COURSE DESCRIPTION

. . . I have found that violence is strangely capable of returning my characters to reality and preparing them to accept their moments of grace. Their heads are so hard that almost nothing else will work. (O’Connor, “On Her Own Work,” Mysteries and Manners, p. 112)

“Reading Flannery O’Connor’s stories . . . I am exhilarated to the brink of fear,” writes literary critic Harold Bloom. “It is splendid that [she] was so outrageous, because our skepticism outraged her, and inspired her art.”

O’Connor’s “grotesque,” sardonic, outrageous fiction stands alone in American or any literature for its uncompromising treatment of issues of faith and nihilism, of the costs of not lying, of encounters with freaks and misfits and sociopaths, all somehow the products of lost or misguided faith in a faithless, misbegotten world. “Whenever I’m asked why Southern writers particularly have a penchant for writing about freaks, I say it is because we are still able to recognize one.”

This is a six-week class devoted to the reading a number of short stories by Flannery O’Connor, together with various of her critical essays and her first novel, Wise Blood. It focuses on O’Connor’s earlier work, with the idea that next summer we will move on to her later works.

REQUIRED TEXTS


## WEEKLY READING SCHEDULE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>TEXT/READING ASSIGNMENT</th>
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| **Week 1**  
Date: July 8 | O’Connor | “A Good Man is Hard to Find” and “The River” in *A Good Man is Hard to Find And Other Stories*  
“The Nature and Aim of Fiction” in *Mystery and Manners* (pp. 63-86) |
| **Week 2**  
Date: July 15 | O’Connor | “The Life You Save May Be Your Own” and “The Artificial Nigger” in *A Good Man is Hard to Find And Other Stories*  
“The Fiction Writer and His Country” and “Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction” in *Mystery and Manners* (pp. 25-50) |
| **Week 3**  
Date: July 22 | O’Connor | “Good Country People” and “The Displaced Person” in *A Good Man is Hard to Find And Other Stories*  
“Writing Short Stories” in *Mystery and Manners* (pp. 87-106) |
| **Week 4**  
Date: July 29 | O’Connor | *Wise Blood*, chaps. 1-7 |
| **Week 5**  
Date: August 5 | O’Connor | *Wise Blood*, chaps. 8-14  
“The Church and the Fiction Writer” and “On Her Own Work” in *Mystery and Manners* (pp. 143-53, 107-18) |
| **Week 6**  
Date: August 12 | O’Connor | *Wise Blood*, review whole  
“Noelist and Believer” in *Mystery and Manners* (pp. 154-68) |

This syllabus is a *summary of course objectives and content*, not a contract. All information in this syllabus is subject to change, with sufficient advance notice provided by the instructor.

### CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE
As we may be addressing controversial topics in our class discussions, we expect students to be respectful and considerate of others.

### DISABILITY INFORMATION
Student Disability Services (SDS) works to provide resources, support and accommodations for all students with disabilities and works to remove physical and attitudinal barriers, which may prevent their full participation in the University community. Students that would like to request accommodations should contact SDS in advance of the first class meeting at 773.702.6000 or disabilities@uchicago.edu.

You will receive an email invitation from UChicago Canvas inviting you to participate in the Canvas site for your course. “Accept” the invitation then sign-in or set up your Canvas account. For Help, visit: https://grahamschool.uchicago.edu/academic-programs/online/learning-resources/liberal-arts