

The Shape and Substance of Books

Thursdays, 12:30-3PM

Office: Ashe 309 Office Phone: 305.284.5573
email: mgalang@miami.edu Office Hours: by appointment, T/R

Required Reading:

Beloved, Morrison; A Pale View of Hills, Ishiguro; Mariette in Ecstasy, Hansen; Mrs. Bridge, Connell; House on Mango Street, Cisneros; Drown, Diaz; Feast of Love, Baxter; Georgia Underwater, Sellers; Sightseeing, Lapcharoensap.

Course Description: The Shape and Substance of Books will study the structure of short story collections, linked stories and novels built of chapters and/or vignettes. The course will focus on how structure reflects and deepens content, and how shape pushes story and theme forward. Similarly, the course will look at how substance shapes the body of the book, gives direction and order to chapters and stories.

Attendance: Since discussion is an integral part of our process to understanding literary works, regular attendance is essential. Students who miss more than two full sessions will not receive course credit. Furthermore, you are still responsible for work assigned or due on the day(s) you missed.

Annotations: Each week a short critical analysis of the book assigned is due. The annotation will be two to three pages in length, will focus on a particular aspect of the book's form in connection to its content, and will be typed. Each week I will return the annotations from the previous week with marginal responses and questions. You should have a minimum of six annotations.

Papers: There will be one Mid-Term paper and one Final Paper/Project. All papers will be typed, double-spaced. Papers that do not meet this requirement will be handed back ungraded. Late papers are not accepted.

Evaluation Criteria:

20%	--Book Annotations (a minimum of 6)
20%	--Mid-Term Paper
40%	--Final Project/Paper
20%	--Class Participation, In-class discussions and exercises.

100 %

M. Evelina Galang, Fall '05
The Shape and Substance of Books Syllabus

8/25

Introduction to the course: Themes/Obsessions/Form.

In Class Journal exercise and Discussion: Describe your body of work, or what you imagine your body of work to be.

9/1

THE NOVEL IN CHAPTERS.

Beloved, Morrison

9/8

Feast of Love, Baxter

9/15

A Pale View of Hills, Ishiguro

9/22

Summary of the novel. Take your body of work (or your imagined body of work) and examine it. If you were to cast this work as a novel – what shape would it take?

9/29

VIGNETTE/COLLAGES AS NOVEL.

Mrs. Bridge, Connell.

10/06

House on Mango Street, Cisneros.

10/13

Mariette in Ecstasy, Hansen.

10/20

SHORT PAPER DUE

Take the material that you laid out for your novel and re-imagine it as a novel in vignettes. Write three to five of the vignettes to share with the class. How would the story change? The intentions, themes and actions of the story change or would the book be the same as the novel in chapters? In addition to the vignettes, you may want to prepare a handout or visual that shows the material cast as the novel in chapter and then in vignettes.

10/27

SHORT STORY COLLECTIONS

Sightseeing, Lapcharoensap.

11/03

Georgia Underwater, Sellers.

11/10

Drown, Diaz

11/17

Summary on vignettes/collage as novel versus short story collections.

Take this same body of work (or different if you like) and cast it's shape as a collection of linked short stories. Write one of the stories from the collection for class. What are some of the benefits of writing the novel in a series of related short stories? What are some of the drawbacks? This would be a good time to consider the various structures we've explored – novel in chapters, in vignettes and now novel in linked

stories. How does the material you wish to explore evolve from one form to the next? Which of the three choices suites the story you would like to tell best? Please bring in a visual or hand out to help us see the three books you've dreamed up.

12/01

Present Final Projects : Projects Due. Meet in Galang Apartment, Hecht Residential Hall PT 113

The Shape and Substance of Books Papers and Projects

ANNOTATIONS

due date: the top of each class. 8 total, minimum of 6 needed.

An annotation for this course is a two to three page (typed, double spaced) critique on an aspect of shape or structure and its connection to the material of the book. Each week, you will turn in a copy of a critique and I will respond to the critique on the page. Hopefully this dialogue will not only focus our thoughts and discussion, but will instigate the connections between the reader's writing and the books. What techniques are working, what are failing, how might you apply the technique of shape and structure to your own writing?

SHORT PAPER

due date: 10/20. Beginning of the hour.

Choose one of the previous annotations and expand your analysis. Use specific examples from the text to show how the author is making or failing to make connections between form and content. Keep the short paper limited to five to six pages, typed, double spaced and CRITICAL.

FINAL PROJECT/PAPER

due date: 12/01. Present papers/projects to class. Hand in assignment.

Choose one of the following projects:

1. Take a look at your own body of work. Are you working on a novel, short story collection, a book of poems? Create a blue print, a possible house for your stories, your essays or your poems. What shape can you see in the body of work? How does the shape of the work reflect the material and content of your work? What might you do to rebuild in order to mirror meaning and shape? Perhaps you believe order and the reflection of content is not an integral part of the work. If so, explain. In other words, critique your own work for shape and substance. 15 to 20 pages, typed, double-spaced.
2. Take a look at your imagined books from this semester – the novel in chapters, the novel in vignettes and the novel as linked stories. Using the material you presented in class you can consider the pros and cons of choosing one form over the other. Consider the intentions of the book, the material itself, and how the shape of the book can further enhance the themes. Use specific examples from the presentations you gave as well as specific examples from the texts we've read to support your conversation. 15-20 pages, typed, double-spaced.
3. Choose one of the books we've read this semester to write an in depth critique of book's structure and its relationship to substance. 15 to 20 pages, typed, double-spaced.
4. Build a shape for your existing poems, stories or essays that somehow reflects and encourages your work's themes. Or you can take the seeds of creative work in the novel presentations you gave and go ahead and write the book (or a portion/s of the book). This choice goes beyond the blueprint option in number one, and asks you not only to organize the creative work, but to actually come up with the book (in progress, of course). For this option, you turn in the actual creative work along with a short treatment (five or so pages) explaining your vision, your reasons, your choices for substance and shape within your work. 15-20 pages, typed, double-spaced. Longer if you like.

