Christopher F. Givan

Givan is a professor in the English Dept. at UCO. He earned a B.A. from Yale and a Ph.D. from Stanford. He has taught at UCO since 1986. He was awarded three Fulbright lectureships to teach American literature abroad: Bucharest, Romania (76-78); Hong Kong (92-93); and most recently at the University of Antananarivo, Madagascar (2000-01). Before coming to UCO, Givan taught at the University of California, Santa Barbara; the University of Bucharest; the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez; University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras; at Eastern New Mexico State, and at Yale.

Givan has published an essay on Shakespeare’s CORIOLANUS, an essay on J.D. Salinger and John Updike; an interview with Vladimir Nabokov, two chapbooks of poetry, and about eight short stories. Givan lives with two cats: both Tabby, named Sandy and Moon.

Givan’s favorite sentence about writing is: “No surprise for the writer, no surprise for the reader.” His favorite quote is perhaps William Blake’s assertion: “The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.” He has not seen the palace yet.

Course description: this course takes J.D. Salinger’s master work, NINE STORIES as the starting place for a journey from the literary perspective of the 1950’s through the experimental Sixties to arrive swiftly at novelists published within the last five years of this century. Salinger, Pynchon, and Bellow (who won the Nobel prize in 1976) provide antiphonal voices that will help us hear the new work by Blau, Squires, and McEwan. Blau and Squires will both visit the class and discuss their work with class members.

Goals of the course: To help the student become better acquainted with the themes and forms of representative contemporary novelists. Students will have a chance to acquire or perfect writing and speaking skills as related to several fictional works. All students will write seven take home quizzes as well as a final essay or work of fiction. Students will also have the chance to comment on each other’s final work and to have that work discussed in class.
Texts:
1. J.D. Salinger, NINE STORIES
3. Blau, Jessica Anya, DRINKING CLOSER TO HOME
4. Pynchon, Thomas, THE CRYING OF LOT 49
5. Squires, Constance, ALONG THE WATCHTOWER
6. Bellow, Saul, HERZOG
7. McEwan, Ian, SATURDAY

Please make a point to bring to class the book or books we are discussing on that day.

Required Written Work, points indicated.
Take home quizzes on:
Salinger 8
The Summer of the Naked Swim Parties 8
Drinking Closer to Home 8
Crying of Lot 49 10
Along the Watchtower 8
Herzog 10
Saturday 8
Final essay, or short story, or
Chapter of a novel 20
One page commenting on student’s final work 2pt (Due on the day that work is scheduled to be discussed.) If ten in the class, then worth 20pts
Class participation 10 pts
Total number of points: about 110. The number might vary depending on how many are in the class since 2 pts may be earned for each commentary on a classmate’s final work.

Equivalency of points to letter grades:

93-100 = A
83-92 = B
75-82 = C
69-74 = D
Below 69 = F.

Late work: you must complete all the required work to pass the class. Your take-home quizzes are due on the day indicated. Please make every effort to get this work in on time. If you do not hand it in on time, expect to be asked to complete all questions on the take home quiz instead of the few assigned. It is likely that late work, will receive the full points.

Attendance policy: If you miss more than 7 classes, FOR ANY REASON, you cannot pass the class. If you miss 6 classes, your grade will most likely be lowered a
full letter grade. If you miss five classes your grade may be lowered a half letter
grade. This policy means that you must budget your absences and save them up for
emergencies related to work, personal life, family emergencies, car failure or a
chance to go to Mexico with a dear friend etc. A family emergency such as a medical
problem and so forth, must be taken out of your allotted four absences. There will
be no Incompletes given except in the case of physical incapacitation and a doctor’s
note will be required.

Remember what Woody Allen said: 70 per cent of life is showing up.

Coming late to class, or leaving early, or having your cell phone go off during
class will count as a third of an absence. Checking your messages on your cell phone will
also be counted as half an absence.

Schedule of Meetings and Assignments

August
23 Tues. intro
25. Thurs. J.D. Salinger, NINE STORIES. Read Carefully first three stories
30 Tues. Salinger, NINE STORIES, read stories 4,5, and 6. Pick up Take Home
Quiz.

