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Office Hours: Wednesdays, Periods 7-8

MWF Period 5  
PSY 129  
AML 2070 – Section 05AD

**“Shackles on the Plumed Feet”:**  
**America’s Imagined Nation from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Mid-Twentieth**

Course Description:

This survey will focus on how major authors and movements of American literary history have exploited the rhetorical and ideological gap between America as we imagine it and America as it truly is. Given our nation’s history of slavery and withholding civil rights from African Americans, women, Native Americans, and the LGBT community, one can’t help but wonder if we *are* free or if there are, to use Emily Dickinson’s words, shackles on our plumed feet.

We will begin with three major short fiction or poetry writers, who establish in both dramatic and subtle ways the difference between the public, “American” life and the private, dissident life. From there, we will move swiftly through major, thematized moments in American literature, all of which should give you a strong sense of historical periods and corresponding literary movements, while simultaneously exhibiting how these authors revealed not only the promise but the betrayal of American democracy.

Throughout the semester, we will also emphasize certain popular critical techniques and literary theories that will help us truly crack these texts open and understand what’s happening beneath the surface. Such techniques and theories will include: methods of close reading, structuralism, feminism, psychoanalysis, queer theory, Marxism, and poststructuralist theory. By the end of the course, you should not only know how to think in these terms, but write within them as well. Whether you continue as an English major or not, these ways of critical thinking about texts and their cultural moments will aid your reading of all kinds of media.

This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition or Humanities, and it also contributes 6000 words toward fulfillment of the UF requirement for writing.

Required Texts:

You are required to bring a hard copy of the text we are discussing to class. Forgetting your text will result in your being marked as absent.

- All short works or poems are available under the “Resources” tab on Sakai
- *The Classic Slave Narratives*, Edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr., Signet Classics
- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Scribner Paperback
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston, Harper Perennial Modern Classics
- *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams
- *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951 film), Dir. Elia Kazan, Rentable on Amazon
- *Ladies’ Home Journal* (February 1956), Available as PDF on Sakai under “Resources”
- *Mad Men*, Season One, Episode 9: “Shoot,” Available on iTunes and Netflix Instant

### Goals:

By the end of the semester, you should...

- Gain an appreciation for poetry, fiction, visual media, and other prose.
- Have a strong sense of the American literary tradition from the early nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century.
- Be able to make historical, literary historical, critical or theoretical statements about the texts you've read and should be able to support those statements.
- Have refined your basic writing skills, including drafting, proofreading, editing, and composing a polished final product.
- Know how to use proper MLA documentation style.

### Assignments and Grading Scale:

#### **Reading Responses: 5 entries in total, 500 words each, 15% of your grade**

These responses should show that you have read the works assigned and critically analyzed them. In each response, you will cultivate an argument that responds to the prompt I give in class, typically one week before each blog is due. Five hundred words is a small space in which to make an argument, so have a critical eye toward concision and clarity. Take these responses as experiments toward the larger assignments--try different analyses out, play with various texts, and see what you like writing about best. These will all be turned in as blogs on Sakai and are due before class.

#### **Close Reading Assignment: 750 words, 20%**

This assignment will test your skills in close reading, especially as that skill pertains to poetry. You will first choose a poem that interests you from a list I will provide, which includes some other works by Poe, Dickinson, and Whitman, as well as a few poems by later writers. Before you begin writing, make sure you speak to me about the poem you chose and why. Then, as we did in class, go through this poem line by line, word by word, and develop an argument regarding the entire poem through your close reading. There should be no reference in your own essay to outside texts. Stick to the poem itself and go from there. This is your chance to establish your own critical idiom, so don't be afraid to get creative.

#### **Synthesis Paper: 1,500 words, 20%**

In this assignment, you will choose one work that we have discussed in class and another that we have not discussed, then cultivate an argument that grows from the synthesis of both texts. I encourage you to think outside the box and look at your other areas of interest or hobbies for inspiration (i.e., other literature, film, television, visual art, or pop culture). This is **not** a simple compare/contrast essay. Instead of placing two texts in opposing columns and discussing their similarities and dissimilarities from one another, you must address both texts separately then form an argument that can only arise from putting these two texts side by side. This is a tricky assignment that addresses an important critical skill, so I again encourage you to discuss topics and outlining with me.

#### **Critical Analysis Paper: 2,000 words, 25%**

In your final paper, you will use the skills displayed in the close reading and synthesis assignments, while adding critical theory to your argument. You will choose a work we

discussed in class (from any movement or era) and form an argument using the theories at your disposal: structuralism, gender studies, Marxism, cultural studies, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, and queer theory. You may choose from any of these or other theoretical lenses you may have learned in other literature or philosophy courses. Your paper should have a strong argument, which relies on your chosen critical theory. You may combine theories, but make sure that your analysis does not become superficial or incomplete as a result. I expect unique and interesting arguments. Parroting in-class discussions or repetition through the whole paper is unacceptable.

### **Reading Quizzes: 10%**

These quizzes will occur on a sporadic basis and will test if you read the text and how well you read the text. Therefore, it is important that you take time in your reading to understand issues concerning tone, theme, format, and character, as well as plot. Rather than focusing on just major scenes or chapters, these quizzes will establish the value of other major moments while reading. I will never ask questions that expect you to read my mind and figure out what interpretation I like best. If you read the text closely and attentively, these should all be easy A's.

### **Participation: 10%**

Reading the texts and doing the assignments really only gets you half way there in this class. I expect active class discussion and participation on a daily basis. If you read the texts, but don't participate in class (or vice versa), then your work in general will suffer because of it. Our classroom acts as a safe environment where you can air your opinions and consider those presented by your classmates, so take advantage of this setup and see how something you're thinking of writing a paper on, for instance, flies in general discussion. In essence, active participation helps your personal work, and of course gets you the full 10%.

### Grading Scale:

UF has recently instituted minus grades. As a result, letter grades now have different grade point equivalencies.

A =	93% = 4.0	C =	73% = 2.0
A- =	90% = 3.67	C- =	70% = 1.67
B+ =	87% = 3.33	D+ =	67% = 1.33
B =	83% = 3.0	D =	63% = 1.0
B- =	80% = 2.67	D- =	60% = .67
C+ =	77% = 2.33	E =	>60% = 0.0

**NB:** You must pass this course with a "C" or better to satisfy the CLAS requirement for Composition (C) and to receive the 6,000-word University Writing Requirement credit (E6). You must turn in all papers totaling 6,000 words to receive credit for writing 6,000 words. PLEASE NOTE: a grade of "C-" **will not** confer credit for the University Writing Requirement or the CLAS Composition (C) requirement.

Grade Meanings: Here is the meaning behind the grades I assign to your papers (all papers are graded on a letter scale, not points); you can use these statements to determine how you might work toward a higher grade:

A: You did what the assignment asked for at a high quality level, and your work shows originality and creativity. Work in this range shows all the qualities listed below for a B, but it also demonstrates that you took extra steps to be original or creative in developing content, solving a problem, or developing a style.

B: You did what the assignment asked of you at a high quality level. Work in this range needs revision; however, it is complete in content, is organized well, and shows special attention to style.

C: You did what the assignment asked of you. Work in this range needs significant revision, but it is complete in content and the organization is logical. The style is straightforward but unremarkable.

D: You neglected some basic requirements of the assignment, and completed it at a poor quality level. Work in this range needs significant revision. The content is often incomplete and the organization is hard to discern. Attention to style is often nonexistent or chaotic.

E: An E is usually reserved for people who don't do the work or don't come to class. However, if your work is shoddy and shows little understanding of the needs of the assignment, you will receive a failing grade in this course.

### General Classroom Policies:

#### **Attendance**

Attendance is *required*. Unlike some other classes you may have taken, just “reading the textbook” won’t get you anywhere near a good grade. You are allowed three absences without any direct effect on your grade. Your final grade will drop by a letter with each subsequent absence after your first three. If you reach six absences, you will automatically fail the course.

Absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays are excused, but you must notify me of your absence prior to the date that will be missed.

Also, tardiness will not be tolerated. Two tardies equal one absence.

#### **Cell phones and other assorted Gadgets**

I turn my cell phone off before coming into the classroom and will expect the same courtesy from you. If you are using a laptop in class, it should be used only for taking notes.

#### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits plagiarism and defines it as follows:

Plagiarism. A student shall not represent as the student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Quoting oral or written materials including but not limited to those found on the internet, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.

2. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.

(University of Florida, Student Honor Code, 8 July 2011)

University of Florida students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire Student Honor Code.

All the work submitted on Sakai will be passed through Turnitin.com, a website that compares your paper to other papers on the Internet, any published work, and the Internet itself. If you plagiarize, you **will** be caught, which could result in an automatic E for the assignment, the course, or a disciplinary measure from the university, depending upon the gravity and frequency of the matter.

### **Classroom Behavior**

Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and elicit strong opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. In other words, any rude, coarse, or offensive remarks based upon race, gender, or sexual identity will not be tolerated. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from the class.

### **In-Class Work**

Students will be expected to work in small groups and participate in group discussions, writing workshops, and other in-class activities. Students must be present for all in-class activities to receive credit for them. In-class work cannot be made up. In general, students are expected to contribute constructively to each class session.

