



COURSE UNIT (MODULE) DESCRIPTION

| Course unit (module) title | Code |
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| American Short Story / Amerikiečių apsakymas | |

| Lecturer(s) | Department(s) where the course unit (module) is delivered |
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| Coordinator: Lecturer Eimantė Liubertaitė | Department of English Philology Faculty of Philology |

| Study cycle | Type of the course unit (module) |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| 1st | Compulsory-Optional |

| Mode of delivery | The period when the course unit (module) is delivered | Language(s) of instruction |
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| Face-to-face | Autumn | English |

| Requirements for students | |
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| Prerequisites: Advanced English language proficiency (B2, C1) | Additional requirements (if any): |

| Course (module) volume in credits | Total student workload | Contact hours | Self-study hours |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| 5 | 150 | 32 | 118 |

| Purpose of the course unit (module): programme competences to be developed |
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| <p>This course will examine the genre of the American short story, focusing on the construction of short narratives. In order to explore the poetics of a short narrative, the theoretical framework of Seymour Chatman's narratological theory will be used. By analyzing selected American short stories and tracing the development of the genre, the fundamental concepts of narrative elements will be discussed.</p> <p>Generic competences to be developed (as per the aims of the English Philology programme):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1. Responsibility: the ability to set goals and make plans, and take responsibility for them; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1.1. will be able to set goals, choose and use resources necessary for the completion of a task, plan their time and follow deadlines; - 1.2. will be able to take responsibility for their work/study results and learn from mistakes; - 3. Intercultural competence: respect and openness to other cultures, the ability to work in a multicultural environment; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3.1. will be able to understand the specifics of different cultures and to analyze and assess cultural contexts; - 3.2. will be able to study, work, and communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds and develop awareness, respect, and openness to cultural diversity; - 4. Problem solving: the ability to solve problems by relying on analytical, critical, and creative thinking; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4.1. will be able to identify problems and challenges in their own and related fields; - 4.2. will be able to identify problems by finding, analysing, and critically assessing relevant information, generate new ideas, and choose the most optimal solutions; - 5. Openness to change: the ability to understand the necessity of change and the intention to improve oneself constantly; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5.1. will be familiar not only with the changes taking place in their field of interest but also with their causes, challenges, and opportunities; - 5.2. will be open to new ideas, strive to change, and be creative and innovative; - 5.3. will be able to evaluate the quality of their actions and achievements and strive to acquire the competencies necessary for future change. <p>Subject-specific competences (as per the aims of the English Philology programme):</p> |

- 7. Essential knowledge and skills of literary science: perception of literature as a phenomenon and perception of literature as a scientific discipline:
 - 7.1. will know, understand and be able to describe literature as a phenomenon and properly use and interpret the basic concepts and terms of literary studies;
 - 7.2. will acquire knowledge of the main branches and methods of literary studies;
- 9. Understanding and analysis of American literature: the ability to analyse and interpret American literature as a phenomenon:
 - 9.1. will gain knowledge of the development of American literature, the most important authors and the most significant works;
 - 9.2. will be able to analyse, interpret and evaluate the phenomena of American literature in the wider context of world literature, using appropriate terminology and methods;
- 10. Understanding an English-speaking culture: The ability to understand and explain the peculiarities of American culture;
 - 10.1 will gain knowledge of English-speaking countries (especially the United States) and their socio-cultural context (aspects of geography, history, public policy, literature and art, mentality and self-awareness, customs and traditions, everyday communication conventions, etc.);
 - 10.2 will be able to distinguish the most prominent features of American culture, compare the culture of English-speaking countries with Lithuanian culture, and identify and explain similarities and differences.

