

English 347: American Literature 1865-1915

Dr. Michael Germana

Fall 2008

Section W01 11:30-12:45 TR 313 Armstrong

Email: Michael.Germana@mail.wvu.edu

Office hours: 2:30-4:00 TR and by appointment, 207 Colson Hall

Required Materials:

To Purchase from the WVU Bookstore:

- James Nagel and Tom Quirk, *The Portable American Realism and Naturalism Reader*
- Cathy N. Davidson and Ada Norris, *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings by Zitkala-Sa*
- James Weldon Johnson, *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*
- Frank Norris, *McTeague: A Story of San Francisco*
- Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Online Resources:

- Readings marked "ereserves" available on .pdf files via electronic reserve:
 - <http://ereserves.lib.wvu.edu/> (username: **germana**, password: **446**)
- "Making of America" (MOA) databases at Cornell and Michigan:
 - <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa/>
 - <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moagrp/>

Introduction:

When the Civil War came to a close in April of 1865, a new era in American history began. So too did a new chapter in American cultural history open as a period of tectonic social and political changes got underway. In this course we will study the major genres, authors, themes, and topics of American literature during this tumultuous period. In the process, we will examine the cultural politics of Reconstruction, the Gilded Age, and the Progressive Era through the lens of American fiction.

Assignments:

As befits a "W" course, the writing and revising processes constitute a significant portion of your overall work for this course. Over the course of the semester you will produce two papers—a critical review essay and a substantial research paper each totaling 10 or more pages—as well as four independent research reports of 500+ words each. Detailed descriptions of each of these assignments can be found below. **Failure to complete any one of the assignments will constitute failure of the course.** All assignments must be printed, not handwritten, in 12-point Times or Times New Roman, double-spaced, and properly documented in MLA style. **Late work will not be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made and approved by Dr. Germana.**

Research Reports:

Throughout the semester you will complete four research reports, each 500 words or longer. To complete each of these reports, you must use the MLA bibliography in conjunction with online resources like JSTOR, Project MUSE, and/or EBSCOHost to find, read, and analyze a single work of substantial scholarship on a topic, theme, author, or text of your choosing, just so long as it is relevant to the course material covered since the last research report's due date. Your research report should begin with a lucid characterization and summary of the argument made by the scholar or scholars whose work you found. This summary must then be followed by a critical response from you that engages with and responds to the scholar or scholars of the secondary source. Remember, you're working toward constructing an argument of your own, so trashing the scholar for his or her writing style isn't going to get you very far. Consider instead how you might respond as a scholar of equal caliber by asking and answering critical questions like: How has this scholar's argument influenced your reading of the text? What has he or she overlooked, in your opinion? Etc. Finally, you must provide a bibliographic citation of the article you found in MLA format. Tentative grades and suggestions for revision and/or further inquiry will be provided in response to each research report.

Critical Review Essay:

The critical review essay (10+ pages) will be drawn primarily from the research reports described above. This assignment requires you to rework no less than three of the research reports you wrote into a coherent essay that explores common threads in the scholarship you examined. Please note that this essay encourages you to use your research reports to map out a scholarly conversation around a topic of your choosing. So, for example, if you used your first research report to summarize and respond to a critical essay on gender stereotypes in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, then you would be wise to continue this thread by examining, say, how another scholar treats Zitkala-Sa's use of such stereotypes. This will enable you to more thoroughly research a topic of your interest as the semester progresses, and provide you with the opportunity to revise and refine your ideas for the final research paper. Because you provided bibliographic entries in MLA format for your research reports, constructing the "Works Cited" page for this assignment will be a piece of cake. Just be sure to include it.

Final Research Paper:

The final research paper (10+ pages) should be your crowning achievement in this course. A detailed description of this assignment will be provided sometime around midterm, but the gist is pretty straightforward. You must develop a thesis that is informed by your secondary research, and support this thesis with evidence from the primary source or sources you choose to examine. **No fewer than three secondary sources are required.** You may use one or more of the articles you analyzed in your research reports and/or critical review essay, but be forewarned: simply plunking your analysis of the secondary source(s) from these documents into your paper whole cloth is ill advised (if not reckless). As you might expect, the revision process is necessary here, too. Also, you will more likely than not need to supplement your research with additional secondary sources depending upon the topic you choose. I will be happy to assist you in this process, just so long as you ask me for help sooner rather than later.

Portfolio:

The final grade will be determined by portfolio system. The portfolio will contain all of your tentatively graded research reports, the critical review essay, and the final research paper. It will

also contain an introductory narrative (~ 2 pages) in which you chronicle the processes that brought you to your final project and characterize what kinds of decisions and revisions you made along the way. What matters most, in the end, is the quality of the work contained in the portfolio. In other words, if you received a tentative grade of 75% on one of your research reports, but you then clearly revised and improved upon the content and delivery of this report when you incorporated it into your critical review essay, then your portfolio grade will reflect the improvement. **Note: you are strongly advised to make revisions to your research reports as the semester progresses.** It is much easier to make minor changes along the way than wait until the last minute to make major changes at that time.

