

ENGL 395 | Winter 2014 | T/R 3:30 – 4:50 | CAT 268
Special Studies in Literature: STYLE IN FICTION

Dan Driscoll
Associate Teaching Professor
Department of English and Philosophy

driscoll@drexel.edu
5030 MacAlister
Office: T 2-3pm, Th 12:30-1:30 + by appt.

"You say that I pay too much attention to form. Alas! it is like the body and soul: form and content to me are one; I don't know what either is without the other."

-Gustave Flaubert

This is a variable topics course, providing intense literary study on a specific theme.

This course examines the relationship between style (the form of a fiction, or how it is constructed) and content (the meaning readers are able to draw from it). Course readings will introduce theories of fiction and narratology (the study of narrative and narrative structure) as well as linguistic perspectives on style and variation in fiction. Throughout the course, you will learn and apply terms and concepts that constitute a way of looking at and analyzing narrative.

You'll use these terms to describe fictions, and to develop/support interpretations of the fictions. You should find that by learning to use the terms and concepts from the course, you'll be better equipped as a reader: more aware of the relationship between style (form) and content (meaning), better able to explore and draw meaning from fiction. If you are also a writer of fiction/narratives, the work in this class should provide you with a stronger understanding of the construction of fiction/narrative, the choices available to writers, and how different styles/forms affect readers.

Required texts.

McCarthy, Cormac. *Child of God*. New York: Vintage, 1993.

Other materials will be posted on or available through our course Blackboard (Bb) site.

Course Requirements (1000 points).

Attendance	
Participation and Preparation	+/- 40
Reading Quizzes	100
Weekly Journals	250
Exam	150
Story Analysis	200
Child of God Analysis	
Initial response	50
Response to response + proposal	50
Final draft	200

Writing Intensive

This course is Writing Intensive (WI); we will use writing to communicate knowledge and also as a way of exploring readings and developing ideas (i.e. writing as a way of learning)—in weekly writing assignments and major papers, as well as in numerous in-class writing activities. "Good writing" changes from situation to situation (sometimes we prioritize ideas, sometimes delivery); nonetheless, you should always work to be *clear* in your writing so can work through and communicate your ideas. Writing about literature depends on the use of clear and well-integrated evidence/examples from our texts, so you should develop the habit of annotating and rereading texts to help you develop your writing and thinking.

Attendance.

Attendance is required. If you have more than two unexcused absence your grade will be penalized; miss more than four classes (excused or unexcused) and you will fail the class. (See Attendance Policy.)

Participation and preparation.

Attendance ≠ Participation... Be prepared for class meetings: read, annotate, have questions and ideas ready to share with the class. Have the text(s) with you—you can't participate at the expected level if your not able to reread and refer to the texts we are discussing. Also be prepared to listen to and talk to your classmates—much of what we accomplish in this class (in terms of understanding the concepts and texts, developing ideas for analyses) will be generated in class.

Reading quizzes.

Class sessions will often begin with a brief quiz on assigned readings. Quizzes will be quick (mostly short answer) and are intended to be *relatively* easy, so they reward careful reading (i.e. being prepared for class). If you miss a quiz (because you are late, or because you miss the class) there is no makeup. At the end of the term, I will drop several of your lowest quiz scores.

Weekly Reading Response Journal.

You'll keep a weekly reading response journal via our Bb Discussions area. Your journal for each week is to be posted after our class meetings for the week, and *no later than Saturday night* of the assigned week. In some cases, I may provide a very specific prompt/task (I will post this and let you know), but your typical/usual response journal for each week will include a brief explication of the week's reading(s) on theories/concepts, and then a response to it/them (in which you work with/question the concepts by applying them to the fiction reading). Your journals do not need to be elegantly written, but should be clear and demonstrate your ability to work with the course material (i.e. go beyond just restating or summarizing it). Journals will typically be 400+ words. Each journal is worth 25 points.

Exam.

An exam during Week 5 will cover introductory concepts (covering readings from Weeks 2 - 4).

Story Analysis paper.

In a paper due at the end of Week 8, you will use terms/concepts from class readings as a lens to view and analyze one of the fictions we've read. Your analysis will center on your ability to describe specific aspects of style/form and also explain how they enable your understanding/interpretation of the text. We'll talk in class about what makes for a significant focus and conclusion in a paper like this, and I will conference with you as you develop a topic and draft. More information about the paper, and about the fictions you may choose from - will be provided and discussed in class. This paper will be approx. 1200 words. *Students working on creative projects may develop an alternate assignment (with my consultation/approval).*

Child of God Analysis paper.

