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ENGL3006
American Literatures and Cultures (1865-1940)
335-425 M/ W Lind Hall 302
335-425 T/TH Kolthof Hall 132
4 Credits
https://moodle.umn.edu/course/view.php?id=6392

American Literatures & Cultures (1865-1940)

This fall, we will be reading texts that carry us across 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, urban 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 many modernisms. 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 course aims to produce not just interpretive skill, but a depth of knowledge about history—literary and otherwise. To that end, I will lecture from time to time—particularly to situate us in crucial historical and critical debates.

You are responsible each day for 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."

Be especially wary of attendance. The learning that transpires in the classroom can't be "made up," per se. 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. Please note: For each absence after your **fourth**, your grade will decrease one step (B+ becomes B); if you miss more than **eight** 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 of profound fulfillment.

I'm not always in my office, so the easiest way to reach me is email (hengen@umn.edu), 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
Sinclair, The Jungle, Simon & Shuster (Pocket Book "Enriched Classic")
Hughes, Collected Poems Of Langston Hughes, Vintage
Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God, Harper Perennial
Fitzgerald, Great Gatsby, Scribner
Faulkner, As I Lay Dying, Vintage
Olsen, Yonnondio: From The Thirties, Nebraska
Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath, Penguin Classics

*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.

(Graded) WORK

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 IDEAS. As you read, you should write down thoughts or questions you have (from "What does susurrate mean?" to "This reminds me of the Koran."). Your participation includes submitting these thoughts before class, either via Moodle (follow the IDEAS link in the top frame) or by writing them on the board. 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. I'll expect to see two of these from each student each week.

MINI-ESSAYS (due during Weeks 2, 4, 7, 9) VALUE: 6% each

These two-to-three page writing assignments are due at any point during the week—you can turn them in as late as noon on Friday, as early as Monday morning. They should be polished arguments about some aspect of our recent readings. 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).

SYLLABUS BUILDING (throughout the term) VALUE: 6%

This is your chance to shape our collective learning. Working in groups of four or five, you will select a text for the class to read, which you will make available at least a week in advance of your assigned date. (Picking texts as a group will take time; WORK AHEAD!) When your day comes, we'll spend class examining the text you've chosen.

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.

My evaluation will be based primarily on your group's explanation of why you've chosen the text you've chosen (which you'll outline in an email to the class and share with us at the start of your class; it needn't take more than five minutes). You might make connections to previous texts, situate the text in cultural, political, or literary history, discuss gaps in my syllabus, what have you.

MIDTERM EXAM (Week 7) Value: 10%

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, though if overall class participation has been excellent, I will not use them (and will let you know that in advance).

FINAL EXAM (exam period) Value: 15%

I will give you a final examination. It will cover all of our readings, though weighted towards the post-midterm readings. It will feel similar to the midterm—including your short answer questions, again—though I reserve the right (as above) to add identification questions.

SEMI-FINAL PAPER (due at the end of Week 11) Value: 10%

This paper will be a revision of one of your reflection papers—you'll expand it, develop the claim, find academic sources. Consider this a practice run at the final paper (though your topic/main idea here cannot carry over to the final). This will be five pages in length (not including the works cited page), draw on multiple non-literary sources, and utilize proper MLA formatting.

FINAL PAPER (due end of Week 15) VALUE: 20%

This will be a final paper developed on a topic of your choosing. It may draw on your previous work, but needs to be substantially new. As with the semi-final paper, you will 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. The paper should be approximately eight pages long (not including works cited).

Outline of Reading (details, pages, etc available on Moodle; and may shift)

WK1 S8-10		American Origin(al)s Longfellow	Who Is Walt Whitman? Whitman, Song of Myself (1855)	Does Modern American Poetry Have a Mom, too? Whitman & Dickinson	
WK2 S14-17	ED's Textuality Dickinson	James as Realist James, Daisy Miller (1878)	Are Women People? James, Daisy Miller	Are Women People (Redux)? Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892); Chopin, "A Pair of Silk Stockings" (1897)	Mini Essay #1
WK 3 S21-24	Science & Race Twain, Puddin'head Wilson (1894)	Gilded Twain, Puddin'head Wilson	Twain as Realist? Twain, Puddin'head Wilson	Race Written by Others Chesnutt, "The Goophered Grapevine" (1887); Du Bois, "The Coming of John" (1903)	
WK 4 S28-O1	Other Races, Other Forms Zitkala- Sa "The Widespread Enigma Concerning Blue Star Woman" (1921); Sui Sin Far "In the Land of the Free" (1912)	[Students 1]	Regional Fictions Garland, "Up the Cooley" (1891); Austin "The Woman at the Eighteen Mile" (1909)	[Students 2]	Mini Essay #2
WK5 O5-8	Archive Fever Alger (Anderson Library)	Realism, Naturalism, and Muckraking Sinclair, The Jungle (1906)	Other Others Sinclair, The Jungle	Technology Reconsidered?, Sinclair, The Jungle	
WK 6 O12-15	Sinclair, The Jungle	Sinclair, The Jungle	READING DAY	What is Literature? Sinclair, The Jungle	
WK 7 O19-22	MIDTERM	Moving Pictures	[Students 3]	Modernist(?) verse(?) Frost, Millay, Sandburg, Williams	Mini Essay #3

WK 8 026-29	Modernist(?) verse(?) II Moore, Reznikoff, Stevens, Stein	Was the Harlem Renaissance Modern? Hughes, from The Weary Blues (1926), Fine Clothes to the Jew (1927)	Toomer, "Bona and Paul" (from Cane [1923])	[Students 4]	
WK 9 N2-5	Renaissance Beyond Harlem Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937)	READING DAY	Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God	Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God	Mini Essay #4
WK 10 N9-12	Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God	[Students 5]	Making Americans Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (1925)	Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (1925)	
WK 11 N16-19	Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (1925)	The New Hughes Hughes, 1930s poems	Modernist Prose Faulkner, As I Lay Dying (1930)	After the Crash Faulkner, As I Lay Dying	Semi-Final Essay
WK 12 N23-25	Modernist Prose II Faulkner, As I Lay Dying	Modernist (Proletarian) Prose Olsen, Yonnondio: From the Thirties (1974)	READING DAY	NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING	
WK 13 N30-D3	Olsen, Yonnondio: From the Thirties	Olsen, Yonnondio: From the Thirties	The Old Hughes Hughes, 1940s poems	[Students 6]	
WK 14 D7-10	Regionalism Redux? Steinbeck, Grapes of Wrath (1939)	Tom Joad as Hero? Steinbeck, Grapes of Wrath	READING DAY	On The Road Steinbeck, Grapes of Wrath	Abstract for final
WK 15 D-14-17	Modernist Prose III Steinbeck, Grapes of Wrath	Bad to Worse Steinbeck, Grapes of Wrath	Political Fictions Steinbeck, Grapes of Wrath	Recapitulate	Final paper due