

English H261: Introduction to Fiction

“Narrative and Truth”

MW 9:30-11:18

Fall Quarter 2005

Dr. Pranav Jani

Assistant Professor, Department of English

Office Hours: MT 11:30-1pm & by appointment

462 Denney Hall, jani.4@osu.edu, 614-292-6965

<http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/jani4/>

Course Description

In this course, we will be examining 20th century fiction and other cultural texts in order to examine common-sense notions of the gap between fiction and nonfiction.

Introducing students to basic principles of narrative theory, the course will identify the way in which the classic aspects of fiction – point-of-view, plot, characterization, etc. – are also reflected in the works of journalists, politicians and historians. Many of the authors we'll read, in fact, explicitly make the point that storytelling is not just a literary activity but central to how we understand our nations, our cultures, and ourselves.

Though all attest to the tremendous power of narrative, however, they disagree on whether it's possible to understand a "real world" beyond the stories. In short, the study of narrative easily leads us to conversations about truth itself.

Required Texts (available at SBX, 1806 N High St)

Abbott, H. Porter. *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Danticat, Edwidge. *Krik? Krak!* Vintage, 1996.

Faqir, Fadia. *Pillars of Salt*. Interlink, 1997.

Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. Harper Perennial, 1998.

Rushdie, Salman. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. Penguin, 1991.

Course Web Page(s) and Email:

Log on at www.carmen.osu.edu for

- Interactive Syllabus
- Articles marked “C” on the syllabus
- Dropbox for turning in papers
- Discussion threads

Go to my personal webpage: <http://people.cohums.ohio-state.edu/jani4/> for

- links to the broader literary and political context of class material
- links to world and alternative media
- information about campus news and events

Note: Important and personal messages requiring a response from me should be sent to jani.4@osu.edu. Please keep the discussion on Carmen focused on themes and questions of general interest to the class.

Course Requirements

Participation	20%
Journal (10 entries)	10%
Paper #1 (3-4 pages)	20%
Paper #2 (5-6 pages)	20%
Research Project (8-10)	30%

Course Policies

- 1) Absences: More than 2 absences from class will harm your participation grade, with a loss of 1/3 of a grade for each day lost. Emergencies should be reported to me as soon as possible, and may require documentation from the University.
- 2) Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.
- 3) Help with Disabilities: Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. We will coordinate something with the Office for Disability Services, located in 150 Pomerene Hall, which offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODS at 2-3307.

COURSE OUTLINE:

Introduction: Narrative, Metanarrative, and Truth

- W 9/21 Students Autobiographical Narratives
TV: "Homer and Apu," *The Simpsons, Season Five* (1993, artist: Matt Groening)
Poem: Hammad, "First Writing Since..."
http://www.teachingforchange.org/News%20Items/first_writing_since.htm

Week 1: Narrative in Art, Politics, and Life

- M 9/26 Short Story: Kureishi, "My Son the Fanatic" – C
Essay: Huntington, From *The Clash of Civilizations* -- C
Theory: Abbott, Chapter 1, "Narrative and Life" (1-11)
Abbott, Chapter 2, "Defining Narrative" (12-24)
Abbott, Chapter 3, "The Borders of Narrative" (25-35)
- W 9/28 Essay: AbuKhalil, "Islamophobia," from *Bin Laden, Islam, and America's New 'War on Terrorism'* (18-30) – C
Essay: Said, "Islam and the West," from *Covering Islam* (3-35) – C
In class:
- Video Clip: Rumsfeld Meets Saddam Hussein:<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB82/>
 - Speech: Reagan on Afghanistan Day (March 1982):
<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1982/31082c.htm>
 - Speech: Clinton, Iraq Liberation Act (Oct 1998):
<http://www.library.cornell.edu/colldev/mideast/libera.htm>
 - Speech: Clinton on Iraq airstrikes (Dec 1998):
<http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/stories/1998/12/16/transcripts/clinton.html>

Weeks 2-3: Narrative and Power

- M 10/3 Novel: Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (100 pages)
Theory: Abbott, Chapter 4, "The Rhetoric of Narrative" (36-50)
- W 10/5 Novel: Rushdie, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (finish book)
Theory: Abbott, Chapter 5, "Closure" (51-61)
*Essay: Rushdie, "Yes, this is about Islam" – C
DUE: PAPER #1
- M 10/10 Film (clips): *Fahrenheit 911* (2004, director: Michael Moore)
Review: Jensen, "Stupid White Movie: What Michael Moore Misses About Empire" <http://www.counterpunch.org/jensen07052004.html>
Theory: Abbott, Chapter 6, "Narration" (62-75)
Abbott, Chapter 7, "Interpreting Narrative" (76-92)
*Abbott, Chapter 8, "Three Ways to Interpret Narrative" (93-104)
- W 10/12 Poem: Kipling, "The White Man's Burden":
<http://www.boondocksnet.com/ai/kipling/kipling.html>
Essay: Ignatieff, "The American Burden," *New York Times Magazine* – C

Document: Bush Administration, "National Security Strategy of the United States": <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>

*Theory: Abbott, Chapter 9, "Adaptation Across Media" (105-122)

*Essay: Roy, "Brutality Smeared in Peanut Butter"

<http://website.lineone.net/~jon.simmons/roy/peanutb.htm>

Weeks 4-5: Focus: Narratives of Gender/Religion

M 10/17 Novel: Faqir, *Pillars of Salt* (1-93)

Theory: Abbott, Chapter 10, "Character and Self in Narrative" (123-137)

W 10/19 Novel: Faqir, *Pillars of Salt* (94-156)

Theory: Abbott, Chapter 11, "Narrative Contestation" (138-155)

M 10/24 Novel: Faqir, *Pillars of Salt* (157-227)

W 10/26 Essay: Sharon Smith, "Woman and Islam" --

http://www.isreview.org/issues/35/women_islam.shtml

DUE: Paper #2

Weeks 6-7: Focus: Narratives of Race/Nation

M 10/31 Short Stories: Dandicat, *Krik? Krak!* (1-88)

Media: Race and Katrina (student research)

W 11/2 Short Stories: Dandicat, *Krik? Krak!* (89-142)

M 11/7 Short Stories: Dandicat, *Krik? Krak!* (143-end)

Theory: Abbott, Chapter 12, "Narrative Negotiation" (156-75)

W 11/9 Media: Haiti (student research)

Weeks 8-10: Globalization and Class

M 11/14 Novel: Roy, *The God of Small Things*

W 11/16 Novel: Roy, *The God of Small Things*

M 11/21 Novel: Roy, *The God of Small Things*

W 11/23 NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING

M 11/28 Film: PBS on outsourcing to India

Text: "What's This India Business?" – C

*Essay: Barber, "Jihad versus McWorld" – C

W 11/30 Essay: Roy, "The Greater Common Good" – C

Final Project Due – Monday, December 5