

Englit 0575: American Literary Traditions II

Jeremy C. Justus

T,Th 11-12:20

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I'm available M-F at other times by appointment

Texts and Materials:

- ❖ Baym, Nina, general editor. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* Vol. 2. 8th edition, Shorter Version.
- ❖ Diaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. I strongly recommend purchasing the version I ordered for the class (available at the campus bookstore), but you are allowed to buy whatever copy you find most affordable / desirable.
- ❖ Faulkner, William. *The Sound and the Fury*. Same as above.
 - An electronic storage device, such as a USB drive, or a cloud storage account, such as DropBox (recommended)
 - A writing handbook such as the MLA Guide (highly recommended)

Course Description:

Why study literature in a national or an historical context? How does the concept of a nation and its historical, political, social, economic, and cultural underpinnings help us read, interpret, and make sense of literature? What does it mean to call a specific text “American”? Is American Literature written by someone born and raised in America? Is it literature written about America? What exactly does it mean to be American? And how do we define what qualifies as “Literature”? During the course of this semester we’ll continue to consider these questions and more, but for now, let’s at least assume that literature – however nebulously defined that may be – can represent a manifestation of the ideologies, beliefs, values, identities, histories, cultures, and undercurrents of a national framework that, in one way or another, produces it. In our attempts to further explore these issues, we’ll approach a broad range of texts – such as poems, short stories, novels, and even films and other popular cultural texts – from various critical perspectives that will enable us to better interrogate such issues as, for example, ideological underpinnings of identity, socio-economic constructions of race, problematic methods of recording history, successes and failures of narrative structures, and so on.

It is my sincere belief that an open and honest interaction with literature can be a risky encounter: ultimately, you will be asked to see from perspectives other than those you bring with you to the class. In this way, we are all invited to enter a text, knowing that we may ourselves change, develop, and see the world differently as a result.

Some Questions to Guide Us:

1. What are some of the defining conceptual, narrative, or stylistic features of American literature that emerge and develop during the historical periods we’ll be focusing on? What are the key features of Realism, Naturalism, Modernism, and Postmodernism? How are these literary movements expressions of the cultural underpinnings of their corresponding historical contexts?
2. How do religion, race, gender, ideology, economics, and politics manifest in literature and culture during this historical period? And how do our contemporary views on the same topics affect the way we read and understand our course readings?

3. What role has literature played in America's challenges, successes, and failures (from promoting or critiquing American involvement in World Wars to giving voice to persons of socially, economically, or politically marginalized groups)?
4. What role has literature played in the development and formation of a national identity, both on social or cultural level and on the more individual level? That is, how has literature helped forge a national identity among nations and contributed to what it means to be an American?
5. Is there really such a thing as American literature? What do we include in this category (and what don't we)? If there is such a thing as American literature, then what challenges and responsibilities follow for American and international readers?

By the end of the semester, you might not have any firm answers to these questions; however, you should have the background, the conceptual frameworks, and the practical skills you need to approach these questions in your scholarship and in your lives. Specifically, by the end of the semester, you will have learned much about American literary and cultural history; you will have experience using these frameworks in your analyses of historical issues and events; you will, through repeated practice, become adept at doing historically, socially, and theoretically contextualized close readings of our course texts; and you will become an authority on the literature of the period by constructing both informal and formal persuasive and analytical arguments regarding our readings. Along these lines, you will have a variety of opportunities to demonstrate your proficiency of these course goals, including class discussions, meeting with me one-on-one, informal writing assignments, exams, and a formal academic essay.

Assignments and Grading:

Daily Quizzes = 10% of final grade

- ❖ On *most* days there will be a quiz on the assigned reading. **These quizzes may not be made up if you are absent.** However, in computing your final grade I will drop your two lowest quiz scores.

First Exam = 20% of final grade

Second Exam = 20% of final grade

Third Exam = 20% of final grade

- ❖ These in-class exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions.

Class Discussion = 5% of final grade

- ❖ While you should regularly contribute to class discussions, each of you will have an opportunity to make your unique voice and perspective heard as you facilitate or open discussion for one of the class readings. You may use this time to give a short presentation on the text from the perspective of a specific and relevant theoretical discourse; you may discuss the text as a part of a socio-historical context; or you may choose any approach that is both appropriate to the text and to the goals of this course and provocative enough to begin a class discussion. I'll give you more details about the guidelines for the presentation early in the semester, but for now you should know that the grading for this assignment is essentially pass or fail (A / F).

Attendance and Participation = 10% of final grade

- ❖ Participation means much more than just being in class. Make thoughtful and meaningful contributions to class discussions, to the work of your peers, and to the larger academic community.

Formal Academic Essay = 15% of final grade.