| Learning outcomes of the course unit (module) | Teaching and learning methods | Assessment methods |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Course-specific learning outcomes: Students will develop an understanding of the literary tradition of the American short story; they will expand their knowledge of canonical American short stories and classic authors, while simultaneously developing the competence to analyze the generic form of a short story (being able to provide well-argued interpretations); they will sharpen their writing, editing, researching, and revising skills.</p> <p>Subject specific learning outcomes: students will become fluent in the use of literary analytical terms, particularly regarding the study of genre and narrative structure; they will learn to recognize the features and tropes of several key movements in American literature; they will become familiar with social and political contexts that influenced the careers of several major American authors.</p> <p>Generic learning outcomes: students will develop analytical and critical thinking skills; they will hone their ability to make connections among various texts and their contexts.</p> | <p>Seminars based on in-class discussion; reading, analytical thinking; critiquing student writing.</p> | <p>Summary of a literary criticism article.</p> <p>Research-in-progress presentation.</p> <p>Take-home essay.</p> |

| Content: breakdown of the topics | Contact hours | | Self-study work: time and assignments | |
|---|---------------|----------|---------------------------------------|--|
| | Lectures | Seminars | Self-study hours | Assignments |
| 1. Introduction: the generic origins of the American short story; the essential trends in its development and aesthetics. | | 2 | | In-class reading: “The School” by Donald Barthelme, George Saunders’ analysis of “The School”. |
| 2. <u>The Romantic period</u> : Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Birthmark” | | 2 | 8 | Read and analyze the story by Hawthorne. |

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| Edgar Allan Poe: review of Hawthorne's <i>Twice-Told Tales</i> | | | | Article summary (see Assessment section). |
| 3. <u>The American Gothic</u> : Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher" | | 2 | 8 | Read and analyze the story by Poe. Article summary (see Assessment section). |
| 4. <u>Realism</u> : Kate Chopin, "Story of an Hour" | | 2 | 8 | Read and analyze Chopin's story. Article summary (see Assessment section). |
| 5. <u>Modernism</u> : Ernest Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants" | | 2 | 8 | Read and analyze Hemingway's story. Article summary (see Assessment section). |
| 6. <u>Tales of the Jazz Age</u> : F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Diamond as Big as the Ritz" | | 2 | 8 | Read and analyze Fitzgerald's story. Article summary (see Assessment section). |
| 7. <u>Postwar short fiction</u> : J.D. Salinger, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish", "Teddy" | | 2 | 10 | Read and analyse two stories by Salinger. Article summary (see Assessment section). |
| 8. <u>Postwar short fiction (cont.)</u> : Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery" | | 2 | 8 | Read and analyse Jackson's story. Article summary (see Assessment section). |
| 9. <u>The American South</u> Flannery O'Connor, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" | | 2 | 8 | Read and analyse BO'Connor's story. Article summary (see Assessment section). |
| 10. <u>African-American short fiction</u> : James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues" | | 2 | 8 | Read and analyse Baldwin's story. Article summary (see Assessment section). |
| 11. <u>"The New Yorker" short story</u> : John Cheever, "The Swimmer" | | 2 | 8 | Read and analyse Cheever's story. Article summary (see Assessment section). |
| 12. <u>Postmodernism: play with genre</u> Joyce Carol Oates, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" | | 2 | 8 | Read and analyse the story by Oates. Article summary (see Assessment section). |
| 13. <u>American Minimalism</u> : Raymond Carver, "What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Love"? | | 2 | 8 | Read and analyse Carver's story. Article summary (see Assessment section). |
| 14. <u>Cult short fiction</u> : Denis Johnson, "Car Crash While Hitchhiking" | | 2 | 8 | Read and analyse Johnson's story. Article summary (see Assessment section). |
| 15. <u>Contemporary</u> : David Foster Wallace, "Good Old Neon" | | 2 | 10 | Read and analyse the story by Wallace. Article summary (see Assessment section). |
| 16. Consultation | | 2 | 4 | Discussing take-home essay requirements, potential essay topics. |
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| Total 150 | | 32 | 118 | |

