

Welcome to ENG240L-721 American Short Fiction online for Winter 2026 CRN10016 (Mercier)

ENG240L-721 26W CRN: 10016

Dates: Saturday, December 13, 2025 – Friday, January 16, 2026

**\*Required Texts:**

You will find the texts to read within our **Brightspace** site attached to actual **Assignments\***

You do **not** have to purchase a textbook.

**\*Required Computer Access:**

All students must have regular access to the **Brightspace** site during each week that the online course is in session.

You will need to use your Marist account to log in.

**Course Content Description:**

In this course, you will examine a variety of classic and modern American short fiction. You will analyze major elements of literature, such as plot, character, setting, style, symbol, and theme. We will ask meaningful questions: How does each work of literature connect itself to society? What clues does literature offer about its own time and place? What does each story seem to say about its own cultural context? It is critical, or supportive, or both? How have characters' lives been caught between social, political, and cultural circumstances and various forms of oppression? To what extent are short stories testimonials that seek to illuminate social practices and conditions? To what experiences do these texts bear witness? How do authors represent dominant and marginalized cultures and address questions about race, class, and gender relations? What are the interpersonal dynamics between family members, friends, and acquaintances? Do these texts offer moral values? Are they meant to raise public consciousness about particular issues? What is the relationship between these stories and our own historical moment? We will consider classic American authors as well as contemporary short fiction.

You will develop intellectual frameworks for discussing important ideas and concepts available in short stories. You are encouraged to use your critical skills and imagination during class discussion and in your essays. How are thematic concerns similar and/or different? How does the rhetorical construction of these stories influence your own reading experience? How do these stories represent personality, identity, memory, needs, moods, and physicality? What sensations, tone, figurative language, scenes, and images are most striking and why? Many Discussions Forum Prompts are meant to augment our discussion of themes and issues in our own contemporary society and in your own personal lives.

**\*The Syllabus** includes how the course is graded and the Reading Calendar. Use the detailed **READING CALENDAR & WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS section on the Syllabus** as the main guide to follow instructions for all aspects of the course in **BRIGHTSPACE**, such as:

1) **ASSIGNMENTS in Brightspace** holds Study Set Questions, Essay Assignments, and the Final Essay (Due on the last Friday night by 11:55p.m.) Attached to Assignments at the very bottom you will find many primary course readings, such as short stories, essays, and book chapters. Attachments to Assignments may also include supplementary lecture materials.

2) **DISCUSSIONS** Forum Post Due Dates

3) **DUE Dates** for Essay #1, Essay #2, and the Final Examination

**Brief Biography:**

Professor Mercier has been teaching full-time at Marist College since 2007 and is a Lecturer of American and Environmental Literature in the Department of English. His main areas of expertise are in 19th-Century American Literature, Nature Writing, and Rhetoric & Composition. He received his Ph.D. in English from the University of Rhode Island, where he wrote his dissertation upon Hudson Valley nature writer John Burroughs (1837-1921). Since then he has published several journal articles and book chapters on Burroughs and has been interviewed by *The New York Times* and National Public Radio (NPR).

This Winter Session, feel free to contact me at:  
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Sincerely,  
Dr. Stephen Mercier

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