

## **Great Literature In Miniature**

Hilary Roberts

Winter, 2024 OLLI UC Berkeley

Tuesdays, Jan. 21-Feb. 11 (4 sessions), 1-3 PM

In person, live-streamed + recorded.

### Course Description:

Miniature tales—“flash” or “micro” fiction—include everything we want from a short story: provocative themes, complex characters, bold imagery, and plot upshots that in the best cases take our breath away. But microfiction achieves these feats in less space—from a handful of words to as many as 2,000 (though usually fewer). Very short fiction is not a new genre; literary icons Kafka, Hemingway, and Chekhov pioneered the modern tiny story. Contemporary literary magazines increasingly showcase flash fiction.

Short form prose challenges writers to compose with economy and enhanced craft, similar to poetry-writing. Artful brevity can even de-familiarize our world and unveil startling insights. Together, we’ll delve into the enchantment wrought by microfiction authors Lydia Davis, George Saunders, Jamaica Kincaid, Anna Deavere Smith, Richard Brautigan, Joyce Carol Oates, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and some lesser-known up-and-comers.

As participants I encourage you, as you wish, to raise questions, comment on details of interest, and discuss these “miniature” perspectives on human nature and culture. Short texts give us the opportunity to read closely and flex our analytic skills. I’ll begin each discussion with contextual remarks and slides and as we proceed highlight particular story features for your consideration.

A hybrid course like this expands access and inclusivity. Our in-person “roomers” are invited to take turns speaking, so those online can easily hear the classroom proceedings. Zoomers, be sure to use the “hand raise” function to join in the discussion. All of the (short and sweet) assigned texts will be available on the OLLI portal, along with recordings of our meetings. Please plan to read the scheduled works beforehand for the best class experience.

Readings Calendar:

January 21

**“Sticks”** George Saunders

**“Girl”** Jamaica Kincaid

**“Men With Horses”** Peg Alford Pursell

January 28

**“Birds of the Americas: The American Robin (Turdus migratorius)”** Sean Lovelace

**“Curriculum”** Sejal Shah

**“Pacific Radio Fire”** Richard Brautigan

February 4

**“The Visitor”** Lydia Davis

**“Emergency Contact”** Marcus Tan

**“Hospice/Honeymoon”** Joyce Carol Oates

February 11

**“In Our Time”** Ernest Hemingway

**“Grace”** Anna Deavere Smith

**“One Of These Days”** Gabriel Garcia Marquez