| Assessment strategy | Weight,% | Deadline | Assessment criteria |
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| Article summaries | 20% | At each seminar | <p>Students will be required to provide brief (approx. 10 minutes), yet coherent presentation of written summaries (1-2 pages) of literary criticism articles on texts chosen from the compulsory reading list. The students are not required to use PowerPoint for the presentation of the said summaries. However, the summaries should follow the requirements indicated in the student manual <i>Research Matters</i> (2006, Laima Erika Katkvienė and Inesa Šeškauskienė, pp. 69-70).</p> <p>Assessment criteria: 10 (excellent). Excellent, exceptional knowledge and abilities. 9 (very good). Very good knowledge and abilities. 8 (good). Knowledge and abilities are above average. 7 (average). Average knowledge and abilities; there are a few not essential mistakes. 6 (satisfactory). Knowledge and abilities are below average; there are mistakes. 5 (weak). Knowledge and abilities meet the minimum requirements. 4, 3, 2, 1. Minimum requirements are not met.</p> |
| Take-home essay | 80% | January, 2027 | <p>Individually prepared take-home essay analysing a short story from the compulsory reading list. The text should show the student's awareness of the literary tradition of the American short story, in addition to providing the reader with the student's own well-argued insights, as well as a well-chosen theoretical framework. The assessment will be based on the student's ability to critically and creatively analyse the short story of their choice, the proper structure of the essay, development of a research question, proper academic conventions.</p> <p>Requirements: Word amount: 2,000-2,500. The minimum number of references: 3. The term paper is graded on a 10 point scale.</p> <p>At a minimum, the term paper will address the topic, follow instructions, fit the image of a quality university term paper discussion, and be submitted in a neatly presented double spaced Times New Roman 12 font format, with pages numbered.</p> <p>An electronic version (PDF format) will be submitted to the lecturer on the assigned date. Late submissions past the deadline will not be accepted.</p> <p>Assessment Criteria: Structure: 5% Formally, a term paper consists of Title Page, Table of Contents, Introduction, Theoretical Framework, Discussion/Analysis, Conclusion, References/Bibliography. The text length shall not go below and shall not exceed 2,500-3,000 considerably.</p> <p>Organization: 30% The paper is soundly organized at both macro and micro levels; its statements and arguments are conceptually coherent and cohesive; its sentences, paragraphs, and sections follow logical progressions, building on clear, concrete examples from the literary works in question.</p> <p>Content: 40%</p> |

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| | | <p>The paper provides ample and relevant information that supports the main hypothesis presented in the introduction. The student supports his or her argument with relevant secondary sources and significant examples and explains any concepts he or she uses to advance the argument. The paper conveys the student's competence of the chosen topic and displays an in-depth research.</p> <p>Language Use: 15% Simple and complex language structures, grammar, and punctuation all used correctly.</p> <p>Academic Conventions: 10% Appropriate layout, margins and fonts are used, total number of words meets the requirements, consistent documentation and referencing is displayed, appropriate bibliography is provided. The text is written in the appropriate academic register, and all referenced material comes from reputable sources (i.e., not from Wikipedia, Cliff's Notes, or Shmoop.) For instructions on how to follow the written academic standard of the English department of Vilnius University please consult the manual <i>Research Matters</i> (2006 Laima Erika Katkuvienė and Inesa Šeškauskienė. <i>Research Matters</i>. Vilnius: Vilnius University Publishing House. Second edition. 137 p.)</p> <p>Assessment Scale: 10 (Excellent) Excellent, outstanding knowledge and skills: the knowledge of the research materials is excellent; the student demonstrates a holistic approach to the subject matter; the student coherently and logically articulates his or her approach to the analysis of the theme, persuasively develops the argument; appropriately uses a theoretical method in the analysis; writes in fluent academic English.</p> <p>9 (Very good) Solid, very good knowledge and skills: the knowledge of the research material is very good, the student knows how to apply it in her term paper; her arguments are logical, well-argued; the student knows and understands the key concepts; the student adequately uses a theoretical method in her analysis, the student writes in very good academic English.</p> <p>8 (Good) Knowledge and abilities are above average: good knowledge of the research material; examples are given but not interpreted; the knowledge of the major concepts is good although occasional discrepancies are observed; the structure and organization of the paper occasionally lacks coherence, in his analysis, the student draws on literary criticism; uses correct academic English.</p> <p>7 (Highly satisfactory) Average performance, knowledge and skills with some unessential shortcomings: the student is familiar with the research material, is able to use it independently; the analysis, however, lacks in-depth knowledge, some discrepancies, incorrect word usages are observed; in his analysis the student draws on literary criticism; the academic English has flaws.</p> <p>6 (Satisfactory) Knowledge and skills are below average performance: the student knows the most part of the research materials, but as he discusses it he shows lack of consistency, and a logical structure; gives few examples; it seems that the student did not invest a sufficient</p> |
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| | | <p>amount of time and effort into studying the subject; the student shows an inconsistent knowledge of the subject matter; or no knowledge at all; he hardly draws on literary criticism; the academic English used has many flaws.</p> <p>5 (Sufficient) Knowledge and skills meet the minimum criteria: the knowledge of the research materials that the student has meets the minimum requirements of the course to get a pass; as he writes he makes major mistakes; hardly knows how to apply the knowledge he managed to obtain throughout the course; the knowledge he obtained is scares; the student does not draw on literary criticism; his academic English is poor; the informal register is used throughout.</p> <p>4, 3, 2, 1 (Insufficient) Knowledge and skills do not meet the minimum criteria: the student has failed to master the research materials; has very poor knowledge of the subject matter; or has no knowledge at all; or the knowledge that he has is irrelevant or insufficient; the student does not use academic English.</p> |
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Attendance and participation requirements

