Narrative Daily Schedule and Reading Assignment
for “Reconsidering Flannery O’Connor,” 1-30 July 2014

Preliminary Reading Assignment: NEH Summer Scholars are strongly encouraged to prepare for the Institute by reading materials that, if needed, we can provide by mail prior to the Institute:
O’Connor’s works assigned for seminars (from Flannery O’Connor: Collected Works); two books that will be assigned in seminars; and Brad Gooch’s biography Flannery. We will also provide Summer Scholars with the full list of seminar reading assignments and a list of assigned articles available online. NEH Summer Scholars should also consult The Manuscripts of Flannery O’Connor at Georgia College and Flannery O’Connor’s Library: Resources of Being in order to help refine their research/teaching goals for the Institute. These books are no longer in print, but NEH Summer Scholars should be able to find them through their home libraries or through interlibrary loan at their home institutions.

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Opening Activities—July 1-6, Tuesday-Sunday: These days will include orientation meetings, opening lectures, consultation with staff, and general welcome.

July 1, Tuesday: Arrival day, moving into dormitory, making financial arrangements, getting acquainted at evening reception at home of Elaine Whitaker, Chair of Georgia College Dept. of English and Rhetoric. Food at dormitory during moving-in and food at reception will be donated.

July 2, Wednesday: Presentations by Nancy Davis Bray and Joshua Kitchens on resources and regulations for the Georgia College O’Connor Collection. Tour of Georgia College Library and Instructional Technology Center.
July 3, Thursday: Self-introductions by Summer Scholars. Formation into seminar groups A, B, C.

Lecture by Avis Hewitt on research and teaching applications of the O’Connor Collection. Visit to O’Connor Room in Georgia College Museum.

July 4, Friday: Andalusia picnic for Independence Day, during which Summer Scholars will meet Elizabeth Wylie, Executive Director of the Flannery O’Connor-Andalusia Foundation, who will discuss ways in which Andalusia can assist in dissemination of Institute products. Film version of “The Displaced Person,” for which Andalusia farm provided the set, will be shown.

July 5, Saturday: Lectures by Sarah Gordon on O’Connor’s writing and cartooning while she was being educated in Milledgeville and by Robert Wilson on Milledgeville history. Visits to local sites: Old Governor’s Mansion, Old Capitol Museum, O’Connor’s Grave at Memory Hill Cemetery, Central State Hospital.

July 6, Sunday: Welcome party at home of Marshall Bruce Gentry and Alice Friman. Food will be donated.

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July 7: Group C works in O’Connor Collection.

Conferences with Ciuba and Fowler during day.

July 7: 7:30 pm Lecture by Ciuba, “Exposing the Victim / Victimizing the Exposé: Parody and Persecution in ‘The Partridge Festival’” (This address will explore
how O’Connor’s “The Partridge Festival,” a story set at Central State Hospital (visited July 5) radically reconsiders O’Connor’s own fiction. The short story re-examines her career-long concern with persecutors and the persecuted, and it self-consciously seeks a different fictional form for her demythologization of scapegoating.

**July 8:** Group C works in O’Connor Collection.

**July 8:** Seminar by Ciuba with Group A—

9 am-noon: Statement by Ciuba on “Reading O’Connor’s Violence I”: My seminar will reconsider my lecture, O’Connor’s fictional confrontation with what René Girard has identified as mimetic desire, sacred violence, and surrogate victimization, as well as Girardian readings of O’Connor. In the first session of the seminar, participants will study excerpts from *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* to gain a greater understanding of Girardian theory, particularly the role of imitative desire, scandal, violence, communal persecution, the pharmakos, sacrificial substitution, and the violent genesis of culture. Girard contends that the task of the novel is to expose the romance of desire and violence at the heart of culture. Members of the seminar will consider to what extent *A Good Man Is Hard to Find* accepts, struggles with, or rejects such an anti-sacrificial mission.

Readings:


1-4 pm: Statement by Ciuba on “Reading O’Connor’s Violence II”: In the second
session of the seminar, participants will study two examples of O’Connor criticism that have been written from a Girardian perspective. They will explore what gets revealed and what gets obscured by such readings as they focus on The Violent Bear It Away. Members of the seminar will consider how Girardian theory might be applied to viewing the current state of O’Connor studies. Finally, they will relocate the issues of “The Partridge Festival” to the very day and hour at GCSU by reconsidering how the NEH Institute itself might be viewed via Girard’s work as, if not “The Milledgeville Festival,” then at least a festival in Milledgeville.

Readings:

July 8: Seminar by Fowler with Group B—

Statement by Fowler: O’Connor wrote from 1952 to1964, years of racial upheaval in the American South, and her fiction analyzes and critiques a Southern resistance to racial integration. More specifically, O’Connor’s fiction traces the roots of this white Southern resistance to a fear of a loss of a white identity that seems to be distinguished by the dialectics of domination. According to Lacan and other theorists, identity depends on difference, and difference seems to require the marginalization of another in a binary opposition. For example, white is either white or it is black, one thing or the other; and if white and black are
similar or equal, then the meanings of both terms seem to be blurred. In story after story, O’Connor’s texts take up this troubling exclusionary, either-or logic to rethink and rewrite it. In this seminar, we will use psychoanalytic, deconstructive, and critical race theory to interpret O’Connor’s depiction of race as a signifier—or symbol—that is used in culture to mark and define a “white” identity. Our study will also be guided by Toni Morrison, who, in Playing in the Dark, maps out an overlooked area of critical investigation—the literary uses to which white writers put an invented “Africanist other.” In particular, we will focus on a challenge that Morrison issues to scholars of Flannery O’Connor’s fiction. In Playing in the Dark, she points out that critics of O’Connor’s fiction have yet to investigate the “connection between God’s grace and Africanist ‘othering’ in Flannery O’Connor” (14). We will take up the project that Morrison outlines—how race, as a marker of white and black identity, facilitates the action of grace in O’Connor’s fiction. In story after story, particularly in O’Connor’s later fiction, an often violent contact between black and white characters precipitates the action of grace. In “The Artificial Nigger,” the mysterious lawn statuary has a healing effect on Mr. Head and Nelson; in “Everything That Rises Must Converge,” the violent collision of the African American lady on the bus and Julian’s mother enables a moment of redemptive grace for Julian; in “Judgment Day,” a violent confrontation between Tanner and the black actor leads to a moment of grace. By reading these violent encounters through theoretical models like deconstruction, the uncanny double, and the social construction of race, we will explore the
mystery of why violent collisions with those who have been culturally defined as “other” become opportunities for grace.

9 am-noon: Statement by Fowler on “Reading Race in O’Connor Alongside Toni Morrison I”: We will review readings on Freud, Lacan, Derrida, Lopez, and Morrison, and then interpret the following works through these theoretical models: “The Geranium”; “The Barber,” “Wildcat,” “A Late Encounter with the Enemy.”

1-4 pm: Statement by Fowler on “Reading Race in O’Connor Alongside Toni Morrison II”: We will continue our analysis of the short fiction, focusing on these stories: “The Displaced Person,” “The Artificial Nigger,” “Greenleaf,” “A View of the Woods,” “The Enduring Chill,” “Everything That Rises Must Converge,” “Revelation,” and “Judgment Day.”

Readings for both sessions:

**July 9:** Group C works in O’Connor Collection.
Conferences with Ciuba and Fowler during day.

**July 9:** 7:30 pm Lecture by Fowler, “Flannery O’Connor’s Racial Politics”
**July 10:** Group C works in O’Connor Collection.

Seminar by Ciuba with Group B (see description and assignments under July 8)

Seminar by Fowler with Group A (see description and assignments under July 8)

7:30 pm Readings by Georgia College Creative Writing Faculty

**July 11:** Group C works in O’Connor Collection.

Conferences with Ciuba and Fowler during day.

**July 13, Sunday:** Field trip to Flannery O’Connor Childhood Home, Savannah.

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**July 14-18, Monday-Friday: Seminar Week Two:** “O’Connor on Religion and the Intellect” with Seminar Leaders Christina Bieber Lake and Robert H. Brinkmeyer, Jr.

**July 14:** Group B works in O’Connor Collection.

Conferences with Lake and Brinkmeyer during day.

**July 14:** 7:30 pm Lecture by Lake, “What Exactly is ‘Wise Blood’? Flannery O’Connor, Literary Darwinism, and the Question of Human Universals”

**July 15:** Group B works in O’Connor Collection.

**July 15:** Seminar by Lake with Group A—

Statement by Lake: Following the lead of E. O. Wilson in *Consilience*, a new generation of critics is arguing for a radical paradigm shift in knowledge acquisition in the humanities. A pioneer in the field of sociobiology, Wilson insists that what we need to know about human nature and culture can be learned primarily from adaptive evolutionary theory—and not from theology or philosophy. Working together in a field commonly called Literary Darwinism, an increasing number of critics are drawing upon new research in cognitive
psychology, neuroscience, and evolutionary theory to reconsider a wide range of literary texts. This criticism boldly and unapologetically rejects all constructivist and theological accounts of human nature in its effort to explain elements of stories and the storytelling impulse in terms of biologically determined universals. In this seminar we will endeavor to answer the question of the utility of this new paradigm for literary studies in general as well as for the treatment of O’Connor’s work in particular, in order to move later toward a consideration of how O’Connor’s work addresses the ethical ramifications of materialist conceptions of human nature.

9 am-noon: Statement by Lake on “O’Connor and Literary Darwinism”: The first session is designed to continue the conversation I hope to start in my evening lecture.

Readings:

1-4 pm: Statement by Lake on “O’Connor and the Ethics of Personhood”: We will turn to “Parker’s Back,” “Introduction to A Memoir of Mary Ann” and The Violent Bear It Away to consider implications of this trend for the ethics of personhood. By reading together sections of Robert Spaemann’s theological
anthropology, as well as Marilynne Robinson’s rejection of parascientific
accounts of the human person in *Absence of Mind*, we will consider the ways that
O’Connor’s prose is consonant with rich accounts of the imagination even as it
resists the reductive tendencies of naturalist materialist philosophy.

Readings:
Robinson, Marilynne. *Absence of Mind: The Dispelling of Inwardness from the
Spaemann, Robert. “Introduction” and Chap. 18 “Are All Human Beings
Persons?” in *Persons: The Difference between 'Someone' and 'Something'.
O’Connor, Flannery. “Parker’s Back,” “Introduction to A Memoir of Mary Ann,”
and *The Violent Bear It Away*.

**July 15:** Seminar by Brinkmeyer with Group C—

9 am-noon: Statement by Brinkmeyer on “O’Connor and Southern
Fundamentalism”: This seminar will explore Flannery O’Connor’s attitudes
toward and relationship with Southern fundamentalism. After first establishing the
tensions between the fundamentalism of Southern culture in which O’Connor
lived and the Roman Catholicism of her belief, the seminar will explore how and
why O’Connor found these tensions invigorating, even nurturing, for her as
believer and artist. The seminar will focus on several of O’Connor’s essays from
*Mystery and Manners, Wise Blood*, several of her stories, and selected secondary
criticism.

Readings:
Brinkmeyer, Robert H., Jr. “‘Jesus, Stab Me in the Heart!’: *Wise Blood,
Wounding, and Sacramental Aesthetics*,” in *New Essays on Wise Blood*.
---. “A Closer Walk with Thee: Flannery O’Connor and Southern
the Modern Protestant South in *Wise Blood*,” in *Wise Blood: A


1-4 pm: Statement by Brinkmeyer on “O’Connor, the Intellectual and the Anti-Intellectual”: This seminar will explore O’Connor’s conflicted feelings toward intellectuals and intellectual endeavor. Despite being an intellectual herself, widely and deeply read, particularly in literature and theology, O’Connor was deeply skeptical of pursuits of the mind. In her letters, she often casually (and comically) dismissed her own intellectualism, and in her fiction she repeatedly brought intellectuals under her withering gaze and criticism. This seminar will explore O’Connor’s paradoxical “intellectual anti-intellectualism,” examining ways in which O’Connor embraced and made use of the anti-intellectualism of her Southern culture, all the while that she remained a staunch intellectual, a thinker and believer characterized by one critic as a “Hillbilly Thomist.”

O’Connor’s anti-intellectualism in her self-representation, her faith, and her fiction will be examined.

Readings:


O’Connor, Flannery. “The Lame Shall Enter First,” “Revelation,” and “Everything That Rises Must Converge”; *The Violent Bear It Away,* selected letters from *The Habit of Being,* selected book reviews from *The Presence of Grace and Other Book Reviews*

July 16: Group B works in O’Connor Collection.
Conferences with Lake and Brinkmeyer during day.

July 16: 7:30 pm Lecture by Brinkmeyer, “Reading Flannery O’Connor Alongside Eudora Welty”

July 17: Group B works in O’Connor Collection.
Seminar by Lake with Group C (see description and assignments under July 15)
Seminar by Brinkmeyer with Group A (see description and assignments under July 15)

July 18: Group B works in O’Connor Collection.
Conferences with Lake and Brinkmeyer during day.

* July 19, Saturday: Field trip to Emory University, Atlanta, with lecture by W. A. Sessions on O’Connor-related collections at Emory.


July 21: Group A works in O’Connor Collection.
Conferences with Wray and Gooch during day.

July 21: 7:30 pm Lecture by Wray, “‘So Much to Be Thankful For’: Maritain Introduces Aquinas to the Modern World”

July 22: Group A works in O’Connor Collection.

July 22: Seminar by Wray with Group B—
9 am-noon: Statement by Wray on “‘One of my own’: Flannery O’Connor, Charity, and Accusations of Racism I”: I want the seminar to look closely at several stories in order to come to a common definition of what constitutes bad (or good) moral or ethical behavior in O’Connor’s fiction. By the end of the morning I will have invited discussion of charity and begun to bring into our discussion Aquinas’ thoughts on charity.