- ❖ This formal, five-page, academic essay will challenge you to engage in one (and only one) of our two novels, to conduct appropriate research for secondary sources that pertain to your chosen text, and to construct and defend a thesis-driven argument on your chosen text while supporting your claims with both your own close readings and secondary materials. We will discuss this essay in much greater detail as the time approaches. It is due at our final exam.
- ❖ **Format:** Written work should be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, left-aligned, with one-inch margins. The upper left-hand corner of the **first page** of each written assignment should look something like this:

Your first and last name	<i>For example:</i> Jeremy C Justus
Class Name or Number	Am. Lit. II
Date	April 16, 2015
Assignment	Final Essay

Additionally, each page after the first should be numbered and include your last name. See the upper right hand corner of this page for an example.

And, please, use a stapler (for any written work longer than one page).

Grading Scale:

A+: 100-98	A: 97-94	A-: 93-90
B+: 89-88	B: 87-84	B-: 83-80
C+: 79-78	C: 77-74	C-: 73-70
D+: 69-68	D: 67-64	D-: 63-60
F: 59 and below		

Course Policies:

1. **If you fail to fulfill any of the course requirements, you will fail the course.**

2. **Social Justice:** UPJ is committed to social justice. I wholeheartedly adhere to that commitment and expect to foster a nurturing learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect and nondiscrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

3. If your writing suffers from serious structural or grammatical errors, the best grade I will be able to give to you for the argumentative essay is a “C.” If you would like help with grammar or with your writing in general, or if you want to build on your strengths, please visit the **UPJ tutoring center**

- Please note that for your course paper you are also required to follow the format guidelines outlined both above and in the assignment sheet.

4. **I will subtract one-third of a grade for each calendar day that your paper is late.**

5. **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism involves “representing the words or ideas of someone else as one's own in any academic exercise.” Thus, all writing you do for this course must be your own and must be exclusively for this course, unless the instructor stipulates differently. Please pay special attention to the quotes, paraphrases, and documentation practices you use in your papers. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please ask me. If you plagiarize, I reserve the right to grant you a failure for the course.

6. **Office Hours:** My office hours, posted at the top-right corner of the first page of this syllabus, are times for us to meet one on one. You may drop in during these times or make an appointment with me to talk about any questions or comments you have about your progress in the course.

7. **Communication:** If you need to email me, you may. However, do not email me drafts or attachments unless I ask you to do so. I will usually reply to emails Monday through Friday within 48 hours of receiving your message.

- Honestly, I’m occasionally slow to reply to emails. If you can, talk to me in person, either after class or during my office hours (or by appointment).

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“Whether it is the medium through which groups are persuaded to live and die as patriotic subjects or the inspiration for their transgression or protest, ‘culture’ expresses dynamic contradictions precisely at those intersections, borders, and zones where normative regimes contact, enlist, restrict, or coerce. Critical studies of the United States within global processes may demonstrate, through the study of culture, that normative modes differentiate as they regulate, and discipline as they include and assimilate” (122).

“American cultural studies follows this line of inquiry by situating U.S. culture (its traditional object) in an international context, from its origins up through contemporary globalization. It identifies in cultural products (literature, music, art, mass and popular cultures) and in cultural practices (the organization of cities and public spaces, schooling, religion) both the longer world history within which the United States emerged and the contemporary U.S. understanding of itself within a global entirety, increasingly, yet unevenly mediated through electronic information technologies” (122).

Lowe, Lisa. “Globalization.” *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*. Ed. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler. New York: NY UP, 2007. 120-123.

American Literary Traditions II, Spring 2016
Class Schedule

- ☞ Subject to revision as needed
- ☞ Keep up with the syllabus in the event of class delay or cancellation
- ☞ Unless otherwise noted, **always** read the introductory and/or biographical section on the authors and texts.

Week	Day	Class Agenda	Homework
1	Th, Jan 7	Course Introduction	Buy books and materials Read: Print and Read syllabus
2	T, Jan 12	American Lit, 1865-1914: Historical Contexts	Read: "American Literature 1865-1914," 3-19
	Th, Jan 14	A Fork in the Road of American Poetry: Whitman and Dickenson	Read: Whitman, sections 1-23 of "Song of Myself" and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd"; Dickinson, "Wild Nights," "There's a certain Slant of light," "I felt a Funeral," "A Bird," "Because I could not stop," "Tell the truth," and "A narrow Fellow in the Grass," 79-97
3	T, Jan 19	"True Art Speaks Plainly": An Introduction to Realism and Naturalism	Read: "Realism and Naturalism" 548-549 ; James, from <i>The Art of Fiction</i> ; Dreiser, "True Art Speaks Plainly"; London, from <i>What Life Means to Me</i> 554-565
	Th, Jan 21	Frogs and Beasts: Twain and James	Read: Twain, "The Notorious Jumping Frog..." 98-105; James, "The Beast in the Jungle," 324-327 and 383-411
4	T, Jan 26	A Hanging and A Drowning: Not Only a Nice Way to Start the Week, But also a Decent Introduction to Bierce, Harte, Realism, And Naturalism	Read: Bierce, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" 317-324; Harte, "The Luck of Roaring Camp" 297-305
	Th, Jan 28	Never Build a Fire in an Open Boat: London and Crane	Read: Crane, "The Open Boat" 581-600; London, "To Build a Fire," 627-639
5	T, Feb 2	"It was all Yellow": On why Coldplay is indebted to Gilman Review / Preparation for Exam I	Read: Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" 484-497; Chopin, "The Storm," 434-437 Review: Look back over previous readings / notes / etc.
	Th, Feb 4	Exam 1	