Grading System:

Final portfolio consisting of narrative, graded research reports, critical review essay, and final research paper: 80%
 Participation, including pop quizzes: 20%

All assignments will be graded on a 100-point scale with grade ranges as follows:

+	100-98	+	89-88	+	79-78	+	69-68		
A	97-92	B	87-82	C	77-72	D	67-62	F	59-0
-	91-90	-	81-80	-	71-70	-	61-60		

Attendance Policy:

Because participation counts for 20% of your grade you have to show up and contribute. After all, you can't participate in the discussion if you aren't here. Periodic pop quizzes will be administered to verify that you're keeping up with the reading. Also bear in mind that some days (e.g., workshop days) count more than other days since your classmates will depend on you more to help them fulfill their assignments. You can miss up to three non-workshop, non-assignment-due dates without penalty. Choose your three days judiciously. Subsequent absences will drop your attendance and participation grade one letter grade per day. A failing grade for the course will be recorded for any student with seven or more absences.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the (mis)representation of someone else's work as your own. It may be direct (e.g., not documenting a quoted source) or indirect (paraphrasing ideas, thoughts, etc. without due credit). In either case, neglecting to acknowledge sources for outside material is a serious offence and may result in failure for the assignment and possibly the course. Please see me if you are not sure about how to use or acknowledge certain materials.

Social Justice Statement:

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, veterans' 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).

Additional Resources:

The WVU Writing Center is committed to helping students become better writers. For more information about the Writing Center, including its hours, how to make appointments, and additional resources, visit their webpage at http://www.as.wvu.edu/english/writing_center/

The Downtown Library also hosts a term paper clinic throughout the semester. Scheduling details TBA.

Contact Information:

If you have questions about the course or concerns you would like to share, please contact me via email at Michael.Germana@mail.wvu.edu. But *please* do not write to ask me for lecture notes or to request a summary of what you missed on any given day. If you miss class and need class notes, ask one of your classmates.

Course Calendar:

August:

- 19 T Introduction/s
The Cultural Politics of Reconstruction and the Limits of Romanticism
- 21 R Constance Fenimore Woolson, "Rodman the Keeper" (Nagel and Quirk 47-71)
- 26 T George Washington Cable, "The Story of Bras-Coupé" (ereserves) + Mark Twain, "A True Story, Repeated Word for Word as I Heard It" *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1874 (MOA-Cornell)
- 28 R **research methodology overview—class meets in room 136 of the Downtown Library**

September:

- 2 T Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Chapters I-XVIII
- 4 R Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Chapters XIX-XXXII
- 9 T Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Chapters XXXIII-Chapter the Last + **research report one due**
Regionalism, Local Color, and the Shifting Shape of the American Cultural Landscape
- 11 R Bret Harte, "The Luck of Roaring Camp" (Nagel and Quirk 8-17) + Bret Harte, "Plain Language From Truthful James" *Overland Monthly*, September 1870 (MOA-Michigan) + Hamlin Garland "Up the Coolly" (ereserves)

- 16 T Zitkala-Sa, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood" + "The School Days of an Indian Girl" + "The Soft-Hearted Sioux" (all three stories contained in *Zitkala-Sa: American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*)
- 18 R Zitkala-Sa, "The Red Man's America" + "America, Home of the Red Man" + "The Coronation of Chief Powhatan Retold" (all three selections contained in *Zitkala-Sa: American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings*) + **research report two due**
Gender, Race, and Class in American Realism
- 23 T Henry James, "The Real Thing" (Nagel and Quirk 233-254)
- 25 R Mary Wilkins Freeman, "The Revolt of 'Mother'" (Nagel and Quirk 208-222) + Sui Sin Far, "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" (Nagel and Quirk 438-448)
- 30 T Charles Chesnutt, "The Sheriff's Children" (Nagel and Quirk 170-185) + Kate Chopin, "Désirée's Baby" (Nagel and Quirk 269-274)

October:

- 2 R James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, Chapters 1-3
- 7 T James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, Chapters 4-11 + **research report three due**
Naturalism and its Contradictions
- 9 R Jack London, "To Build a Fire" (Nagel and Quirk 537-551)
- 14 T Stephen Crane, "The Open Boat" (Nagel and Quirk 466-487) + Hamlin Garland, "Under the Lion's Paw" (Nagel and Quirk 487-499)
- 16 R Theodore Dreiser, "Curious Shifts of the Poor" (Nagel and Quirk 499-508) + Theodore Dreiser, "The Second Choice" (Nagel and Quirk 551-568)
- 21 T Frank Norris, *McTeague*, Chapters 1-9
- 23 R Frank Norris, *McTeague*, Chapters 10-12
- 28 T Frank Norris, *McTeague*, Chapters 13-19
- 30 R Frank Norris, *McTeague*, Chapters 20-22 + **research report four due**

November:

- 6 R student conferences—class does not meet
- 11 T **final paper topic workshop—final paper thesis statement (~ 1p) due**
- 13 R research day—class meets in the Downtown Library
- 18 T research day—class meets in the Downtown Library
- 20 R **final paper draft workshop—first draft (~ 5-10 pp) due**
 ---Thanksgiving Recess---

December:

- 2 T **final paper draft workshop—second draft due**
- 4 R **final portfolio due** + course evaluations administered