Geaux Read examines short stories, student opinion at club meetings

The lights on the university side of Johnston Street provide ample light to previously dark stretch of sidewalk. The right side of the street shows the darkness that previously occupied all of Johnston Street.

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A new student-run organization offers bibliophiles a chance to share their opinions about a weekly assigned, fictional short story, including thoughts on authors and themes.

Geaux Read UL is a space for students to discuss assigned readings and "to foster liberal arts discussion" as Kai Duckworth, a freshman political science major and club co-president, said.

"One of our goals is to bring in people who don’t always have a chance to read literature," he said.

The club meets on Thursdays at 5 p.m. at Jazzman's Cafe in the Edith Garland Dupre Library.

At the last meeting, attendees discussed the short story "Sonny’s Blues" by James Baldwin and took turns to add their thoughts. Duckworth said discussions generally work with short stories, because it allows the club to have a diverse conversation with both literary and social values.

"I've been going to every meeting since I heard about it four weeks ago," said Dalton Earl, a freshman informatics major. "Even if it's non-fiction, I enjoy learning and escapism is a large part of it, too."

Duckworth mentioned the group of students is not yet an official club, but they’re moving in the right direction. Students have to meet consistently for one full semester before they can start the process of becoming an official club.

The process includes assembling a club constitution, ensuring a certain number of members and acquiring a letter from a faculty member who will be the club adviser.

"I'd like to give a shout out to Jodi Johnson, our club sponsor, who inspired the club to start with," Duckworth added.

He said he took one of Johnson's American literature courses and it encouraged him to meet other like-minded readers.

"We try to make the club open to all," Duckworth said. "There are no dues. Anyone can join in and all the materials for discussion are online. Basically, we all grab seats in Jazzman’s, talk about our day and the readings."

"I think it's about expanding points of view," said Maggie Bradley, a freshman English major and the other club co-president. "At a collegiate level, it's hard to get yourself out there. We help explore new perspectives and opinions."

"I didn’t always enjoy reading, but overtime reading put me into new circumstances and helped me understand people," said Laura McDonald, a freshman biology major and club vice president, said she didn’t always like reading, but it eventually led her to new situations and helped her understand other people.

"When I got to college, I was not finding any enriching conversation, and joining this club has gotten me to talk to people I wouldn’t have otherwise," McDonald said.

Bradley said usually about 10 people attend the meetings and every week they decide what they are going to read next by email.

"We read ‘Siddhartha,'" Bradley added. "Most everyone was open to expressing their opinion, and we tried to make it comfortable for all."

Bradley said what surprised her most about starting the club was "the dedication of members to willingly read, make it to meetings and discuss whatever kind of fiction was thrown at them."

For more information about meetings, email geauxreadull@gmail.com.