

ENGL 7471: Forms of Fiction

Time in Fiction

Tuesdays 5:30-8:30pm

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No other medium can mold time as fiction can. In fiction, we can compress, expand, or rearrange time at will, covering years in a sentence or dwelling in a single moment for pages. Fictional time can move in a straight chronological line or zig-zag between eras. It can plod or race. It can reveal how the past haunts the present. It can color how past-ness of the past feels.

In every paragraph, fiction writers must be thinking about how to wield time. This means developing skill using language to drive or halt time and developing sensitivity to the subjective rhythms of temporal experience. In this seminar, we'll hone our ability to manipulate time within narrative structures and pace for impact, and we'll poke the strange oobleck of lived time and try to represent with precision how its passage is truly felt.

Our unit topics will include:

- Pageturner-ology: What creates forward narrative momentum?
- Chronotope: What gives a setting its "time-feel"?
- Dilation and Duration: What happens when time is slowed and expanded or when it is condensed?
- The Diamond Moment: How can we create a sense of concentrated presence?
- Past-ness: What makes a setting feel credibly past-like?
- Time Sickness: How is time reshaped by trauma, haunting, and forgetting?
- Green Time: How might climate catastrophe challenge Western linear time?

This course will focus on the novel and short story but should benefit any creative writer or lit scholar working with narrative forms. Final assignments may be tailored to students' needs. Concurrent enrollment in *ENGL 7602: Fiction Workshop* is welcomed—encouraged—but not required.

Required Texts:

- Nicholson Baker, *The Mezzanine*
- Eleanor Catton, *Birnam Wood*
- Evan Connell, *Mrs. Bridge*
- Ferdia Lennon, *Glorious Exploits*
- Edward P. Jones, *The Known World*

- Juan Rulfo, *Pedro Paramo*
- Emily Ruskovich, *Idaho*
- Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*
- ENGL 7471 Coursepack with work from James Baldwin, Walter Benjamin, Amitav Ghosh, Yasunari Kawabata, Julia Kristeva, Carlo Rovelli, and others.