

Engl. 242: American Identities/American Memories



ENGL 242/001: American Literature II
Fall 2012, MWF 10:30-11:20 AM
Chitwood Hall, 102

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Office Hours Monday and Wednesday: 1:30-2:30
and by appointment

Course Description

What is an American? Although we will not answer this question in a single semester, we will propose a variety of *answers* to it. Such a question demands answers since there is no singular definition of an “American.” In surveying nearly 150 years of American literature, this course will explore a variety of answers to this question—answers articulated, debated, constructed, and contested by and through multiple people(s), ideas, cultures, desires, demands, and conflicts. Not only will we discuss a variety of Americans and Americas, but the literature will also illustrate how constructions of identity are intimately linked to memory. From (re)imagining the Civil War to (re)negotiating race in American culture, the debates surrounding conceptions of identity and belonging circle back to questions of memory.

Required Texts

Package through WVU Bookstore:

Norton Anthology of American Literature C & D

The Red Badge of Courage – Stephen Crane

ISBN-13: 978-0393914276

Three Lives and Q.E.D. – Gertrude Stein

A Farewell to Arms – Ernest Hemingway

ISBN-13: 978-0684801469

The Ox-Bow Incident – Walter Van Tilburg Clark

ISBN-13: 978-0812972580

Another Country – James Baldwin

ISBN-13: 978-0679744719

Brooklyn – Colm Tóibín

ISBN-13: 978-1439148952

***** you must purchase the required editions*****

Course Objectives

Students in this course will learn:

- close-reading and critical writing skills focused on literary texts
- critical terminologies and frameworks for analyzing literary and cultural texts
- to recognize historical, national, and regional contexts within American literature
- to engage literary criticism essays with thoughtful support and/or criticisms

GEC Objectives

This course satisfies:

- GEC Objective 5: Artistic Expression—apply methods and principles of critical inquiry to the analysis of literary or artistic expression.
- GEC Objective 7: American Culture—develop knowledge critical to an understanding of the issues that shape the culture of the United States in all its diversity.

B.A. in English Program Goals

Upon completing a B.A. in English, a student should be able to:

1. Interpret texts within diverse literary, cultural, and historical contexts.
 - identifies genre conventions and analyzes their effects
 - identifies and analyzes effects of complexity or ambiguity
 - locates text in social/economic/political/literary history
 - connects text to other literary or cultural texts
2. Demonstrate a general knowledge of the social and structural aspects of the English language.
3. Demonstrate a range of contextually effective writing strategies.

Coursework: Complete all assigned readings prior to the day listed on the syllabus. All of these texts are written in modern English, although many are difficult in subject matter and literary form. I have built in “light” reading days prior to more difficult and time-consuming texts. Understanding literature and close-reading a text effectively is a time-consuming process that requires reading, re-reading, and digesting. You will always be more successful in understanding literature you have read over a period of time, as opposed to cramming the literature into a single sitting. Please plan your reading time accordingly.

Assignments will break down as follows:

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|-------------------------------|------------|
| • Quizzes | 5% |
| • Critical Responses | 5% |
| • Close Reading Paper: Poetry | 20% |
| • Critical Argument Paper | 20% |
| • Close Reading Paper: Prose | 20% |
| • Take-Home Final Exam | 30% |

Important: Each major paper will have its own detailed prompt with specific directions. These prompts will be posted to eCampus, along with clear due dates. **I will not accept these submissions late unless you speak with me prior to the due date.** For each paper, you will need to type a response and **post it** to eCampus; **do not type your submission into the eCampus text box.** It is your responsibility to make sure your attachments are successfully posted to eCampus on time.

In submitting your papers and responses, you must attach them as either Microsoft Word documents (**.doc**) or rich text files (**.rtf**). Additionally, they should be formatted with one-inch margins, double-spacing, and Times New Roman, 12-point font. A proper heading should include your name, the date, and the course.

Quizzes: Unannounced quizzes will given at the beginning of class. If you are late or absent, you will not have the opportunity to make up missed quizzes. There will be approximately eleven quizzes and I will drop your lowest quiz grade.

Critical Responses: These will be randomly assigned and posted to eCampus. There will be a prompt asking you to respond with a 1-2 page critical analysis of an author we have or will read. I will assign four Critical Responses. Missed responses cannot be made up.