Similar to the Story Analysis Paper, you will develop a paper that uses terms/concepts from class as a lens to view and analyze McCarthy's novel, again with the goal of describing specific aspects of style/form and explaining how they enable your understanding/interpretation of the text. This project is comprised of your initial response to Part I of the novel, your later response to your initial response (which will include a topic proposal), and your final paper. I will provide you with feedback (and be available to conference with you) as you work on this; more information about the paper will be provided and discussed in class. This paper will be approx. 1200 words.

Schedule.

During most weeks, we will have a reading for Tuesday that introduces concepts/terms, and then read fiction(s) for Thursday, when we'll continue our discussion of the concepts/terms and explore their application. Except for McCarthy's *Child of God*, all readings are available in our Bb course (Readings area). If/when our schedule changes, I will notify you and post the updated version.

Please note: Read before class. Have the text(s) with you (hard copy is best). Memory is important (we'll often refer back to previous readings; you may want to keep a binder for the course with the readings in it). Have something to write on/with (we'll frequently do some writing/hands-on work in class).

Also note : Weekly reading response journals are **due** to the Bb Discussion area by Saturday of each week (for ease, I'm going to set the actual deadline for each to 6am Sunday morning, so that you're not constrained to Bb's typical midnight deadline); late journals will not be accepted/graded. Other deadlines are listed on our schedule.

Week 1 | Jan. 6 – 12

Tuesday: Course intro, first things

Thursday: McCarthy, *Child of God* Part 1 (pp. 1 – 81); **Due hard copy at the start of class:** *Child of God* Initial response (approx. 500 words: what do you notice as you read the first section of the novel, i.e. what gets your attention? What questions do you think the text raises?)

Week 2 | Jan. 13 – 19

Tuesday: Ryan, "Toward a definition of narrative."

Thursday: Davis, "Right and Wrong"; Wallace, "A Radically Condensed History of Postindustrial Life"; Jorney, "[An Imagined Conversation Between the Construction Workers Upstairs From Me](#)"; Ferri, "[Lowlights From My Failed Hidden Camera Show](#)"; Moore, "[The First Draft of My New Bud Light Commercial](#)."

Week 3 | Jan. 20 – 26

Tuesday: Abbot, "Story, plot, and narration."

Thursday: Bierce, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge."

Week 4 | Jan. 27 – Feb. 2

Tuesday: Leech and Short, "Style and choice."

Thursday: (reread) Davis, "Right and Wrong"; (reread) Wallace, "A Radically Condensed History of Postindustrial Life."

Week 5 | Feb. 3 – 9

Tuesday: Bridgeman, "Time and space."

Thursday: Wolff, "Bullet in the Brain."

Week 6 | Feb. 10 – 16

Tuesday: Margolin, "Character."

Thursday: Bloom, "By-and-by"; Moody, "Demonology."

Week 7 | Feb. 17 – 23

Tuesday: Jahn, "Focalization"

Thursday: Barthelme, "Alice"; Bloom, "The Sight of You."

Week 8 | Feb. 24 – Mar. 2

Tuesday: Phelan, "Rhetoric/ethics."

Thursday: Bring your draft [Story Analysis draft workshop]; **Due to Bb dropbox (as .doc or .docx) by Sunday night (Mar. 2):** Final draft of Story Analysis paper.

Week 9 | Mar. 3 – 9

Tuesday: (reread) McCarthy, *Child of God* Part I (1 – 81); **Due hard copy at the start of class:** *Child of God* Response to Response + Proposal (approx. 500 words: as you look back at your initial response to the novel, what has changed? What else are you noticing, how has your view changed? At this point, what would you want to focus on when analyzing the novel, and why?)

Thursday: McCarthy, *Child of God* Part II (85 – 141)

Week 10 | Mar. 10 – 16

Tuesday: McCarthy, *Child of God* Part III (145 – 197)

Thursday: Reread sections of *Child of God* (I'll select some, you can also select some).

Due to Bb dropbox (as .doc or .docx) by Wednesday night (Mar. 19): Final draft of *Child of God* Analysis paper.