September
1 Thurs. Conclude Salinger, read last three stories in NINE STORIES. Bring
back take home quiz on all nine stories.
6 Tues Jessica Anya Blau, The Summer of the Naked Swim Parties
   Read first half, i.e. up to page 165
8 Thurs. Conclude SUMMER, including material at the back.

13 Tues. Bring back Take Home Quiz, typed, on SUMMER.
15 Thurs. Blau, DRINKING CLOSER TO HOME, read first half.
20 Tues. Blau, DRINKING, bring back take home quiz on this novel
22 Thursday TBA
27 Tues. Blau, DRINKING
29 Thurs. Jessica Anya Blau will visit the class, speak, answer questions
and sign books.

October
4 Tues. Thomas Pynchon, THE CRYING OF LOT 49. Read the first half
6 Thurs. Complete THE C of Lot 49.
11Tues Bring back quiz on THE CRYING OF LOT 49. This will include
your response to an essay you will have been given on the novel.
13 Thurs. Kevin McDonald will deliver his paper on THE C of Lot 49, a
paper he delivered last spring at the PCA conference in San Antonio Texas.
18 Tues. Constance Squires, ALONG THE WATCHTOWER, read up to
page 131.

20 Thurs. Fall Break
27 Thurs. More discussion of ALONG THE WATCHTOWER

November

1. Tues Constance Squires will visit the class to discuss her novel and to sign copies.

3 Thurs HERZOG, Read up to page 101.

8 Tues. HERZOG, read up to page 205. Pick up Take Home Quiz.

10 Thurs. More discussion of Herzog, perhaps centering on an article you will have been given a copy of. For this class have completed the novel and bring in a one page reaction to the article you have been given, or to an article you find on line on this novel. You must read the article handed out in any case.

Tues 15 Bring back take home quiz on HERZOG.

Thurs. 17 Ian McEwan SATURDAY. Read the first two sections, i.e. up until page 120.

Tues. 22. Read up to page 177 of SATURDAY. Your short essay or original short story, or section of a longer work of fiction is due. Lengths:

- Essay for undergraduates: 7-10 pages not counting any page for footnotes or bibliography.

- For graduate students: 9-15 pages, also not counting extra pages. Graduate students must refer to at least one critical essay or book chapter on the work discussed. The essay will need a title that points to the thesis. The thesis statement should be about two paragraphs so it is clearly set up. The short story should be about ten pages for undergraduates, and about 15 pages for graduate students. Handling of punctuation and dialogue must be correct. Short stories will need a title, as will the chapter of a longer work of original fiction. Same lengths apply as to the short story.

Thanksgiving Break begins Wednesday Nov. 23rd.

November 29 Tues. Bring back your Take Home Quiz on SATURDAY. If by some reason you did not hand in your short story, essay, or fictional chapter with copies for us all you must do so absolutely on this day. This means you need to bring in both quiz on Saturday and your final paper. We will workshop your essays and original fiction in our last two classes. We will schedule discussion of your essays or fictional works for the last three class periods. Please note that on the day the essay or short story /chapter is discussed, you will need to hand in a one page reaction to that work, with a copy for the teacher and a copy for the student author.

December

1 Thurs Discussion of your final work

6 Tuesday More discussion of your work

9 Thurs. Our last class, and concluding discussions of your work.

Please Note: UCO has adopted a way of looking at its educational goals; this philosophy is reflected in the concept of “transformational learning.” Below is a statement the university provides about this concept.

*Transformative learning is a holistic process that places students at the center of their own active and reflective learning experiences. All students at the University of Central Oklahoma will have transformative learning experiences in five core areas: leadership; research, creative and*
scholarly activities; service learning and civic engagement; global and cultural competencies; and health and wellness.

Students enrolled in this course will demonstrate leadership by practicing the art of dialogue in a seminar situation in which they find ways to express their views without sacrificing complexity. Students will engage in research and scholarly activities as they explore a wide range of themes and literary techniques related to the contemporary novel and short story. Students will have a chance to write either a short work of fiction or a literary essay. Global awareness is likely to be increased by a discussion of novels which raise major cultural questions that include and go beyond the U.S.