6	T, Feb 9	Historical Overview of American Literature 1914-1945 T. S. Eliot	Read: “American Literature 1914-1945” 653-672; Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and “The Waste Land” 819-838
	Th, Feb 11	About Modernism	Read: “The Waste Land,” 825-838; Pound, “A Pact” and “from <i>The Cantos</i> , 786-793; Stein, from <i>Tender Buttons</i> 714-726
7	T, Feb 16	Winter Dreaming in Kilimanjaro: Fitzgerald and Hemingway	Read: Fitzgerald, “Winter Dreams” 963-980; Hemingway, “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” 1019-1037
	Th, Feb 18	Five Poets: Stevens, Williams, H. D., Cummings	Read: Stevens: “The Emperor of Ice-Cream,” and “Anecdote of the Jar” 766-773. Williams: “The Young Housewife,” “The Red Wheelbarrow,” and “This is Just to Say” 777-785 H.D.: “Mid-day,” “Leda,” and “Helen” 808-811. Cummings: “in Just-,” “Buffalo Bill’s,” and “somewhere I have never traveled” 951-956
8	T, Feb 23	Just Like Mayberry: The Hometown in Anderson and Wright	Read: Anderson, from <i>Winesburg, Ohio</i> 753-763; Wright, “The Man Who Was Almost a Man” 1060-1069
	Th, Feb 25	On Aging and Memory: Faulkner and Steinbeck	Read: Faulkner, “A Rose for Emily” 994-1004; Steinbeck “A Leader of the People” 1045-1055
9	T, Mar 1	<i>The Sound and the Fury</i>	Read: Part One
	Th, Mar 3	<i>The Sound and the Fury</i>	Read: Part Two
10	T, Mar 8	No Class: Spring Break	
	Th, Mar 10	No Class: Spring Break	
11	T, Mar 15	<i>The Sound and the Fury</i>	Read: Finish Novel
	Th, Mar 17	Exam II	
12	T, Mar 22	American Literature 1945 - Present Wake to Sleep, We Real Cool: Roethke meets Brooks	Read: “American Literature since 1945” 1071-1087; Roethke: “My Papa’s Waltz,” “The Waking,” “I Knew a Woman” 1088-1092; Brooks: “kitchenette building,” “We Real Cool” 1309-1312

	Th, Mar 24	The Invisible Man Meets <i>The Man</i> : Ellison and Baldwin	Read: Ellison, from <i>Invisible Man</i> 1209-1221; Baldwin, “Going to Meet the Man” 1327-1339
13	T, Mar 29	“To transcribe middleliness with all its grits, bumps, and anonymities” : Updike and O’Conner	Read: John Updike, “Separating” 1424-1433; O’Connor, “Good Country People” 1339-1353
	Th, Mar 31	Can’t Beat the Beats : Kerouac and Ginsberg	Read: Kerouac, the first chapter of <i>On the Road</i> (to be distributed digitally); Ginsberg, “Howl” and “America” 1354-1364
14	T, Apr 5	Let’s talk PoMo, Shall We? Perspective, Parody, and Pastiche : Morrison and Pynchon	Read: Materials on PoMo; Toni Morrison, “Recitatif” 1401-1416; Pynchon, “Entropy” 1482-1494
	Th, Apr 7	Shifting Boundaries and Marginalized Voices : Carver, Lahiri, and Spiegelman	Read: Raymond Carver, “Cathedral” 1494-1505; Lahiri, “Sexy” 1649-1665; Spiegelman, from <i>Maus</i> 1550-1568
15	T, Apr 12	Film	Read: Diaz, <i>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> , One and Two
	Th, Apr 14	Film	Read: Diaz, <i>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> , Three and Four
16	T, Apr 19	What exactly is American Literature these days?: <i>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i>	Read: Diaz, <i>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> , Five and Six
	Th, Apr 21	Unstable Subjectivities in Pomo: <i>The Brief Wondrous Life</i> continued.	Read: Diaz, <i>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> , Finish Novel
17	Finals Week	Third Exam Due: Scholarly essays	Thursday, April 28 11 – 12:20

Note: By submitting the form below, you are indicating that you have received, printed, and read the course syllabus and calendar.

Please Write Legibly

Name: _____

Year: _____

Major: _____

Hobbies: _____

Do you have a favorite author or authors? A favorite text or texts? If so, what are they?

Please sign and date this document below:
