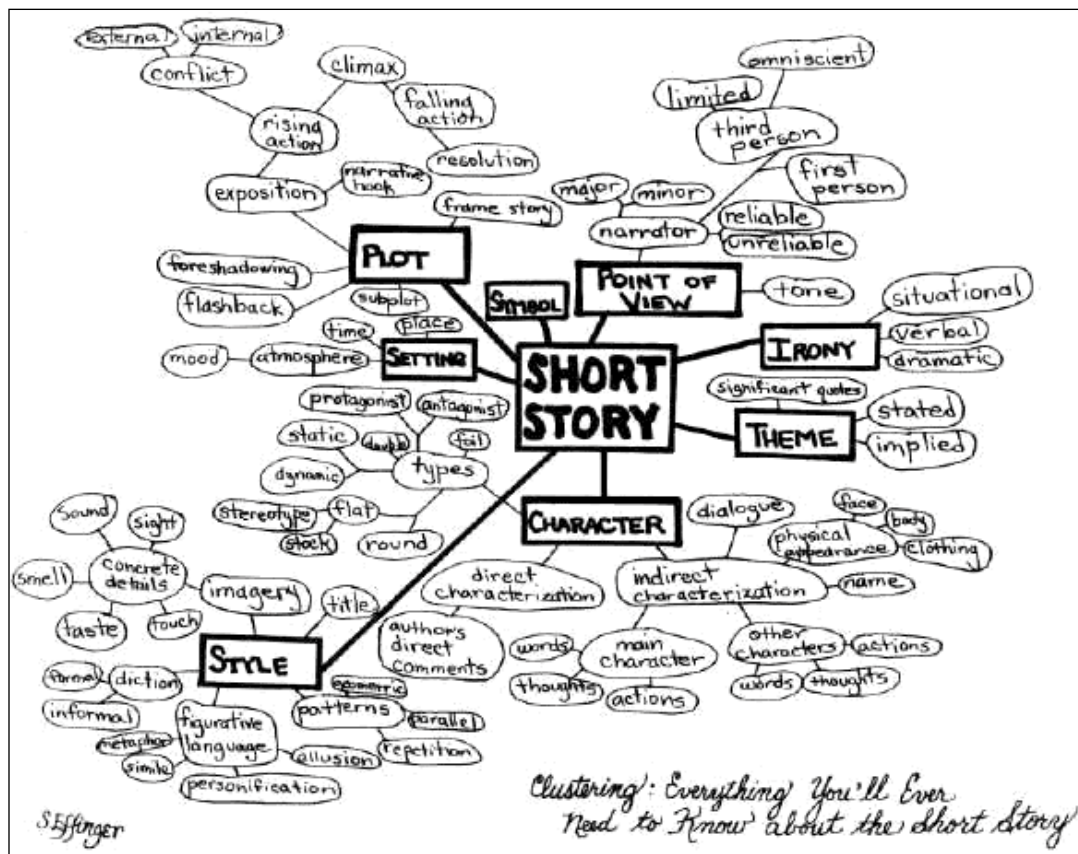
- Reaction papers (2-4 pp.) will address the course readings. Further instructions will be provided in class. Although these will be personal considerations they should be well informed, effectively argued, and carefully written (logically structured, free of grammatical and spelling errors, etc). Written work will be graded according to the rubric provided below. No late work will be accepted.

- The midterm exam will cover all the material studied up to that point in the course. The questions may include multiple choice, true or false, identification, and short-answer questions, as well as short essays. There will be no make-ups without significant reason.

- The final paper (5-7 pp.) will be in lieu of the final exam. It will allow for a more in depth reflection on a course-related topic of your choice and will require a certain amount of duly-cited research. It may be a well-wrought revision of one of the reaction papers. Further instructions will be provided in class. On the course's last session, we will have brief presentations of the papers' general outlines.

