

DAN TRIPP ONLINE

My Teaching: English 242

Department of English, West Virginia University

"Tales for an Accelerated Culture" American Literature 2, Fall 2001

Instructor: Daniel Tripp
English 242, Fall 2001
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Overview:

American literature since the Civil War has been marked significantly by the perception that the world is changing faster than ever before--faster, even, than our abilities to make sense of our environment around us. Alvin Toffler calls this, "Future Shock," and he means this phrase to represent those moments of anxiety and confusion that we experience when something new develops for which we're not quite ready. Like Toffler, American writers have tried to put a name on the changes they have seen in their world. Some have tried to make the world manageable, perhaps even understandable, by shaping it a certain way through language. Others have set out to show the impossibility of doing any such thing. All of this is the long way of saying that before there were such things as Reality-based TV programs, there were programs called, "Realism," "Irrealism," and "Hyper-realism," not on television but in books and stories and poems. These programs were aesthetic and stylistic movements, and American writers often participated in them both consciously and unconsciously as they set out to capture in words the worlds they experienced around them.

In addition to providing an introductory overview to American literature from the Civil War to the end of the millennium, this class will examine the ways in which the literature of this period was shaped and defined by notions of accelerated change. We will examine writing as a medium--as a mode of representation--and how writers have tried to use this medium to make sense of a modernizing world. We will pay special attention to how notions of aesthetics and literary forms have evolved over the past century and a half in response to rapid advancements in industry and technology. We will also study how American writers have responded to competition offered by other, emergent media, such as film, television, and the internet. And finally, we will think about the role that literature has played, and continues to play, in our conceptualizations of America's past, present, and future.

Required Texts:

Anthology of American Literature: Realism to the Present. 7th ed. Eds. George McMichael, et al. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2000.

Weekly Reading Schedule:

http://www.as.wvu.edu/~dtripp/eng242_readings.html

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. If a situation arises which will cause excessive absences, you might want to consider dropping the class and taking it again at a later date.

Late Work:

I do not accept late work. If you miss a pop-quiz, you will not be allowed to make it up. If an emergency arises, you must contact me ahead of time to be granted an extension. I reserve the right, however, to deny extensions.

Participation:

The quality of this class rests largely on your participation; therefore, your participation will be factored into your final grade. I ask that you come to class prepared; completing all reading assignments will help you to participate actively in class discussions. I will also ask that you come prepared to discuss at least one aspect or issue related to the readings for the day--this way, you'll always have something to say if I call on you. You should also expect surprise reading quizzes from time to time--they will be part of your final grade as well. If you have any problems with an assignment, I'll be glad to answer your questions either during my office hours or by email.

Writing Assignments:

Each of the following components is designed to help you engage the materials of the course and to promote critical thinking, reading, and writing. You will be expected to complete three exams and to take a number of pop-quizzes on the readings.

Grading:

Exam 1: 20%
Exam 2: 25%
Exam 3: 25%
Quizzes: 20%
Participation: 10%
100 pts

I encourage you to keep a record of your grades as the semester progresses. Final grades will be awarded according to the following measures:

A+ (97-100) A (93-96.99) A- (90-92.99)
B+ (87-89.99) B (83-86.99) B- (80-82.99)
C+ (77-79.99) C (73-76.99) C- (70-72.99)
D+ (67-69.99) D (63-66.99) D- (60-62.99)
F (below 60)

Learning Environment:

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I support that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. WVU does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, or national origin. Any suggestions concerning ways to further a positive and open environment in this class will be welcomed.