
ENGLISH 224: U.S. Literature since the Civil War

University of Mississippi, Fall 2010
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Office hours T/Th 11-12 and by appt.
Lectures 9:30-10:20 T/Th
Bondurant 204C

Mary Gray (mgray@olemiss.edu)
Somerville 317; Tuesdays 1-4 or by appt.
• Section 8, 12-12:50 Wed., Shoemaker 408
• Section 10, 2-2:50 Wed., Longstreet 102
• Section 11, 3-3:50 Wed., Hume 230
Kyle Schlett (noodlesalad@gmx.com)
Somerville 317; Tuesdays 10:30-1:30 or by appt.
• Section 6, 8-8:50 Wed., Bishop 324
• Section 7, 11-11:50 Wed., Hume 215
• Section 9, 1-1:50 Wed., Turner 241

OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Identify many of the most prominent themes and movements in U.S. literary history between the Civil War and the present,
- Articulate how literary texts engage with their historical context through both form and content,
- Exercise greater precision and insight in close analysis—both written and oral—of literary language, and
- Demonstrate greater clarity in developing and supporting written and oral claims about literary texts.

REQUIRED TEXT—available at University Bookstore

The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Shorter 7th Ed., Vol. 2

POLICIES

- While in class, you are expected to attend to and participate in discussion; you are **NOT** allowed to engage in private conversation, “packing up” your belongings before class ends, or other behaviors that would disrupt class activities. Turn off your phones before class!
- You are expected to uphold the University Creed (<http://www.olemiss.edu/info/creed.html>), particularly its clauses on civility, integrity, academic honesty, and academic freedom. Our reading presents some unsettling images as well as controversial topics, and you are encouraged to express your concerns and opinions about this material. Please remember that other members of the class share this right. Discussions should be conducted both candidly and in a manner that demonstrates respect for every member of the classroom community.
- The University of Mississippi does not allow food and drink in classrooms.
- Bring the relevant text to *every* meeting of class!
- It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individual basis, reasonable classroom accommodations to students who have verified disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations.

GRADING

- A total of more than five absences—OR more than two absences from your discussion section—will lower your final grade by a minimum of .5 (on a 4-pt. scale) per class missed. A total of more than nine absences—OR more than four absences from your discussion section—will result in a failing grade for the semester.

Attendance will be recorded during the first 10 minutes of class, and repeated tardiness or early departure will be recorded as absence. This policy does not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences: you are strongly advised to reserve your allotted absences for occasions, such as illness or family emergency, when you need them. Please note that you are responsible for keeping track of your absences.

- Your course grade will be determined by a weighted average:
 - Quizzes: 15%
 - Assignments: 30% (10% each)
 - Essay: 20%
 - Final exam: 20%
 - Participation: 15%
- To convert your grades from assignment percentage marks to the 4-pt. transcript scale, use the following values:
 - 90-100 → A (4)
 - 80-89 → B (3)
 - 70-79 → C (2)
 - 60-69 → D (1)
 - Below 60 → F (0)
- You must complete all assigned work to pass this class.

LECTURES

- Lectures will chiefly examine the texts on the syllabus in relation to broader literary-historical dynamics: though we will engage in close reading, we will say relatively little about authorial biography. Students are encouraged to read the headnotes to each author's work provided in the anthology. You can also find overviews concerning authors, some texts, and literary history at www.norton.com/literature; log in using the code in the opening of your anthology.
- There is limited time available for Q&A during the lecture sessions, but if students would like further clarification of points discussed there, they have many options—bringing up questions in discussion section, visiting course staff during office hours (or by appt.), or posting questions on the course's electronic discussion board in Blackboard. The professor will check that site regularly and respond either on the discussion board or in lecture.
- The professor is experimenting with technology that will facilitate uploading of lectures (either slides + audio or audio only) to iTunes U. Slides will also be posted on Blackboard.