Participation: Although a percentage of your grade is not devoted to participation, both participation and absences will impact your final grade. You will be given three “free” absences—excused or

unexcused. If you accumulate five absences the highest grade you can earn is a “B.” If you accumulate seven absences the highest grade you can earn is a “C.” If you miss nine classes you will fail the course. I will round up final grades according to high marks in attendance and participation. Good-to-excellent participation is making one to two substantial comments in class per week.

Grades will breakdown as follows:

A+	98-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69
A	94-97	B	84-86	C	74-76	D	64-66
A-	90-93	B-	80-83	C-	70-73	D-	60-63

In-Class Conduct: My classroom is a place where honest, open discussion and mutual respect are the expectation. Everyone will embrace principles of social justice and treat others respectfully regardless of religion, race, national origin, politics, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc. If you are disruptive during class I reserve the right to ask you to leave. Once you enter the classroom, please turn off your cell phone and put it away; if I see you repeatedly on your cell phone I will mark you absent for the day. If you must use the restroom during class just leave the classroom quietly and without disruption, and return the same way.

Week	Required Reading
M 8/20	Course Introductions: Syllabus & Overview
W 8/22	“Introduction,” pp. 3-19 & Walt Whitman: pp. 20-23 & “The Wound-Dresser,” pp. 77-79 in NAAL C
F 8/24	Whitman: “Song of Myself,” pp. 24-45 (read through stanza 32 of poem) in NAAL C
M 8/27	Whitman: “Song of Myself,” pp. 45-67 and “Democratic Vistas,” pp. 86-89 in NAAL C
W 8/29	“Native American Oratory,” pp. 411-417 & Sarah Winnemucca: <i>Life Among the Piutes</i> , pp. 507-517 in NAAL C
F 8/31	“The Ghost Dance and Wounded Knee,” pp. 1117-1131 & Zitkala Ša: <i>Impressions of an Indian Childhood</i> , pp. 1085-1108 in NAAL C
M 9/3	Labor Day Recess – No Class
W 9/5	Booker T. Washington: <i>Up From Slavery</i> , pp. 673-697 & W.E.B. Du Bois: <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> , pp. 883-901 in NAAL C
F 9/7	Paul Laurence Dunbar: pp. 1028-1029 & “We Wear the Mask” & “Harriet Beecher Stowe” & “Debates over ‘Americanization,’” pp. 1132-1161 in NAAL C
M 9/10	Stephen Crane: <i>The Red Badge of Courage</i> , pp. VII-X & 3-81 (through XVIII)
W 9/12	Crane: <i>The Red Badge of Courage</i> , pp. 81-103 & Ambrose Bierce, pp. 398 & “Chickamauga,” pp. 405-410 in NAAL C
Close Reading Paper: Poetry due Thursday to eCampus	
F 9/14	“Introduction,” pp. 3-22 & Willa Cather: pp. 45-47 & “The Sculptor’s Funeral,” pp. 181-190 in NAAL D
M 9/17	Robert Frost: introduction, pp. 230-231, “The Figure a Poem Makes,” pp. 250-252 &

	select poems: “The Pasture,” “Mowing,” “The Oven Bird,” “Birches,” “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening,” “Desert Places,” & Carl Sandburg: pp. 278-281 in <i>NAAL D</i>
W 9/19	Wallace Stevens: pp. 281-295—select poems: “The Snow Man,” “The Emperor of Ice Cream,” “Anecdote of the Jar,” “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird,” “The Idea of Order at Key West,” “Of Modern Poetry,” “The Plain Sense of Things” in <i>NAAL D</i>
F 9/21	“Modernist Manifestos,” pp. 335-350 & Ezra Pound, pp. 314-315 & “To Whistler, American,” pp. 316 & “A Pact” & “In a Station of the Metro,” pp. 318 in <i>NAAL D</i>
M 9/24	Pound: “Hugh Selwyn Mauberley (Life and Contacts),” pp. 320-328 in <i>NAAL D</i>
W 9/26	Gertrude Stein: “Preface,” pp. VII-X & “The Good Anna,” pp. 1-52 in <i>Three Lives and Q.E.D.</i>
Revised Close Reading Paper: Poetry due Thursday to eCampus	
F 9/28	Stein: pp. 53-109 in <i>Three Lives and Q.E.D.</i>
M 10/1	Stein: <i>Q.E.D.</i> , pp. 109-227 in <i>Three Lives and Q.E.D.</i>
W 10/3	T.S. Eliot: pp. 365-367 & “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” pp. 372-375 & “The Waste Land,” I. <i>The Burial of Dead</i> , pp. 378-380 in <i>NAAL D</i>
F 10/5	Eliot: “The Waste Land,” pp. 380-391 in <i>NAAL D</i>
M 10/8	Nella Larsen: <i>Quicksand</i> , pp. 550-605 (to 16) in <i>NAAL D</i>
Critical Argument Paper due Tuesday to eCampus	
W 10/10	Larsen: <i>Quicksand</i> , pp. 605-632 in <i>NAAL D</i>
F 10/12	William Faulkner: <i>As I Lay Dying</i> pp. 695-716
M 10/15	Faulkner: 717-768 (to Vardaman) in <i>NAAL D</i>
W 10/17	Faulkner: <i>As I Lay Dying</i> pp. 768-793 in <i>NAAL D</i>
F 10/19	“World War I and its Aftermath,” pp. 214-229 in <i>NAAL D</i> & Ernest Hemingway: <i>A Farewell to Arms</i> , pp. 1-61
M 10/22	Hemingway: <i>A Farewell to Arms</i> , pp. 62-225
W 10/24	Hemingway: <i>A Farewell to Arms</i> , pp. 226-285
Revised Critical Argument Paper due Thursday to eCampus	
F 10/26	Hemingway: <i>A Farewell to Arms</i> , pp. 286-332
M 10/29	Hart Crane: pp. 812-823 in <i>NAAL D</i>
W 10/31	Walter Van Tilburg Clark: <i>The Ox-Bow Incident</i> , Introduction, pp. IX-XXI & pp. 1-63
F 11/2	Van Tilburg Clark: <i>The Ox-Bow Incident</i> , pp. 64-104
M 11/5	Van Tilburg Clark: <i>The Ox-Bow Incident</i> , pp. 105-208
Close Reading Paper: Prose due Tuesday to eCampus	

W 11/7	Claude McKay: poetry, pp. 480-484 & Countee Cullen: poetry, pp. 892-897 in <i>NAAL D</i>
F 11/9	James Baldwin: <i>Another Country</i> , pp. 1-51
M 11/12	Baldwin: <i>Another Country</i> , pp. 52-126
W 11/14	Baldwin: <i>Another Country</i> , pp. 127-179
F 11/16	Baldwin: <i>Another Country</i> , pp. 180-227
11/19-11/23	Thanksgiving Recess – No Class
M 11/26	Baldwin: <i>Another Country</i> , pp. 228-377 Revised Close Reading Paper: Prose due Tuesday to eCampus
W 11/28	Baldwin: <i>Another Country</i> , pp. 378-436
F 11/30	Colm Tóibín: <i>Brooklyn</i> , pp. 1-52
M 12/3	Tóibín: <i>Brooklyn</i> , pp. 53-208
T 12/4	<i>Gran Torino</i> viewing – Downtown Campus Library, Large Group Viewing Room: 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm
W 12/5	Tóibín: <i>Brooklyn</i> , pp. 209-262
F 12/7	<i>Gran Torino</i>

Paper Overview and Writing Guide

My goals for this class include: surveying American literature since 1865, fostering critical thinking and close-reading of various texts, and articulating these ideas in well-written, academic arguments. The guide that follows will provide an overview of the three major papers and outline suggestions for formatting and structuring strong academic papers.

Evaluation:

My evaluation for written papers focuses on three areas: structure, content, and presentation. Each of these areas corresponds to roughly a third of your overall grade, though deficiencies in one area will adversely affect others. Structurally, you should follow the guidelines set forth earlier in the syllabus about proper formatting, which overlaps with your paper's presentation. Additionally, effective academic structure emphasizes clarity and detailed explanations of appropriately cited textual evidence. The content of your paper should be little to no summary, with most of the paper devoted to critically analyzing the text. You will also draw appropriate, measured connections to historical, cultural, and social elements, amongst other possibilities, for further analysis. In presenting your paper, the copy should be clean, formatted strongly, and follow all requirements: heading, title, paragraphs, Works Cited. Finally, you will notice that each paper has a due date and a revision due date; with the exception of the take-home final exam and critical responses, you are allowed to revise each of the three major papers for a better grade. These revisions are due by the date specified and your final grade will be the highest mark earned between the original and revised papers. Revised drafts are entirely optional.

For each assigned paper, I will post a detailed assignment prompt to eCampus with instructions, paper topic(s), and required length. All submissions must be electronically posted to eCampus.

