

# AML 4242: THE PROBLEM OF PAIN

## SECTION 1D69, T 1:55-2:45, TH 1:55-3:50

**Instructor:** Jordan Youngblood  
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**Office:** Turlington 4405  
**Office Hours:** Monday/Wednesday 9:30-10:30 and by appointment

**On-line Syllabus available on Sakai Webpage**

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”

–C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

Lewis’ famous exhortation in *The Problem of Pain*— a book written in the pursuit of discerning a method and reason for the existence of human suffering — points towards the immense significance of pain and trauma in American literature. What purpose does pain serve in molding and forming American identity? How is it avoided, controlled, delayed, or denied? What are we, as readers, “roused” from in experiencing the presence of pain in a text — and what do we awake into?

This course attempts to examine a landscape of pain over the 20th century in American literature, beginning with T.S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land” evoking the Petronian Sybil who wants only “to die,” and concluding with the father and son in Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* staring down a world that offers little else but suffering. Along the way we will consider legacies of pain through such means as race, religion, sexuality, travel abroad, wealth and production, community violence, and family. While the subject matter may often be on some level harrowing, the aim of the class is not to sink all participants into a deep depression. Rather, we hope to explore how pain not only destroys but builds, and the means by which it has crafted both the American literary tradition and the larger cultural vision of our nation.

### OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

AML 4242 will teach students to

- Analyze various texts and sources with a critical mindset
- Read, write, and think clearly and concisely
- Develop essay-length arguments built around a core thesis
- Consider texts within a historical and literary context
- Synthesize various ideas and concepts over the semester into a final paper

### REQUIRED READINGS

All of the books should be available through the campus bookstore, though I highly suggest considering sources like Amazon or other used book retailers to receive the best deals. They

are listed in the order we will read them this semester, along with the ISBN number of the edition I will be using.

“The Waste Land,” T.S. Eliot (available online via Sakai)  
*As I Lay Dying* – William Faulkner (067973225X)  
*The Sheltering Sky* – Paul Bowles (006083482X)  
*Player Piano* – Kurt Vonnegut (0440170370)  
*Wise Blood* - Flannery O’Connor (0374505845)  
*Bailey’s Café* – Gloria Naylor (0679748210)  
*Stone Butch Blues* - Leslie Feinberg (1555838539)  
*The Road* – Cormac McCarthy (0307265439)

## GRADING POLICIES

The course is built around two major essays. The first essay, which is built around an extended analysis of one text, is worth 30% of the course grade. This essay is expected to be roughly six to eight pages in length. The second essay, which develops a reading of two texts in conversation with one another, is worth 40%. As the final essay in the course and a weaving of two texts together, the assignment will be eight to eleven pages in length. Each will be accompanied by a sheet explaining the essay expectations in greater detail.

The other major assignment in the class will be designing a short in-class presentation on one of the core novels. This presentation is meant as an opportunity for students to explore a central theme or concept in a particular text and offer it as a topic of discussion for the class. Presentations are 8 to 10 minutes in length and will occur at the beginning of class. A short paper (roughly 3 double-spaced pages) accompanies the presentation and will be turned in to me after presenting. Students may find it useful to supply a handout or visual aid to help convey their ideas. Sign-ups will open after add/drop concludes for a particular text and date. One student may present on Tuesdays, while two can present on Thursdays. This presentation is worth 15% of the course grade. Presenting students are strongly encouraged to meet with me beforehand to discuss the theme or concept they intend to focus upon.

The remaining 15% comes from in-class and online participation (worth 10%) and writing in the class discussion forums (worth 5%). Students will be expected to make one in-depth entry in the forums per text. This can vary from a character analysis to a close reading of an important quote. Additional posts or responses to other students will count towards participation.

Students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, English Department Program Assistant; this may result in a higher, lower, or ultimately unchanged grade.