### Clear Writing: Some Basic Rules

1. To write clearly you have to have something to say. Write what YOU think, not what you think I want to hear. It is acceptable to use the pronoun "I" in expressing your opinions. However your opinions must be justified and/or illustrated (generally quoting or paraphrasing a source text). Avoid ranting, vagueness, and prejudice.
2. Always start with an introductory paragraph that contains a clear thesis statement, and end your paper with a concluding paragraph. Make sure the ideas in the body of the paper follow a clear and organized format. A great way to write an organized paper is to start with a solid outline.
3. Avoid using verbs in the passive voice – sentences in which the subject of the sentence receives the action, for example, "Agamemnon *is shown* to be a fool by Homer." A better turn of phrase could be "Homer *shows* us Agamemnon's foolishness."
4. Avoid a vague "it" or "this" at the beginning of a sentence. Vague: "Agamemnon is a fool. This is a shame." [To what does "This" refer? Whose shame is it?] Clear: "Regrettably, Agamemnon is a fool." Then justify the comment.
5. Avoid using contractions, run-on sentences, sentence fragments, and slang.
6. Know your words. Do not hesitate to look up words in a dictionary. Do not be afraid to use a thesaurus (Shift +F7 in MS Word) to look for the most appropriate term. Avoid weak qualifiers such as "very," "kind of," "really."
7. Use quotation marks when quoting lines from a text, and cite the source specifically with line number or page number in a footnote or in a parenthetical citation. If you paraphrase someone else's ideas, be sure to cite this as well. Quotes and paraphrases should strengthen your own ideas, not substitute for them. Ultimately, it is your ideas that matter most.
8. Most important: remember that only proof reading and rewriting produces good writing. You will probably have to outline your ideas several times, and rewrite sentences or even entire paragraphs. Do not be afraid to cut out all that is superfluous. Good writing takes time and beginning a paper the night before it is due is never a good idea.



<http://homepage.mac.com/nseffie/handouts/cluster.html>

PRESENTATION GRADING CRITERIA				
Aspect	Excellent (A range)	Good (B range)	Acceptable (C range)	Poor (D range)
<b>1. In general</b>	Very thorough and engaging.	Thorough and engaging.	Somewhat thorough and engaging.	Partial and uninteresting.
<b>2. Preparation</b>	Presenter is evidently very well prepared.	Presenter is evidently well prepared.	Presenter is reasonably prepared.	Presenter is evidently not well prepared.
<b>3. Content</b>	Content shows a full investigation of the topic.	Content shows a good investigation of the topic.	Content shows an acceptable investigation of the topic.	Content shows a minimal investigation of the topic.
<b>4. Organization</b>	Presentation is logically organized.	Presentation is logically organized.	Presentation is fairly well organized.	Presentation is poorly organized.
<b>5. Speech</b>	Speech is clear and distinct 90% of the time.	Speech is clear and distinct 80% of the time.	Speech is clear and distinct 70% of the time.	Speech is clear and distinct less than 70% of the time.
<b>6. Questions/Issues</b>	Discussion questions/issues addressed are pertinent and very interesting.	Discussion questions/issues addressed are pertinent and interesting.	Discussion questions/issues addressed are pertinent and somewhat interesting.	Discussion questions/issues addressed are not very pertinent or interesting.
<b>7. Audience engagement</b>	Presenter consistently engages the audience as a whole and encourages participation and discussion.	Presenter often engages the audience as a whole and encourages participation and discussion.	Presenter attempts to engage the audience as a whole and to encourage participation and discussion.	Presenter barely attempts to engage the audience as a whole and to encourage participation and discussion.
<b>8. Audience feedback</b>	Verbal and non-verbal feedback from the audience demonstrates a high degree of interest and engagement.	Verbal and non-verbal feedback from the audience demonstrates interest and engagement.	Verbal and non-verbal feedback from the audience demonstrates some interest and engagement.	Verbal and non-verbal feedback from the audience demonstrates little interest and engagement.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT GRADING CRITERIA				
Aspect	Excellent (A range)	Very Good (B range)	Average (C range)	Poor (D range)
<b>1. In general</b>	A pleasure to read.	Interesting to read.	Readable.	Challenging to read.
<b>2. Thesis</b>	Essay based on a clear, precise, well defined, and original thesis that goes beyond the ideas discussed in the class	A clear specific thesis, central for the essay.	A general thesis, central to the essay.	Vague or irrelevant thesis.
<b>3. Analysis</b>	Essay contains a cogent analysis that demonstrates a command of interpretative and conceptual tasks required by assignment and course material.	Demonstrates a solid understanding of the texts, ideas, and methods of the assignment.	Shows an understanding of the basic ideas and information involved in the assignment, though with some errors of fact or confusion of interpretation, and a tendency toward recapitulations or narration of standard chronology.	Inadequate command of course material with significant factual or conceptual errors. Fails to respond directly to the assignment.
<b>4. Development and support</b>	The essay includes well-chosen examples, persuasive reasoning consistently applied, and solid evidence directly applicable to the thesis.	Pursues thesis consistently , clearly developing a core argument with clear component points and appropriate supportive detail.	Incomplete development of core argument; weak organization or shallow analysis, insufficiently articulated ideas, or unsupported generalizations.	Discursive and undeveloped, a mere narration that digresses from one topic to another.
<b>5. Structure</b>	Essay moves easily from one point to the next with clear, smooth, and appropriate transitions, coherent organization, and fully developed paragraphs.	Clear transitions, the development of coherent, connected ideas in unified paragraphs.	Some awkward transitions, weak or underdeveloped paragraphs not clearly connected to one another.	Simplistic and discursive, tending to vague summations and digressions from one topic to another.
<b>6. Grammar</b>	The author employs sophisticated sentences effectively, chooses words aptly, and observes all the conventions of English grammar to craft an eloquent essay.	A good command of English, though with occasional stylistic or grammatical problems (most commonly awkward syntax or excessive use of the passive voice).	A tendency toward wordiness, unclear or awkward sentences, imprecise use of words, grammatical errors, and a vagueness of meaning brought on by the passive voice.	Major grammatical problems such a subject verb-disagreement, obscure pronouns, and sentence fragments. Language marred by clichés, colloquialisms, repeated inexact word choices and gross spelling errors.

