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ENGL3006
American Literatures and Cultures (1865-1940)
M/W/TH 1010-1240
Lind Hall 302
4 Credits
https://moodle.umn.edu/course/view.php?id=5413

American Literatures & Cultures (1865-1940)

This summer, we will be reading texts that carry us over an incredible breadth of time—from the end of the American Civil War to the start of World War II. Imagine living through it: bayonet and trench warfare to airplanes; communication by horse and train to telephone and television; a "frontier" culture to a settled, suburban existence; a society where only white men had political rights to one in which women and people of color (sometimes) did.

The literature of this period reflects these changes and their incipient discombobulation: free verse, naturalism and realism, muckraking and the social novel, the rise of modernism, the revisions of second-generation modernism. Of course, in all of these changes there are continuities as well. Our task will be discovering them: What makes these texts "American"? How do they speak to one another? To United States history? Is this art—free and autonomous of social concern—or part of the political discourse of the period? Those are some of the big questions I'd propose to start us off. As we go along, we'll find plenty more.

Expectations

I firmly believe student-driven discussion will, by and large, produce the best learning experience in a course like ENGL3006. However, this is a course that aims to produce a depth of knowledge about not just interpretation but history—literary and otherwise. To that end, I will, from time to time, lecture—particularly to situate us in crucial debates.

You are responsible each day for finishing reading the assigned texts before class and sharing your ideas (or uncertainties) about them in our meetings; I will do the same. To say something in class is always a risk; if we all enter our meetings with the understanding that this is a mutual venture—one in which most of us will make some "mistakes"—we can, I hope, have productive discussions. I will ask that you come to class with a willingness to take risks, to suspend closure, and to accept that asking questions is often more important than being "right."

At a pedagogical level, I am skeptical of the value of summer courses (as someone critical of the costs of higher education today, I realize their necessity). To that end, I would ask you to remember that we are attempting to cover a full semester in half the usual time. That will necessitate an intense commitment. Many of you have other commitments outside of this course; I acknowledge that and will attempt to be flexible and understanding.

But be especially wary of attendance. If you need to miss class, please be in touch in advance—talk to me or send an email. It is your responsibility to find out what you miss and your responsibility to turn in what was due; the grades of late papers drop one step

every day they're not turned in (in hard copy!). Please note: For each absence after your **second**, your grade will decrease one step (B+ becomes B); if you miss more than **five** sessions, you will not pass this course.

Office Hours & Communication

I strongly encourage you to visit me early and often during office hours on the third floor of Lind Hall. Unsurprisingly, students who visit tend to write stronger papers, get higher grades, and go on to lead lives full of joy and fulfillment. I will mandate that you meet with me once to talk about your final paper before you've written it.

I'm not always in my office and when I'm not, the easiest way to reach me is email, which I check regularly. Please check your U of M email regularly as well, as I will contact you with assignments and updates on occasion.

Required Books (listed in order of use)*

Whitman, Song Of Myself, Dover
Course Packet (at Alpha Prints in Dinkytown: 1407 4th St SE)
James, Daisy Miller, Dover
Great American Short Stories, Dover
Twain, Pudd'nhead Wilson, Dover
DuBois, Souls Of Black Folk, Dover
Sinclair, The Jungle, Simon & Shuster (Pocket Book "Enriched Classic")
Hughes, Collected Poems Of Langston Hughes, Vintage
Fitzgerald, Great Gatsby, Scribner
**Faulkner, As I Lay Dying, Vintage
**LeSueur, The Girl, 2nd Rev Ed., West End Press
Wright, Native Son, Harper ("Restored Text" Edition)

*Most of these are cheap but reliable editions. If possible, get the recommended edition; it will make our discussions easier. Let me know if you have questions about whether a certain edition will suffice.
**You will need either Faulkner or LeSueur other of these: TBD first day of class; you can get both, of course.

(Graded) WORK

REFLECTIONS (due Thursday of weeks 1, 2, 3, 5, 6) VALUE: 6% each
These two-to-three page writing assignments are due at the start of class on Thursday of the weeks indicated above. They should be polished reflections on our reading for the week. Use them to explore your ideas or to engage further in a conversation or controversy from class. When evaluating, I will be looking to see (a) your (unique, contestable) ideas (b) connected to textual evidence. I expect you to use MLA citation on these as if they were formal papers (though your works cited need not be a separate page).

TEACHING GROUPS (throughout the term) VALUE: 10%
This is your chance to shape our collective learning. Working in groups of three, you will select a text for the class to read, which you will make available (preferably as a pdf) a week in advance of your assigned date (you can use Moodle to email it out). When your day comes, I will shift into student mode and your group will take over the class, teaching us

the text you've chosen however you see fit. I will bracket off about 45 minutes of class time for you to lead.

Ideally, the texts you choose will broaden our examination of literature or culture (though you could make us read more by someone I've assigned). You can get ideas from me, from other anthologies (which you can get from the library or borrow from me), other syllabi from the course (you may find these elsewhere, but I've posted some on Moodle), or from your own experience as a reader. I would encourage you to stay within the period (roughly) of the week you choose to work in, as this will enrich our inquiry (though, again, if you want to draw from another period, I'm amenable to that, as long as you have good reasons for doing so.)

My evaluation will encompass (a) your group's explanation of why you've chosen the text you've chosen (which you'll email to the class; it needn't be more than 500 words), (b) your preparedness to teach, (c) your ability to work together as a group.

PARTICIPATION (every day!) VALUE: 15%

Participation is, of course, showing up in class and sharing your ideas—both in the big group and in small group work—as well as small "daily" assignments. The most key of these is questions. As you read, you should write down questions you have (from "What does susurrate mean?" to "Shouldn't we be reading Hemingway?"). Your participation includes submitting these questions via Moodle or writing them on the board in class (either pre-class or during the break). We won't answer them every day, but seeing what you're thinking about helps me make the class more about your interests and less exclusively about mine.

MIDTERM EXAM (Thursday of Week 4) Value: 10%

On Thursday of week four, I will give you a midterm examination. It will cover all of our reading up to that point. I will solicit short-answer questions from you prior to the test and you will be asked to write an (in-class) essay. The exam may include identification questions, as well.

FINAL EXAM (Thursday of Week 8) Value: 15%

On Thursday of week eight, I will give you a final examination. It will cover all of our readings, but likely be weighted towards the post-midterm readings. It will feel similar to the midterm, though I reserve the right (as above) to add identification questions.

FINAL PAPER (due end of Week 8) VALUE: 20%

This paper will be a "revision" of one of your weekly writing assignments. In week seven you will choose one of those to develop into a longer, more formal, argumentative essay. On this, I will encourage you to work with multiple sources (critical, historical, and/or literary) and offer a thorough and focused analysis of American Literature and Culture. One percent of your grade on this assignment will hinge on you visiting me outside of class to talk about your plans during week seven or eight. The paper should be approximately eight pages long (not including works cited).

Outline of Reading (details, pages, etc available on Moodle; and constantly shifting…)

Jun 15, 17, 18 (1850s-1880s)	America?	American Origin(al)s Whitman; Dickinson	Good Girls James, Daisy Miller (1878), Dickinson (Fasicle 16)	2 page reading response
Jun 22, 24, 25 (1870s-1890s)	Are Women People? James, Daisy Miller; Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892); Chopin, "A Pair of Silk Stockings" (1897)	Science & Sentiment Twain, Puddin'head Wilson (1894); "sentimental" verse	Gilded Twain, Puddin'head Wilson; [students 1]	2 page reading response
Jun 29, 1, 2 (1890s-1900s)	"Regional" Fictions Chesnutt, "The Goophered Grapevine" (1887); Garland, "Up the Cooley" (1891); Austin "The Woman at the Eighteen Mile" (1909)	"Other" Fictions (?) DuBois, Souls of Black Folk (1903); Zitkala-Sa "The Widespread Enigma Concerning Blue Star Woman" (1921);[students 2]	Other Others Sinclair, The Jungle (1906); [students 3]	2 page reading response
July 6, 8, 9 (1900s)	Realism or Naturalism Sinclair, The Jungle	Technology Reconsidered? Sinclair, The Jungle	Fin-de-siècle Adams, Education of Henry Adams (1907); Midterm	
July 13, 15, 16 (1910s-1920s)	Modernist(?) verse(?) Frost, Millay, Moore, Reznikoff, Stevens, Sandburg, Stein, Williams	Was the Harlem Renaissance Modern? Hughes, The Weary Blues (1926), Fine Clothes to the Jew (1927); Toomer, "Bona and Paul" (from Cane [1923]); [students 4]	Beyond Harlem Hurston, "Spunk" (1925) and "The Eatonville Anthology" (1926); [students 5]	2 page reading response
July 20, 22, 23 (1920s-1940s)	Harlem's Children Wright, Native Son (1940); [students 6]	Making Americans? Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (1925)	Beyond East Egg Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby; Hughes, 1930s poems	2 page reading response
July 27, 29, 30 (1930s-1940s)	Modernist Prose LeSueur, The Girl (1978); Faulkner, As I Lay Dying (1930)	Modernist Prose II LeSueur, The Girl; Faulkner, As I Lay Dying	(post?)Modernism Wright, Native Son; Hughes 1940s poems	Abstract for final paper
August 3, 5, 6 (1930s-1940s)	(Socialist) Realism Wright, Native Son; [students 7]	Socialist (Realism) Wright, Native Son	Looking Back Steinbeck "Leader of the People" (1945); Final Exam	Final paper due