Students are required to attend a minimum of 70 percent of classes, reflecting the established correlation between academic performance and class attendance. Failure to meet this attendance threshold disqualifies students from submitting their essays in January, 2027. Additionally, if questions arise regarding the authenticity of a student’s paper, they may be required to validate their work through a viva voce defense. Should a student miss over 30 percent of the classes, they will be advised to retake the course and submit their papers after a year.

Retake policy

The opportunity for a retake, specifically the resubmission of a revised and enhanced essay, is available to domestic and international students in the first two weeks of February 2027, on a date determined by the course instructor. Retakes are permitted exclusively for students who have met the 70 percent attendance requirement but did not pass the course. Additionally, retakes are intended for passing the course rather than grade improvement.

This course is heavily based on close reading, therefore the students will be required to read the chosen short stories in full, in the original language, not summaries or descriptions available online.

NB The students are expected to have and maintain academic integrity, therefore any type of plagiarism or academic dishonesty is strictly forbidden. Any plagiarised material found in a student’s work will be recorded and reported to the Committee of the Study Programme of the Department of English Philology, resulting in the student failing the course. If during the re-taking of the exam, the student once again resorts to academic dishonesty, he or she will be reported to the Dean’s office, where the issue of the student’s expulsion will be raised. For more information on types of plagiarism, please consult the manual *Research Matters*.

| Author | Year | Title | Issue or volume | Publishing place and house or web link |
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Compulsory reading

SHORT FICTION

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| Edgar Allan Poe | 1839 | “Fall of the House of Usher” | | Available online |
| Nathaniel Hawthorne | 1843 | “The Birthmark” | | Available online. |
| Kate Chopin | 1894 | “The Story of an Hour” | | Available online |
| F. Scott Fitzgerald | 1922 | “Diamond as Big as the Ritz” | | Available online |
| Ernest Hemingway | 1927 | “Hills Like White Elephants” | | Available online |
| J.D. Salinger | 1948 | “A Perfect Day for Bananafish” | | Available online |
| | 1953 | “Teddy” | | |
| Shirley Jackson | 1948 | “The Lottery” | | Available online |
| Flannery O’Connor | 1953 | “A Good Man is Hard to Find” | | Available online |
| James Baldwin | 1957 | “Sonny’s Blues” | | Available online |

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| John Cheever | 1964 | “The Swimmer” | | |
| Joyce Carol Oates | 1966 | “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” | | Available online |
| Donald Barthelme | 1968 | “Lost in the Funhouse” | | Available online |
| Raymond Carver | 1981 | “What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Love” | | Available online |
| Denis Johnson | 1992 | “Car Crash While Hitchhiking” | | Available online |
| David Foster Wallace | 2004 | “Good Old Neon” | | Available online |
| THEORETICAL MATERIAL | | | | |
| Seymour Chatman | 1993 | <i>Reading Narrative Fiction</i> | | New York: Macmillian Publishing Company. |
| Laima Erika Katkuvienė, Inesa Šeškauskienė | 2006 | <i>Research Matters</i> | Second edition. | Vilnius: Vilnius University Press |
| Optional reading | | | | |
| Scofield, M. | 2006 | <i>The Cambridge Introduction to the American Short Story</i> | | Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. |
| Gerlach, J. | 1985 | <i>Toward the End: Closure and Structure in the American Short Story</i> | | Alabama: The University of Alabama Press. |
| Notes | | | | |
| Course Description Updated: April 3rd, 2026 | | | | |