### **NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

First essay:	30%
Second essay:	40%
Presentation:	15%
Participation:	10%
Wiki:	5%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Grading Scale and Criteria**

**“A” Papers:** An “A” assignment contains a strong, clearly stated argument developed throughout the paper utilizing evidence from the text in conjunction with the student’s own commentary on why such details are important. The student’s analysis shows depth and sophistication in approaching the text, often in an original manner. Paragraphs are clearly constructed and flow naturally from each other. Sentences are stylistically varied and grammatically correct. “A” papers are earned. They are not the baseline grade.

**“B” Papers:** “B” papers often contain many qualities of an “A” assignment, but are held back due to various flaws. The argument is still valid, but can wander at certain moments or lack the same relevancy. While the analysis may contain strong moments, it is more uneven and may lean towards the superficial. Paper construction is not as well thought-out, and paragraph transitions may seem forced or arbitrary. Grammatical errors crop up more often, and sentence structure lacks variety. “B” papers, with the right tuning, could become “A”s.

**“C” Papers:** A “C” paper completes the assignment, but does nothing more. The argument is often underdeveloped, and textual evidence is either mostly missing or awkwardly chosen. Analysis is largely replaced by plot summary, and the paper feels sloppily put together. Numerous sentence errors emerge. “C” papers will need extensive revision to approach “A” level.

**“D” Papers:** “D” papers fail to adequately answer the assignment, and often are laden with basic writing errors that indicate a lack of structure and proofreading. They may consist entirely of plot summary, fail to cite any evidence from the text, or wander far afield of the given topic. “D” papers often need to be dismantled completely and fully rewritten in order to approach a passing grade.

**“E” Papers:** “E” papers indicate a total disregard for the assignment and should be avoided.

UF has recently instituted a plus/minus grade system. As a result, letter grades now have different grade point equivalencies. For more information, see:

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

A	4.0	93-100	930-1000	C	2.0	73-76	730-769
A-	3.67	90-92	900-929	C-	1.67	70-72	700-729
B+	3.33	87-89	870-899	D+	1.33	67-69	670-699
B	3.0	83-86	830-869	D	1.0	63-66	630-669
B-	2.67	80-82	800-829	D-	0.67	60-62	600-629
C+	2.33	77-79	770-799	E	0.00	0-59	0-599

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment dates are subject to change as the course progresses. As this is a Tues/Thursday class, with Thursdays being a double period, we will have a slightly different type of schedule. Tuesday classes will cover typically the first third to half of the week's reading, but students are encouraged to read ahead so as to not have to cram between Tuesday and Thursday. We will cover more material on the longer Thursday section. Please note that all readings are due on the date they are listed. Major assignments and holidays are noted.

### COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND READING SCHEDULE

#### JAN 8 – 10

TUES – Introduction to course; discussion of syllabus

THURS – “What is pain?”; discussion of core course themes and concepts

#### JAN 15 – 17

**Reading for the week – “The Waste Land,” T.S. Eliot (available on Sakai)**

TUES - opening discussion on “The Waste Land,” modernism, and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century

**\*PRESENTATIONS NOW AVAILABLE\***

THURS – concluding discussion of “The Waste Land”

#### JAN 22 – 24

**Reading for the week – *As I Lay Dying*: opening to Tull, “When I told Cora how...”**

TUES – opening discussion of Faulkner & family; discuss through Vardaman, “When I get it finished...”

THURS – discuss through Tull, “When I told Cora how...”

#### JAN 29 – 31

**Reading for the week – *As I Lay Dying*: Darl, “Cash lies on his back...” to conclusion**

TUES – discuss through Vardaman, “Darl and Jewel and Dewey Dell...”