## COURSE CALENDAR

DATE	ASSIGNMENTS DUE	PREPARATION AT HOME / DISCUSSION IN CLASS
08/23		Introduction to the course: critical reading
08/25		The short story: it's not just a matter of length
08/30	1. The Black Legend	Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, "Plague of Ants"
09/01		Garcilaso de la Vega, El Inca, "The Story of Pedro Serrano"
09/06		Juan Rodríguez Freyle, "A Deal with Juana García"
09/08	2. Civilization and Barbarism	Esteban Echeverría, "El matadero"
09/13		Ricardo Palma, "fray Gómez's Scorpion"
09/15		Joaquim María Machado de Assis, "Midnight Mass"
09/20	3. <i>Modernismo</i>	Rubén Darío, "The Death of the Empress of China"
09/22	<b>Reaction paper 1</b>	Horacio Quiroga, "The Decapitated Chicken"
09/27		Ricardo Güiraldes, "The Braider"
09/29		Enrique Amorim, "The Photograph"
10/04		Jorge Luis Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths"
10/06	4. Magic Realism	Alejo Carpentier, "Journey Back to the Source"
10/11	<b>MIDTERM</b>	<b>MIDTERM</b>
10/13		Short film ("Un nuevo comienzo," Dir. Rigoberto Castañeda) & discussion
10/18	<b>Reaction paper 2</b>	Juan Carlos Onetti, "The Image of Misfortune"
10/20	<b>NO CLASS</b>	<b>NO CLASS</b>
10/25	5. The Mexican Revolution	Juan Rulfo, "Tell Them Not to Kill Me"
10/27		Juan José Arreola, "The Switchman"
11/01		Augusto Roa Bastos, "Unborn"
11/03		Julio Cortázar, "The Night Face up"
11/08		Rosario Castellanos, "The Cooking Lesson"
11/10	6. Banana Republics	Gabriel García Márquez, "Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon"
11/15		Mario Vargas Llosa, "The Challenge"
11/17	<b>Reaction paper 3</b>	Clarice Lispector, "The Crime of the Mathematics Professor"
11/22	<b>NO CLASS</b>	<b>THANKSGIVING RECESS</b>
11/24		
11/29		Antonio Benítez Rojo, "Buried Statues"
12/01	7. The Cuban Revolution	Reinaldo Arenas, "The Parade Ends"
12/06		Retrospective
12/08		Final-paper-outline presentations

**Final paper due: Wednesday, December 14 by 5:00 PM**