An "A" Essay:

- has a clear, creative thesis statement that provides structure to the entire argument
- has strong topic sentences in each body paragraph that direct your reader to what each paragraph is going to focus on and argue
- has a clear argument that logically progresses throughout the paper and convincingly states its case by drawing on appropriate, persuasive textual evidence
- exhibits thoughtful composition, including language, structure, formatting, and evidence
- is built upon claims that are well-thought-out and measured, without appealing to fallacies, overgeneralizations, unsubstantiated claims, or excessive questions
- includes detailed claims that are supplemented by logical general appeals to wider issues in history, culture, society, etc.
- demonstrates complexity and a sense of creativity and intellectual excitement; as long as you support your argument with examples from the text, and explain this in enough, perceptive detail, craft an argument that is fresh and takes risks

Important Points of Emphasis in Academic Writing:

1. **Focus:** each of the papers assigned in this course will range between 300-1200 words. Because these are not overly long papers, you must quickly and effectively focus your ideas. Figure out one specific question, problem, scene, or line(s) about/from a work and develop a focused argument around this point.
2. **Specificity:** although overlapping a bit with focus, what specificity largely applies to is the evidence selected that supports your argument. Carefully choose direct evidence from the text and make sure you provide a thick amount of evidence. You need to prove your point by evidence that is both perceptive and cumulative.
3. **Voice:** you are making academic arguments, whether in Critical Responses or the formal paper assignments. Regardless, you should project an authoritative, confident, and thoughtful voice in these papers. Avoid slang, generalities, and unsubstantiated claims. Highlight your evidence, be

confident in your arguments, and show your intelligence and sophistication in the focused, clarity you bring to explaining the connections between your textual evidence and your argument.

4. Grammar and style: proofread every paper before turning it in. Occasional, minor errors occur and I will not penalize these excessively, but a growing number of careless errors will do much to detract from your authority, ethos, and grade.

The Introduction:

This is arguably the most important part of any paper, as the introduction sets the stage for your reader. Generally, a successful introduction will do three things. First, focus on introducing your subject: the text you are analyzing. Quickly give the title, author, and any relevant, general ideas about the work to your argument. Following this, introduce your topic, the question or problem your argument is focused on. In doing this, you could choose to explain your topic generally, provide a question that leads the reader into the problem you identified, and/or use passages from the text to illustrate your problem. The thesis is the final stage of your introduction; remember that a subject is what you are discussing, a topic gives reasons for discussing it, and a thesis gives your debatable view(s) on the discussion.

Structure and Content:

Pay attention to the topic sentences of each paragraph—these sentences should provide the main ideas for each paragraph in your paper. Along with the thesis, your reader should be able to read only these sentences and get a sense of your overall argument. Each body paragraph you develop should feature a direct quote(s) as evidence to support your claims. Each of these quotes should be properly cited in MLA form. Never end a paragraph on a quote; always explain, in *your* words, what a quote means and how it proves your argument.

Sample Student Introduction and 1st Body Paragraph:

Critical Response 3: The Truth in the Lies

William Shakespeare's sonnet "138" says some interesting things about truth in relationships, if it really, in fact, matters, and brings up good points about the nature of truth. The speaker makes his point clearly, saying, "When my love swears that she is made of truth / I do believe her, though I know she lies" (1-2). That statement tells the reader a lot about the speaker's sense of truth. He is separating the factual definition of the word from a more universal, and yet personal version of it. The truth he is referring to is about their relationship and the feeling between them.

He also has, in a way, a playful attitude about their lying. The rhyme scheme of the poem enhances this: ABABCDCDEFEGG. It gives the poem almost a sing-songy tone that makes the lying the speaker refers to seem like less of a betrayal of trust, and more like verbal word play between the two. A part in which this really shines is: "Therefore I lie with her, and she with me, / And in our faults by lies we flattered be" (13-14). He characterizes the lying as a sort of politeness they pay each other. The double meaning of line 13 also brings out the playfulness in the speaker. The reader could take it to mean he was sleeping with her or the more direct reading—literally lying to her and receiving lies in return. Either way, the speaker presents the lies in their relationship in a positive light, which goes against most people's idea of a functional relationship.

Final Thoughts:

Textual analysis and close reading are both formal academic disciplines and each paper I assign will test your developing mastery of these disciplines. I cannot stress this point enough: these papers *are* tests. Your goal in each paper is to present a thoughtful, persuasive analysis of literature. If you are ever unsure or anxious about your writing, please do not hesitate to contact me via email or speak with me after class. I will happily work with each of you on any and all of these assigned papers.