

GERM 365 – Modern short fiction

A study of short prose forms in German throughout history

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I. Course description

Short prose as a genre gives the authors the flexibility to experiment and explore new approaches to plot, character development, time, and setting. This flexibility makes short prose an exciting genre to study. It offers the opportunity to explore contemporary trends in German literature in just a few pages.

In this course we will examine short prose works by influential German writers from the 18th century to the present. We will look at various examples of the mode, analyzing narrative techniques and aesthetic devices employed, placing them in the context of the social, political, and cultural changes that occurred in Germany during the same period. Students will engage critically with concepts pertaining to subjectivity, generations, gender, migration, technology and the human, crisis, environment, alterity and otherness. The course is taught in English; knowledge of German is not required.

II. Objectives

This course aims to achieve the following learning objectives:

1. **Develop a theoretical understanding:** Participants will gain familiarity with key theoretical concepts related to the genre of modern short fiction.
2. **Enhance analytical skills:** Participants will acquire methodological approaches to effectively analyze how texts are narratively and,0.73 5wrkS2 Tfrtictn krcitim(ot re)5(quir)-8(e)4(c

IV. Evaluation & Grades

Attendance & Participation (15%)

Active participation in class discussions, activities, and group work is essential for your learning experience and will be taken into account when evaluating your performance. You may have 2 unexcused absences. For all other absences supporting documentation is required. For each additional unexcused absence 5% of your overall grade will be deducted. If you miss more than 10 classes you will automatically receive a grade of zero. Your attendance and participation will be assessed based on your preparedness, thoughtful contributions, and respectful engagement with your peers and the instructor.

Position Paper (15%)

Throughout the semester you will be writing one short position paper (1.5-2 pages, double spaced) on one or two texts of your choice. The position paper should offer a brief reflection on one of the assigned readings. It should clearly outline the argument made, backed up with citations from the chosen texts. Focus on one aspect that stands out to you and reflect on that. It should not be a summary of the text. Please upload your paper to the discussion board on *mycourses*. The paper is due 2 days prior to when the assigned reading is discussed in class (e.g. Sunday or Tuesday, 5 pm). The position paper will serve as a basis for class discussion.

V. Required Texts:

All texts will be provided in English translations via MyCourses.

Course Outline

Week I, January 4: **Modern short fiction**

Th: Introduction to the Course

Week II, January 9-11: **What is short fiction?**

T: Introduction to the genre

Th: Johann Wolfgang Goethe: *The green snake and the beautiful lily* (1795), Friedrich Schiller: *The pledge* (1798)

Week III, January 16-18: **Telling tales**

T: Adelbert von Chamisso: *Peter Schlemihl* (1813)

Th: Adelbert von Chamisso: *Peter Schlemihl* (1813)

Week IV, January 23-25: **Literature and Society**

T: Heinrich von Kleist:



Th: Wolfgang Borchert: *The kitchen clock* (1947)

Week IX, February 27-29: **Dealing with memory, generations, and gender**

T: Ingeborg Bachmann: *Three paths to the lake* (1972)

Th: Ingeborg Bachmann: *Three paths to the lake* (1972)

Week X, March 5-7: **Reading Week**

Reading Break

Week XI, March 12-14: **Alterity and Otherness**

T: Robert Musil: *Tonka* (1923)

Th: Robert Musil: *Tonka* (1923), [Test 2]

Week XII, March 19-21: **Alterity and Otherness**

T: Judith Hermann: *Summerhouse, later* (1998), *excerpts*

Th: Judith Hermann: *Summerhouse, later* (1998), *excerpts*

Week XIII, March 26-28: **Migration**

T: Yoko Tawada: *Where Europe begins* (1991), *excerpts*

Th: Yoko Tawada: *Where Europe begins* (1991), *excerpts*

Week XIV, April 2-4: **Migration**

T: Yoko Tawada: *Where Europe begins* (1991),

excerpts Th: Concluding discussion

VIII. Student Accessibility and Achievement Office

The Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures endeavours to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Student Accessibility and Achievement Office (<https://www.mcgill.ca/access-achieve/>). If you have a documented disability, please contact the SAA as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining recommended accommodations. This letter should be given to me at the beginning of the semester.