Readings:

1-4 pm: Statement by Wray on “‘One of my own’: Flannery O’Connor, Charity, and Accusations of Racism II”: I want us to take our working conclusions from the morning session about good and bad behaviors and apply them to several O’Connor texts that contain African American characters. We will expand our definition of bad behavior to include racism, a task that likely will not be as easy as participants might expect it to be. We will conclude by turning our attention to the numerous accusations of racism aimed at O’Connor herself in the early 1990s after her correspondence with her friend Maryat Lee was made public. I hope that further discussion of Aquinas on charity and the theory of “ethic of
responsibility” that Susan Srigley argues in her *Flannery O’Connor’s Sacramental Art* can put such *ad hominem* accusations to rest.

Readings:
(Or:  http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/arts/al0074.html)

**July 22:** Seminar by Gooch with Group C—

9am-noon: Statement by Gooch on “Was Flannery O’Connor a Mystic? From ‘A Prayer Journal’ to ‘Revelation’”: I was recently on a panel in Key West on the topic of mystic writers. I was speaking on Rumi; Edmund White on Rimbaud; Paul Mariani on Gerard Manley Hopkins. The moderator said, “Of course Flannery O’Connor was a mystic!” I disagreed, saying that she certainly would never have thought of herself in those terms. Sarah Gordon was in the audience that day and she told me that she thought I was quite right on that score. Yet looking at O’Connor’s recently released “A Prayer Journal,” she writes, “I would like to be a mystic and immediately!” As with all things O’Connor, the answer to the question I’ve posed for this seminar is not simple. But to try to get closer to a full answer, I propose looking with NEH Summer Scholars at the train of clues, and decoys, left by O’Connor on this issue, with special attention to her “Prayer Journal,” her “Hillbilly Thomist” pose examined in my published talk “Thirteenth-Century Lady,” her stories, especially “The Temple of the Holy Ghost” and “Revelation,” and her
relationship to Teilhard de Chardin, in reviews and letters. We will look at the issue biographically rather than with an essentialist bias, discovering the meaning of “mystic” to her at different stages of life.

1-4pm: Statement by Gooch on “Flannery Among the New Critics: Autobiography and Intimacy in ‘The Life you Save May Be Your Own,’ ‘Good Country People,’ ‘The Enduring Chill,’ and ‘Revelation’”: Flannery O’Connor was deeply influenced by the New Critics, much in vogue when she studied at the Iowa Writers Workshop. We will first look at T.S. Eliot’s critical essay “Traditional and the Individual Talent” to establish a baseline of New Criticism, and then we will look at some of O’Connor’s own statements about the relationship between biography and literature. New Critic or not, like Eliot, O’Connor was invested in complicating the relationship between life and art for anyone interested in that connection in her work, as in her funny, and perhaps coy, insistence that “…there won’t be any biographies of me because, for only one reason, lives spent between the house and chicken yard do not make exciting copy.” After examining theoretical issues, touching on the differences between modern and post-modern approaches to the nexus of life and art, we will spend the second half of the seminar in close readings of four stories of O’Connor’s that tease out the issues of biographical reading of her work: “The Life You Save May Be Your Own,” “Good Country People,” “The Enduring Chill,” and “Revelation.” We will discuss the tact needed to teach and write well about O’Connor’s work biographically.

Readings:

Required:
Eliot, T.S. “Tradition and the Individual Talent”
Gooch, Brad. FLANNERY: A Life
O’Connor, Flannery. *A PRAYER JOURNAL*
*COLLECTED WORKS*: “A Temple of the Holy Ghost”; “Revelation”
*SPIRITUAL WRITINGS*

Recommended:
Elie, Paul. *THE LIFE YOU SAVE MAY BE YOUR OWN*
Giannone, Richard. *FLANNERY O’CONNOR: HERMIT NOVELIST*

**July 22**: 7:30 pm: Lecture by Nagueyalti Warren on topic of race in O’Connor.

**July 23**: Group A works in O’Connor Collection.

Conferences with Wray and Gooch during day.

**July 23**: 7:30 pm: Lecture by Gooch, “Flannery and Brad: A Rocky Relationship”

**July 24**: Group A works in O’Connor Collection.

Seminar by Wray with Group C (see description and assignments under July 22)

Seminar by Gooch with Group B (see description and assignments under July 22)

**July 25**: Group A works in O’Connor Collection.

Conferences with Wray and Gooch during day.

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**Closing Activities—July 28-29, Monday-Tuesday**: Final writing and consultation period, reports by the participants on their accomplishments during Institute / plans for future, with feedback from Gentry and Donahoo. Elizabeth Wylie will consult with NEH Summer Scholars about dissemination of Institute results through the Andalusia website.

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July 30, Wednesday: Departure day, with final wrap-up work with some participants as needed.