THURS – discuss through conclusion of the novel; final thoughts

#### FEB 5 – 7

**Reading for the week – *The Sheltering Sky*, ch. 1 - 20**

TUES – opening discussion of Bowles and travel; discuss through ch. 9

THURS – discussion of ch. 10 to 20

#### FEB 12 – 14

**Reading for the week – *The Sheltering Sky*, ch. 21-conclusion**

TUES – discussion of ch. 21 to 24

THURS – discussion of ch. 25 to conclusion

**FEB 19 – 21**

**Reading for the week – *Player Piano*, ch. 1-18**

TUES – opening discussion of Vonnegut and capital; discuss chapters 1 to 8

THURS – discuss chapters 9 to 18

**FEB 26 – 28**

**Reading for the week – *Player Piano*, ch. 19-conclusion**

TUES – discuss chapters 19 to 26

THURS – discuss chapters 27 to conclusion

**FIRST PAPER MUST BE TURNED IN ON SAKAI BY 5 PM ON FRIDAY**

**MARCH 5 – 7**

**\*SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES\***

**MARCH 12 – 14**

**Reading for the week – *Wise Blood*, ch. 1 to 9**

TUES – opening discussion of O'Connor and religion; discuss chapters 1 to 3

THURS – discuss chapters 4 to 9

**MARCH 19 – 21**

**Reading for the week: *Wise Blood*, ch. 10 -conclusion; *Bailey's Café*, "Maestro, If You Please..." through "Mood: Indigo"**

TUES – discuss *Wise Blood*, chapter 10 to conclusion

THURS – opening discussion of Naylor and race; discuss *Bailey's Café*, "Maestro, If You Please..." through "Mood: Indigo"

**MARCH 26 – 28**

**Reading for the week – *Bailey's Café*, "Eve's Song" to conclusion**

TUES – discuss "Eve's Song" to "Jesse Bell"

THURS – discuss "Mary (Take Two)" to conclusion

**APRIL 2 – 4**

**Reading for the week – *Stone Butch Blues*, ch. 1 to 13**

TUES – opening discussion of Feinberg and sexuality; discuss ch.1 to 6

THURS – discuss chapters 7 to 13

**APRIL 9 – 11**

**Reading for the week – *Stone Butch Blues*, ch.14 to conclusion**

TUES – discuss chapters 14 to 19

THURS – discuss chapter 20 to conclusion

**APRIL 16 – 18**

**Reading for the week: *The Road*, opening to “There is no book and your fathers are dead in the ground”**

TUES – opening discussion of McCarthy and apocalypse; discuss opening to “He woke in the night with the cold...”

THURS – discuss “He woke in the night...” to “There is no book...”; **\*LAST POSSIBLE DAY FOR PRESENTATIONS\***

**APRIL 23**

**Reading for the week – *The Road*, “The country went from pine...” to conclusion**

TUES – final discussion of *The Road* and course

**FINAL PAPERS DUE TUESDAY, APRIL 30 BY 5:00 PM  
NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS ACCEPTED**

**CLASSROOM POLICIES****Attendance**

Students are allowed three absences without grade penalty. The fourth absence results in the deduction of a letter grade, and each continued absence will reduce the student’s course grade by one further letter. The sixth absence results in an automatic failure of the course. If a student arrives late to class, they will be marked tardy; two tardies are equivalent to one absence. Students *must* keep track of their absences over the semester. Failure to do so may result in greatly reduced final averages.

**Preparation**

Papers and drafts are due by the specific time on the date assigned. Unapproved late papers *will not* be accepted. Ensure that you provide enough time for yourself to complete any necessary printing or editing before the class.

All papers must be turned in to Sakai. This is to prevent plagiarism as well as provide an online database for your work. Instructions will be provided in-class at the necessary time. Papers must be in 12-point Times New Roman font and double-spaced with 1 inch margins. MLA format is expected for parenthetical citations.

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the [Student Honor Code](#). The Honor Code prohibits and defines plagiarism 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):

- a.) Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
- b.) 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.

All students are required to abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including these definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

### **Students with Disabilities**

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

### **Harassment**

UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentconductcode.php#s4041>