

HON 3010.002 *Revelations of Grace: The Fiction of Flannery O'Connor* Spring 2015, Wednesday 2:00-4:40, Honors C309 – (C-L in EN and GS)

I. Course Description

This is a single author course on the fiction of Mary Flannery O'Connor (1925-64). We will examine over half of O'Connor's short stories (about two per week) and her two novellas, *Wise Blood* and *The Violent Bear it Away*. Class discussions will involve, at least, O'Connor's treatment of such topics as private divine revelations of God's grace, the problem of faith, the social structures of the mid-twentieth century rural American South, Catholicism in the American South, and the effective use of southern dialect in her fiction. I am particularly interested in how O'Connor uses animated nature as a possible vehicle for delivery of grace in stories such as *The River*, *A View of the Woods*, *Greenleaf*, and *Revelation*. Students' interests may guide class discussion as the course develops.

IIa. Required Texts

O'Connor, Mary Flannery. *The Complete Stories*. 1971. New York: Noonday Press. ISBN 0374515360
---. *Wise Blood*. 1949. (1990). New York: Noonday Press. ISBN 0374505845
---. *The Violent Bear It Away*. 1955. (1988). New York: Noonday Press. ISBN 0374505241
---. *The Habit of Being*. 1988. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux. ISBN 0374521042
---. *A Prayer Journal*. 2013. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux. ISBN 0374236917
Kimmel, Haven. 2002. *The Solace of Leaving Early*. Various publishers. ISBN 1400033349

IIb. Optional Texts

O'Connor, Flannery. *Mystery and Manners*. 1969. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux. ISBN 0374508046
Gooch, Brad. *Flannery: A Life of FO'C*. 2009. New York: Little, Brown and Company. ISBN 0316018996

III. Course Requirements

Students will be expected to complete the following:

- (1) Write weekly journal entries on reading assigned that day, due 7:00pm on Tuesdays
- (2) Write a 300-word abstract outlining their final paper, due 1 April 2015 in class.
- (3) Write a 12-15 page paper (times new roman 12, folks, at least 3000 words) on some topic of interest related to the course, due by file attachment to btorbert@gmail.com as a Word document by 8 May 2015. Graduate students will be expected to write a seminar paper appropriate for a writing sample submitted with an application for further study, something more in the neighborhood of 15-20 pp.
- 4) Graduate students will present an informal, in-progress version of their paper project on 29 April 2015.

Class participation = 10%; Abstract = 10%; Final Paper = 60%; Journal Entries = 20% (300ish words)

Students who display heightened interest in O'Connor will be encouraged to submit an abstract to present their paper at the fall meeting of SAMLA or M/MLA. There is almost always at least one session on O'Connor.

IV. Content disclaimer. This course includes adult-directed reading of a mature nature. In particular, mid-twentieth century use of the racial epithet on the part of white characters is uncensored, and representative of that era. O'Connor's narrator also uses the epithet, although usually when portraying the consciousness of a white character in a negative light. Students are expected to deal with the material in a sensitive and mature manner.

V. Schedule of Readings

On the schedule that follows, you will see what works of fiction she wrote that we will examine on a given date. There will be other readings (usually critical work), either in your possession already, or uploaded to MyGateway. The extra readings will generally be short, and available to you not later than Friday the week before class on Wednesday. I have left them off this syllabus in order to maintain a little flexibility.

DATE	DAY	TOPIC/ASSIGNMENT
1/21	W	Introductions, some background
1/28	W	<i>The Geranium, The Barber, A Good Man is Hard to Find</i>
2/4	W	<i>The River, The Life You Save May Be Your Own</i>
2/11	W	<i>The Artificial Nigger, A Circle in the Fire</i>
2/18	W	<i>A Late Encounter with The Enemy, Good Country People</i>
2/25	W	<i>Wise Blood</i>
3/4	W	<i>Wise Blood</i>
3/11	W	<i>The Displaced Person</i>
3/18	W	<i>Everything that Rises Must Converge, Greenleaf</i>
4/1	W	<i>A View of the Woods, The Enduring Chill</i>
4/8	W	<i>The Violent Bear It Away</i>
4/15	W	<i>The Violent Bear It Away</i>
4/22	W	<i>Revelation, Parker's Back</i>
4/29	W	<i>Judgment Day</i> ; graduate students will present briefly
5/6	W	First half of <i>The Solace of Leaving Early</i>

VI. Office Hours and contact information

Lucas Hall 420 – TWR 1:00-2:00, R 3:30-4:30, but I'm around a lot more than that.

Contact: btorbert@gmail.com, Facebook chat, G-chat, (314) 236-1259

VII. Student Rights and Responsibilities

ATTENDANCE POLICY: You are allowed one absence, period. This is an upper-level, once-a-week seminar. Act like it. Exceptions will be made only for serious life crises. Speak to me if you experience such a situation.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: As in all classes at UMSL, students must adhere to University policies about cheating and plagiarism—see http://umsl.edu/studentlife/dsa/student_planner/policies/conductcode.htm

CIVILITY: UMSL lists university policies about our shared responsibilities as teachers and as students for creating a positive environment for learning. Our classroom must be an intellectually safe space. Refrain from using your cell phones in any fashion during class. We also need you to display respect for your fellow students. See http://www.umsl.edu/studentlife/dsa/student_planner/policies/positive.htm.

ACCESS/DISABILITY: Students who have special needs must meet with the campus access office in MSC 144. If you require special accommodations, please meet with me to discuss accessibility of disability needs.