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American Literature: 1865-Present (ENGL 242)

Course Overview: In this course we will undertake the daunting task of surveying American literature since 1865. While no course can claim to cover all (or even most) literature from this expansive period, a wide array of readings have been chosen to foster a broad understanding of early American literature and culture. Along the way we will ground these writings in their proper historical context, taking note of thematic trends while also locating critical divergences among writers and texts. You will likely notice that the list of assigned readings remains highly “canonical” throughout. One key aim of this class, however, will be to ask open-ended questions regarding canon formation:

- Why are certain texts included in the canon to the exclusion of others?
- How has the canon developed and changed over the period we will study?
- How might we challenge the characteristics of canon formation that we identify?
- What are the benefits *and* problems with generally accepted canons of literature?

Our specific goals in this course will align with the larger goals of major-level English courses. Such courses are intended to give students the necessary skills to:

1. Interpret texts within diverse literary, cultural, and historical contexts.
2. Demonstrate a general knowledge of the social and structural aspects of the English language.
3. Demonstrate a range of contextually effective writing strategies.

Required Texts: Please purchase the following texts (note that you must acquire the 8th edition of the Norton Anthologies):

Baym, Nina, Ed. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: Volume C (1865-1914)*. 8th ed. New York: Norton, 2012.

Baym, Nina, Ed. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: Volume D (1914-1945)*. 8th ed. New York: Norton, 2012.

Baym, Nina, Ed. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: Volume E (1945-Present)*. 8th ed. New York: Norton, 2012.

Participation: Participation implies more than simply showing up for class. I expect you to complete all readings and come to class ready to discuss what you’ve read. In short, I’ll rely on each of you to keep class discussion moving forward and to maintain a positive attitude about the contributions of your peers.

Reading Quizzes: To ensure that you are completing assigned readings, we will have regular unannounced reading quizzes. These quizzes are not meant to deceive you and are only intended to gauge whether or not you have completed the readings. In other words, if you read and spend some time thinking about the texts before class, these should not be difficult. Please note that while there is no formal attendance policy for the course, **you must be in class (and on time) to receive credit for the quiz**. If you are absent or come to class late you will not be permitted to make up the quiz. At the end of the semester I will drop your two lowest quiz grades.

Attendance: You are expected to attend all classes. If you know that you will be missing class, please let me know so that I can get you any necessary materials. In the event of unforeseen circumstances that require you to miss a significant number of classes, please contact the Office of Student Life at (304) 293-5611 or studentlife@mail.wvu.edu.

Tests: There will be four tests this term. These tests will consist of passage identification and analysis, multiple choice, and short answer. You will need to purchase a blue book for each test.

Final Exam: The final exam will be cumulative. It will ask you to demonstrate familiarity with texts across the entire semester and will be held in our regular classroom on Wednesday, May 8 from 8-10am.

Office Hours: While my office hours are Monday 10:30-11:30 and Tuesday 10-11, I am available at other times to meet. Please don't hesitate to set up a meeting with me if you have any questions or concerns. I'm happy to answer quick questions by email but I'd prefer to meet in person to discuss your progress in the course.

Plagiarism: Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Penalties range from an "F" on the plagiarized assignment to an "Unforgivable F" in the course. If you have any questions about how the university defines academic dishonesty, please feel free to ask me or consult the WVU student handbook.

Cell Phone Policy: Please silence your cell phones during class. If I notice you texting during class I will ask you to leave the classroom. If you are expecting an important (i.e. emergency) call, please let me know before class begins.

Grade Breakdown:

Test 1:	10%
Test 2:	10%
Test 3:	10%
Test 4:	10%
Reading Quizzes:	15%
Participation:	15%
Final Exam:	30%

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Disability Services (293-6700).

Reading Schedule Subject to Slight Changes. Readings should be completed before the date listed.

Region and Realism

1/14	M	Course introductions; Syllabus overview
1/16	W	Twain: "Fenimore's Literary Offenses" (C. 325-334), <i>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> I-IX (C. 130-62)
1/18	F	Twain: <i>Huck Finn</i> X-XXV (C. 162-235)
1/21	M	No Class: University Holiday
1/23	W	Twain: <i>Huck</i> XXVI-End (C. 235-309)
1/25	F	Jewett: "The Foreigner" (C. 533-50)
1/28	M	Harte: "The Luck of Roaring Camp" (C. 353-60), "Tennessee's Partner" (C. 367-373)
1/30	W	James: <i>Daisy Miller</i> (C. 421-39)
2/1	F	James: <i>Daisy Miller</i> (C. 439-59)
2/4	M	Test 1
2/6	W	Chestnutt: "The Passing of Grandison" (C. 714-26)

2/8	F	Du Bois: <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> (C. 885-901), Dunbar “We Wear the Mask” (C. 1033)
2/11	M	Sa: <i>The School Days of an Indian Girl</i> (C. 1093-1100), Winnemucca: <i>Life Among the Piutes</i> (C. 508-17)
2/13	W	Gilman: “The Yellow Wall-paper” (C. 792-803), “Why I Wrote...” (C. 804)
2/15	F	Wharton: “The Other Two” (C. 814-27)

Experiments in Modernism

2/18	M	Eliot: <i>The Waste Land</i> (D. 378-91)
2/20	W	Eliot: <i>The Waste Land</i> (continued)
2/22	F	Stevens: Selected Poems (D. 283-95)
2/25	M	Williams: Selected Poems (D. 304-13)
2/27	W	Frost: Selected Poems (D. 241-50)
3/1	F	Test 2
3/4	M	Anderson: <i>Winesburg, Ohio</i> (D. 265-78), Masters: Selected Poems (D. 37-39)
3/6	W	Toomer: <i>Cane</i> (D. 647-57)
3/8	F	Hughes: Selected Poems (D. 871-80)
3/11	M	O’Neill: <i>Long Day’s Journey Into Night</i> Act 1-2 (D. 402-40)
3/13	W	O’Neill: <i>Long Day’s Journey Into Night</i> Act 3-End (D. 441-80)
3/15	F	Fitzgerald: “Babylon Revisited” (D. 675-89)
3/18	M	Faulkner: “Barn Burning” (D. 800-12)
3/20	W	Hemingway: “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” (D. 826-42)
3/22	F	Test 3

Spring Break

Post-Nuclear America

4/1	M	Warren: “American Portrait: Old Style” (E. 33-37)
4/3	W	Cheever: “The Swimmer” (E. 157-65)
4/5	F	Baldwin: “Going to Meet the Man” (E. 424-36)
4/8	M	O’Connor: “Good Country People” (E. 445-58)
4/10	W	Roth: “Defender of the Faith” (E. 647-68)
4/12	F	Pynchon: “Entropy” (E. 725-36)
4/15	M	Ginsberg: “Howl” (E. 492-99)
4/17	W	Plath: Selected Poems (E. 625-35), Kincaid: “Girl” (E. 1181-2)
4/19	F	Wilson: <i>Fences</i> Act 1 (E. 929-56)
4/22	M	Wilson: <i>Fences</i> Act 2 (E. 956-75)
4/24	W	Shepard: <i>True West</i> Act 1 (E. 870-87)
4/26	F	Shepard: <i>True West</i> Act 2 (E. 887-909)
4/29	M	Test 4
5/1	W	Final Exam Review Session
5/3	F	Closing Thoughts, Course Evaluations
5/8	W	Final Exam, 8-10am