COURSE POLICIES & RESOURCES

Academic Integrity

All students must abide by Drexel's academic integrity policy. The *Drexel University Student Handbook* states:

If an act of academic dishonesty is determined to have occurred, one or more of the following sanctions will be imposed, depending on the severity of the offense:

- Reduction of a course grade
- An "F" for the assignment or exam
- Failure for the entire course
- Other action deemed appropriate by the faculty member
- Any of the above sanctions with the inability to withdraw

Examples of other action deemed appropriate include, but are not limited to, requiring the student to re-take the exam, re-complete an assignment, or complete an assigned exercise.

The decision of the faculty member and the department head shall be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards, which is responsible for maintaining student conduct records. The incident will result in an official conduct record for the student(s).

Students may also be required to attend or complete an educational activity as determined by the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards, and the student may be placed on disciplinary probation. (99)

A violation of academic integrity is *not limited to* copying a passage from a source word for word. **If you acquire specific information from a source, you must acknowledge that source, even if you have used your own words and paraphrased or summarized that information.** You must refrain from fabricating source material, stealing or buying compositions, or being complicit in a violation of academic integrity (e.g., writing a peer's paper for him/her) (98-99). You should also refrain from multiple submission (submitting the same paper to more than one course), unless you have permission from your professor).

According to the *Drexel University Student Handbook*, a second academic integrity offense may result in "suspension or expulsion, in addition to any sanction issued from the list above" (99). For further questions about Drexel's academic integrity policy, please talk with your professor, and consult the *Drexel University Student Handbook*, which may be found here:

http://drexel.edu/studentaffairs/community_standards/studentHandbook/general_information/code_of_conduct/

Add/Drop/Withdraw

Students have until the end of the 2nd week to add or drop a course. Please note that students are responsible for any work they miss in the late addition of a course. Undergraduates have until the end of the 7th week of the term to withdraw. For details on the withdrawal policy, see

<http://www.drexel.edu/provost/communications/academicnews/facultystaff.html#adddropwd>

Class Participation and Attendance

Your participation is essential to your success in this class, and thus you should assume that attendance is mandatory. Class participation means being present and prepared, and actively engaging with discussion, readings, and writing. Students who miss more than 10% of class meetings due to unexcused absences will have their grades penalized. Except under extraordinary circumstances,

students who miss more than 20% of scheduled class time as a result of unexcused OR excused absences will fail the course.

NOTE: An excused absence is defined as one that is the result of a condition or circumstance beyond the student's control, such as illness, a family crisis or emergency, or essential travel; an official university event (e.g., academics, athletics or performing arts); or a religious holiday. Normally, an absence will be excused only if there is some documentation verifying the circumstances that caused the absence.

Being on time is also important. Students who are often late to class may be marked absent at their instructor's discretion.

Deadlines and Assignment Submission

Your learning in this course requires in-depth reading, discussion, reflection, writing, and independent work. To achieve our goals, you must complete your work in a timely manner. Note:

- Weekly Reading Response Journals will not be accepted/graded late.
- The Initial Response and Response to response + Proposal components of the *Child of God* Analysis paper may be submitted late up until the start of the next class meeting (after they are due); late submissions will be penalized (10pts).
- The Story Analysis papers may be submitted up to one week late *if* arranged with me in advance; *Child of God* Analysis papers may be submitted late *if* arranged with me in advance, but note that there is little room for extension at the end of the term (and late papers do not typically warrant an Incomplete). Late papers will be penalized (10 pts).

Whether you submit your assignments in hard copy or electronically, it is your responsibility to ensure that your instructor receives your work. You also should back up all of your work and plan on saving it.

Drexel Office of Disability Resources

Students with disabilities who request accommodations and services at Drexel need to present a current accommodation verification letter (AVL) to faculty before accommodations can be made. AVLs are issued by the Office of Disability Resources (ODR). For additional information, contact the ODR online at <http://www.drexel.edu/oed/disabilityResources/Overview/>. The ODR is located at 3201 Arch St., Ste. 210, Philadelphia, PA, 19104. Phone: 215-895-1401; TTY: 215-895-2299.

Inclement Weather

If the University is required to close because of severe weather, please continue to check your email and/or *Blackboard Learn* regularly for instructions from your professor.

Technology Expectations and Tech Support

You need to be able to access *Blackboard Learn*, and you also must have an active Drexel email account. If you are having problems accessing *Learn*, setting up your email, or using *iWebfolio*, please contact <http://www.drexel.edu/irt/> or call the Help Desk at 215.895.2020. Support for using *iWebfolio* may also be found here:

<http://www.drexel.edu/irt/coursetools/toolList/eportfolios/iWebfolioTutorials/>.