### **Paper Maintenance Responsibilities**

Students are responsible for maintaining duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course and retaining all returned, graded work until the semester is over. Should the need arise for a resubmission of papers or a review of graded papers, it is the student's responsibility to have and to make available this material.

**Mode of Submission** All papers will be submitted as MS Word (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf) documents to E-learning/Sakai. Final drafts should be polished and presented in a professional manner. All papers must be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced with 1-inch margins and pages numbered.

Papers and drafts are due at the beginning of class or on-line at the assigned deadline. Late papers will not be accepted. Failure of technology is not an excuse.

### **Students with Disabilities**

The University of Florida complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students requesting accommodation should contact the Students with Disabilities Office, Peabody 202. That office will provide documentation to the student whom must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

## Course Schedule:

*Readings are subject to change during the course of the semester. It is your responsibility to pay attention in class for these changes.*

**Close Reading a Crazy America**  
Week 1: January 7-11M - Syllabus. Discuss the theme for the course.  
W - Edgar Allan Poe: "The Fall of the House of Usher" F - Edgar Allan Poe: "The Black Cat"

Week 2: January 14-18M - *Writing Workshop*: Basic writing practices  
W - Walt Whitman: "Song of Myself" (1-14) F - Walt Whitman: "Live Oak with Moss (Calamus)"  
Week 3: January 21-25M – NO CLASS  
W – **Blog #1 Due**  
Emily Dickinson: "Wild Nights— Wild Nights!" and "I'm ceded—I've stopped being theirs" F - Emily Dickinson: "One need not be a Chamber—to be Haunted" and "The Soul has Bandaged moments"

**The Slave Narrative**  
Week 4: January 28 – February 1M - *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave* (pp. 250-260 stop at "Before I entered...")  
W - *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave* (pp. 260-288) F - Selections from *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers Project*  
Week 5: February 4-8M - **Close Reading Assignment Due!**  
Excerpts from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (Chs. 6-7)  
W - Excerpts from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (Ch. 10) F - *Writing Workshop*: How to synthesize two or more sources in one paper

**The American Dream/Nightmare**  
Week 6: February 11-15M – **Blog #2 Due**  
Henry James: "Daisy Miller" W - Henry James: "The Beast in the Jungle" F – *The Great Gatsby* (Chs. 1-2)

Week 7: February 18-22M – *The Great Gatsby* (Chs. 3-5) W – *The Great Gatsby* (Chs. 6-7) F – *The Great Gatsby* (Chs. 8-end)

*Writing Workshop*: Exercising synthesis with *The Great Gatsby*  
**The Expatriates and the War**  
Week 8: February 25 – March 1M - T.S. Eliot: "The Hollow Men" W - Ernest Hemingway: "Big Two-Hearted River: Part I" F - **Blog #3 Due**  
Ernest Hemingway: "Big Two-Hearted River: Part II"

Week 9: March 4-8 **SPRING BREAK!**  
**Double Consciousness and the Veil**  
Week 10: March 11-15M – **Synthesis Paper Due!**  
*Writing Workshop*: Introduce Critical Analysis assignment  
W.E.B. DuBois: *The Souls of Black Folk* (Forethought, Ch. 1: Of Our Spiritual Strivings) W - W.E.B. DuBois: *The Souls of Black Folk* (Ch. 3: Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others, Ch. 6: Of the Training of Black Men) F - *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Chs. 1-4)

Week 11: March 18-22M - *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Chs. 5-10) W - *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Chs. 11-17) F - *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Chs. 18-end)  
**The Grotesque South**  
Week 12: March 25-29M – **Blog #4 Due**  
William Faulkner: "A Rose for Emily" W - Flannery O'Connor: "A Good Man is Hard to Find" F - Flannery O'Connor: "Good Country People"  
*Writing Workshop*: Proper research methods

**Queer Censorship**  
Week 13: April 1-5M - *A Streetcar Named Desire* W - *A Streetcar Named Desire* F – *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Film)

**Female Inspiration and Domestic Culture**  
Week 14: April 8-12M – **Blog #5 Due**  
Silvia Plath: "Daddy" W - Silvia Plath: "Lady Lazarus" F - *Writing Workshop*: Integrating outside sources

Week 15: April 15-19M - *Ladies' Home Journal* (February 1956) W - Anne Sexton: "Her Kind" F - Anne Sexton: "Rapunzel"

Week 16: April 22-26M - *Mad Men*, Season One, Episode 9: "The Shoot" W – **Peer Review for the Final Paper – Final Paper DUE April 29F – NO CLASS**