DISCUSSION SECTIONS

- In addition to reading assignments, there will be a quiz almost every Wednesday in this class. If you keep up with lectures and reading, this aspect of the course will help your grade (and will also enable you to participate in class discussion, further improving your grade). If you do not keep up with the reading, you will not do well in this class.
- Student participation is vital to our pedagogical goals and therefore plays a vital role in establishing students' grades. It will be recorded after every Wednesday session. Please alert your discussion leader about any concerns you may have regarding this aspect of the class at the beginning of the semester. Obvious signs of disengagement with class discussion—texting, reading other materials, etc.—will severely damage this portion of your grade.

PAPERS (ASSIGNMENTS AND ESSAY)

- Students must submit 2 copies of each paper.

- Each paper must be typed and double-spaced. Provide the word count at the end of your paper. All papers must include the author's name, section number, and working email address in the heading.
- Papers must be submitted in print at the beginning of class on the date due. Late papers will be marked down 5 points per day. Students who can document unavoidable causes for their inability to complete the paper on time should contact the professor by the due date in order to establish an adjusted deadline.
- All sources must be documented using MLA or Chicago style. If you are solely quoting our anthology, you need not submit a "Works Cited" page, but you should document page numbers parenthetically at the end of the relevant sentence.
- Papers will be graded according to their success in fulfilling the particular objectives of each assignment, but grades will also reflect clarity of argument and expression, professionalism and verve of prose style, coherence of structure, and acuity of insight. All claims must be supported with textual evidence.
- Plagiarism, if detected, will result in a failing grade for the assignment and, in many cases, the course also. (See university [policy](#). The university also offers an instructional [video](#) providing a detailed description of plagiarism and ways to avoid it.) Success in this course requires not only academic integrity (the willingness and determination to do your own work) but also an understanding of how to use and identify scholarly resources properly. If you have, at any time, questions regarding plagiarism or the appropriate use of sources, ask course staff.

ASSIGNMENT 1

Due: September 8

Length: approximately 500 words

Topic: Select one critical essay on *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and briefly summarize its argument, explaining also how it shaped your response to the novel. The essay you choose must come from a scholarly source—either a peer-reviewed essay or a book. In other words, you may use electronic versions of books or journals, but they must be books or journals that you access through the university library.

Skills Assessed:

- Finding and selecting scholarly resources;
- Proper use of paraphrase, quotation, and citation;
- Summary and use of critical essays.

Tips:

- Begin your assignment with a bibliographic citation of the article, using MLA or Chicago style. (Guidelines for how to format such citations are readily accessible, and this aspect of your paper will be graded. Do not, for instance, format a citation as JSTOR does.)
- Document your description of the article thoroughly. Your summary should include sufficient detail that you explain various aspects of the argument; when paraphrasing a section, you should note the page or pages summarized parenthetically. Indicate direct quotation by using quotation marks, and note the page of the quotation parenthetically at the end of your sentence. These are familiar rules that writers occasionally neglect; we are beginning the semester with this assignment in order for you to review and practice skills that you should exercise consistently.
- Summary is not as easy as it sounds. Think carefully about how much information your reader will need in order to understand the article's purpose(s), conclusion(s), and method(s) of proving its case.
- Your assessment of how the article affected your understanding of the novel could take diverse forms. You could, for example, argue that the essay helped you understand an aspect of the novel that previously confused you, that it led you to contemplate an aspect of the novel you had not previously considered, that it helped you think about the novel in relation to a new context, or even

that it offered a perspective with which you disagree (explain why very briefly). You may conclude by considering what research topics you would pursue if you were to read more scholarship on this novel.

ASSIGNMENT 2

Due: September 29

Length: approximately 500 words

Topic: Select a brief passage from any of the literary texts we have read to date and show how it engages—through description, metaphor, plot, characterization, or some other combination of literary devices—with broader historical debates concerning the significance of spatial distinctions within the nation.

Skills Assessed:

- Selection of passage that helps to demonstrate a claim
- Close analysis of literary language in support of a claim
- Insight into literary representations of social space

Tips:

- **Contexts:** Repeatedly, in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Huck states his desire to "light out" to a place where he is free from social constraints and norms; Jim, of course, seeks a place where he is free from legal and physical oppression. But though slavery ended in 1865, the dream of free and wild space—which (as Frederick Jackson Turner points out in your anthology) had been so important to the nation's self-understanding—increasingly became untenable. As historian Alan Trachtenberg argues in *The Incorporation of America: Culture & Society in the Gilded Age* (1982), the U.S. experienced, during the last decades of the nineteenth century, the substantial expansion of an industrial and capitalist economy, the burgeoning of a national infrastructure for transportation and communication (including print culture), and a concomitant sense that the nation's diverse spaces were developing into a hegemonic nation (3-6). This process provoked anxiety concerning what kinds of behavior would be expected in national space and to what extent expectations would be similar across various social divisions, such as race, ethnicity, gender, region, class, nationality, urbanity/rurality, and various combinations thereof. While some groups sought to shape or even dictate the norms of national space, others sought, in various ways, to protect their autonomy within certain spaces and/or secure equal access to all spaces. We have looked at some obvious literary explorations of this problem, such as Gillman's and Glaspell's observations of how gender roles are defined through expectations concerning public and domestic space. Other considerations of space and spatial norms may be less obvious: you could include Huck's contemplation of the blissful freedom he finds on the island or the river (each of which is always under threat of some kind), for example, or Mr. Ryder's theory concerning the role of the Blue Vein Society's members in metaphoric social space (compared to millstones). Accordingly, it is possible to write cogently about space in texts that may not appear to say much about setting; the trick is to attend to how behaviors are described and distributed in relation, however implicit, to social space.
- **Parameters:** One could easily write a substantial paper on this topic in relation to many of the works we are reading, but that is not the goal here; rather, we want to practice looking closely at one passage and elucidating its significance fully. (That is a vital skill in literary analysis, and it is also one of the main skills tested on our final.) Accordingly, be sure to select a single passage—or, at most, two appearances of an image—that you can thoroughly analyze in a brief discussion. You should not need an extensive introduction for this assignment, but you should have a thesis statement. If you

like, you can conclude your assignment by briefly stating how you might continue your analysis if given more time and space.

- **Early submission/feedback:** Students concerned about their potential for success in this class should submit this assignment on Sept. 22 and ask their instructors for early feedback. The drop deadline is October 4.

ASSIGNMENT 3

Due: November 5

Length: approximately 500 words

Topic: Select a brief passage from any of the literary texts from unit III on our syllabus and show how it explores—through description, metaphor, plot, characterization, or some other combination of literary devices—the role of market logics (exchange, ownership, shifts in valuation, etc.) in aspects of life that do not seem inherently or necessarily governed by the market (social relations, moral dilemmas, etc.).

Skills Assessed:

- Selection of passage that helps to demonstrate a claim
- Close analysis of literary language in support of a claim
- Insight into literary engagement with the values and rhetorics of the marketplace

Tips:

- **Contexts:** In Ernest Hemingway's "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" (1936), the narrator relates a perspective initially attributed to F. Scott Fitzgerald, who wrote, "The very rich are different from you and me"; Hemingway's character goes on to mock the idea that the wealthy constitute "a special glamorous race," preferring the view that they simply "have more money" (1080). As the story progresses, however, this character seems ambivalent, occasionally associating certain character traits (positive or negative) with the states of wealth or poverty. Such ideas were quite prominent in social theories of the late nineteenth century, and they have shaped various aspects of discourse in the U.S. ever since; concomitantly, the nation's literature often ponders whether the meaning of money is chiefly quantitative (having more or less to spend) or qualitative (designating the presence or lack of virtue). Also, influenced by the country's history of slavery and its continuing conflict over exploitative labor practices (from so-called "wage slavery" to sharecropping, described by social scientists as "peonage"), writers explored the question of what it means to view humans as commodifiable, either as straightforward property (as in slavery) or as a more indirect source of wealth (such as the rape victims in Welty's "Petrified Man"). In a related concern, writers have wondered whether various market ideologies might lead the society to lose more concrete senses of value: this potential is dramatized in Hurston's "The Gilded Six-Bits" but also appears in debates over national currency (silver coinage vs. the gold standard) in the late nineteenth century, as well as in Thorstein Veblen's analysis of conspicuous consumption and waste in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). Though you may choose to write about passages in which financial worries or issues are overt, you are also encouraged to look at passages that examine the influence of the economic system on aspects of life that otherwise seem far removed from the financial realm.
- **Parameters:** See "Tips" for Assignment 2.

ESSAY

Due: December 1

Length: approximately 1000 words

Topic: Choose one short story from our anthology—or one or two poems by one author—not included in the schedule for this semester, and explain why it would be a good addition to future offerings of

this course. Alternatively, choose one text from our syllabus and explain why it not be deleted from future versions.

Skills Assessed:

- Critical autonomy
- Literary analysis in the service of practical, pedagogical argument
- Articulating relevance of a single literary text in relation to a larger group of works

Tips:

- For the purposes of assignments 2 and 3, you could justly assume that your reader was very familiar with the text being discussed, but for this essay, that is not the case. Though you will have to describe the text you choose in order for your argument to succeed, do not allow your discussion to descend into unreflective plot summary. Be sure that every piece of information you provide is placed in the service of your larger argument concerning the merits of this text for future offerings of this course, with its particular set of themes and questions.
- A successful paper will consider not only the themes of the text discussed, but also its formal qualities. What aesthetic and/or historical aspects of U.S. literature might this text help students understand more fully? What other texts in the syllabus would it complement especially well? What current lacks would it help to fill?
- You may place the text you choose in relation to one of the course schedule's existing units, or you may propose a new unit. If you choose the latter, consider what other texts might be suited to that section of the syllabus; also, describe the significance of this category for the course. (You are not required to consider the issue of units for this assignment.)

FINAL EXAM

The final exam is scheduled for Thursday, December 8, from 8-11. In order to assess students' knowledge and understanding of course materials, the exam will include 20 passages from our reading; students are required to identify and comment on 15 of those. Passages will relate directly to topics discussed in lecture. Further, you are allowed access to your syllabus (with whatever notes you have recorded there) during the exam. In addition to identifying title and author, students should briefly situate each passage in relation to the larger work from it is taken, and situate that work in relation to U.S. literary history. What aesthetic trends and/or thematic concerns does each passage reveal? Students should write approximately one long paragraph on each passage. Correct identifications will earn 40% credit, and good commentaries will earn the remaining 60% credit; accordingly, students can earn points on an entry even if they fail to recognize the passage's source.

SCHEDULE

(Readings are arranged in an order that is intended to be chiefly thematic, loosely chronological, and pedagogically practical. Further explanation will be provided throughout the course.)

T, 8/24 Introduction

I. The Nation as Question

Th, 8/26 Mark Twain/Samuel Clemens, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), "Notice"-chap. 16, pp. 101-167

T, 8/31 Twain, chaps. 17-29, pp. 167-23

Th, 9/2 Twain, chaps. 30-end, pp. 234-287

- T, 9/7** Zitkala Ša, from "Impressions of an Indian Girlhood" (1900), pp. 662-669
Sui Sin Far/Edith Maud Eaton, "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" (1912) at
<http://storyoftheweek.loa.org/2010/01/mrs-spring-fragrance.html>

W, 9/8 ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE

- Th, 9/9** Paul Laurence Dunbar, "An Ante-Bellum Sermon" and "We Wear the Mask" (1897),
pp. 644-646, 646-647
Charles Chesnutt, "The Wife of Youth" (1899), pp. 464-472
- T, 9/14** Ezra Pound, "To Whistler, American" (1912), p. 844
E. E. Cummings, "next to of course god america i" (1926), p. 1000
Claude McKay, "If We Must Die" and "America" (1922), pp. 970-971
Langston Hughes, "I, Too" (1932) and "Visitors to the Black Belt" (1940), pp. 1090
and 1093
Carlos Bolusan, "Be American" (approx. 1940s), 1122-1127

II. Positionings

- Th, 9/16** Sarah Orne Jewett, "A White Heron" (1886), pp. 415-422
Kate Chopin, "At the 'Cadian Ball" (1892), pp. 428-435
- T, 9/21** Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1899), pp. 508-519
Susan Glaspell, "Trifles" (1916), pp. 792-801
- Th, 9/23** Jean Toomer, from *Cane* (1923), pp. 1004-1008
Countee Cullen, "Incident" and "Heritage" (1925), pp. 1108-1111

III. Hermeneutics of Capital

- T, 9/28** Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus" (1883), p. 426
Henry James, "The Real Thing" (1892), pp. 356-374
- W, 9/29** **ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE**
- Th, 9/30** Stephen Crane, "An Experiment in Misery" (1894) at
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/An_Experiment_in_Misery
Edith Wharton, "The Other Two" (1904), pp. 521-534
- T, 10/5** William Carlos Williams, "To Elsie" and "The Red Wheelbarrow" (1923), pp. 836-838
F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Babylon Revisited" (1931), pp. 1025-1039
- Th, 10/7** Robert Frost, "The Death of the Hired Man" (1914), 778-782
William Faulkner, "Barn Burning" (1938), pp. 1048-1060
- T, 10/12** Zora Neale Hurston, "The Gilded Six-Bits" (1933), pp. 985-993

Richard Wright, "The Man Who Was almost a Man" (1939), pp. 1113-1121

- Th, 10/14** Sterling Brown, "Mister Samuel and Sam" (1932), "Break of Day" (1938), and "Bitter Fruit of the Tree" (1939), pp. 1085, 1086-1087
Eudora Welty, "Petrified Man" (1941), pp. 1149-1158
- T, 10/19** Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), scenes 1-9, pp. 1161-1212
- Th, 10/21** Williams, scenes 10-end, pp. 1212-1222
Allan Ginsberg, *Howl* (1956), 1416-1424
- T, 10/26** Ralph Ellison, from *Invisible Man* (1947/1952), pp. 1254-1264
- Th, 10/28** Flannery O'Connor, "Good Country People" (1955), pp. 1393-1407
Alice Walker, "Everyday Use" (1973), pp. 1596-1602

IV. Foregrounding Perception and Representation

- T, 11/2** Emily Dickinson, 620 (435/"Much Madness is divinest Sense") (1863), pp. 90
Marianne Moore, "Poetry" (1921), pp. 855-856
Wallace Stevens, "The Snow Man" (1931), p. 816
- W, 11/3** **ASSIGNMENT 3 DUE**
- Th, 11/4** Elizabeth Bishop, "The Fish" (1946), pp. 1223-1225
Adrienne Rich, "Diving into the Wreck" (1973), pp. 1450-1452
- T, 11/9** Gwendolyn Brooks, "The Last Quatrain of the Ballad of Emmett Till" (1960), p. 1365
James Baldwin, "Going to Meet the Man" (1965), pp. 1381-1392
Rita Dove, "Parsley" (1983), pp. 1636-1637
- Th, 11/11** A. R. Ammons, "Corsons Inlet" (1965), pp. 1409-1412
John Berryman, "Dream Song 29" (1968), p. 1272
Thomas Pynchon, "Entropy" (1984), pp. 1543-1552
- T, 11/16** Toni Morrison, "Recitatif" (1983), pp. 1462-1475
Cathy Song, "Lost Sister" (1983), pp. 1667-1668
Li-Young Lee, "Persimmons" (1986), pp. 1670-1672
- Th, 11/18** LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, *Dutchman* (1964/1967)
- 11/22-26** **THANSGIVING BREAK**
- T, 11/30** Raymond Carver, "Cathedral" (1983), pp. 1557-1567
Yusef Komunyakaa, "Facing It" (1988), p. 1604
- W, 12/1** **ESSAY DUE**

Th, 12/2 Louise Erdrich, "Fleur" (1986), pp. 1655-1664
Sandra Cisneros, "Woman Hollering Creek" (1991), pp. 1644-1651
Invited lecturer: Kyle Schlett

Th, 12/8 **FINAL EXAM 8-11 am**