

Survey of American Literature

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AML 2070 - 6102
T 8-9; R 9
MAT 0113

Course Description

To “survey” is to view, examine, or inspect in detail. In this course, we will survey select works of American literature by examining their language, inspecting their form, and viewing them alongside other cultural materials in order to understand their historical context. While the texts we will read are diverse in form, content, and period, they are all intimate narratives of individuals struggling to understand themselves within the broader historical events and cultural ideologies in which they live. Thus, the purpose of our survey will be to examine how literature connects the personal to the political. Through close reading and contextual research, we will examine questions such as: How do literary narratives change our understanding of historical events such as war, or social injustices such as racial prejudice? How do stories about individuals help us to grapple with complex issues regarding identity, ideology, ethics, and empowerment? How do race, class, and gender shape your individual life experiences and influence your understanding of who you are? You will write about the course texts using various analytical methods as well as connect the texts to your own individual experiences through organized, personal reflection. While I will sometimes give lectures that introduce authors, forms, and contexts, this will primarily be a seminar-style course. In addition to writing about the texts, then, you should come to class prepared to discuss them.

AML 2070 is a General Education course and provides the student learning outcomes listed in the Undergraduate Catalog. For a full description of course goals, please see the Undergraduate Catalog at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/advisinggened.html#requirements>.

Required Texts

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 1845
Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 1861
Nella Larsen, *Passing*, 1929
Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*, 1963
Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 1970
Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*, 1990

Note: All primary course texts will be available at the UF Bookstore. If you choose to purchase your books elsewhere (through online vendors like Amazon, for instance), then make sure to get the correct version. I will give you all other articles or contextual readings either via Canvas, email, or in class.

Grades

A: 93-100	C: 73-76
A-: 90-92	C-: 70-72
B+: 87-89	D+: 67-69
B: 83-86	D: 63-66
B-:80-82	D-: 60-62
C+: 77-79	E: 0-59

Grade Breakdown:

Involvement: 10%

Discussion Questions: 10%

Reading Journals: 20%

Short Critical Analysis Papers: 30%

Final Project: 30%

Here is an explanation of the letter grades I'll use to evaluate your writing:

'A' essays present complex, original interpretations supported by compelling textual evidence and thought-provoking considerations of the 'so what' question, e.g. what the analysis reveals about the language, images, themes, or ideologies of the text. **'B+'** essays present complex, original and well-supported analyses, but need more follow through regarding the 'so what' question. **'B'** essays are competent in their presentation of ideas and textual evidence but the arguments require further development, nuance, or textual evidence. **'C'** or **'C+'** essays engage with the text but need to push further in order to go beyond a surface-level interpretation. Lower grades indicate a lack of organization, clarity, and/or textual evidence. I encourage you to see me in office hours or make an appointment if you are concerned about your essay grades and would like to discuss strategies to improve.

Assignments

Involvement (100 pts.)

Class and small group discussions will be a vital part of this course. However, it is incredibly difficult to grade "participation." Do I evaluate the quantity or quality of students' comments? How do I compare outgoing discussion leaders to the quieter students, who listen to their classmates and respond in more measured ways? For this reason, instead of evaluating you on your "participation," I will evaluate you on your involvement in the class. I expect that for the two times a week that we meet, you will be an involved and engaged member of the class. This means **1)** Having the required text(s) in class with you, **2)** Being focused on the class activities and materials rather than on phones or laptops, **3)** Contributing your thoughts

and responding respectfully to the thoughts of others in both whole class and small group discussions. In the second week of class, I will give you a checklist that contains all of these items. At the end of the semester, if you have satisfied the terms of the list, you will receive the full 100 points.

Reading Journals, 4 at 400 words each (2000 words total, 200 points total)

Over the course of the semester, you will turn in four reading journals that examine how the assigned reading connects to your own past or present experiences, academic or extracurricular interests, or issues relevant to your own historical moment. Since the other course writing assignments ask you to engage with the texts through various analytical methods, use the journals as opportunities to engage with the texts on a more personal level. Did a particular passage or character strike a chord with you, and why? Does a situation in the text remind you of something that you're studying in another class, and how does this connection enhance your reading of the text? Does the text recall cultural issues that are particularly relevant in today's world?

To ensure that these journals count toward the composition credit, they cannot be free form, but must focus on drawing out the connection between yourself and the text for the purpose of understanding how literature makes meaning in personal as well as social, literary, and historical contexts. The dates in which you turn in your reading journals are up to you, but you must hand them in at the beginning of class, and they must respond to that day's assigned reading.

Discussion Questions, 4 at 100 words each (400 words total, 100 points total)

Four times over the course of the semester, you will turn in a set of **two** thoughtful and clear questions, each capable of generating various responses and lasting discussion about the text and its relation to some of the major themes, issues, or other texts we have been thinking about throughout the course. During class, I might ask you to elaborate on one or more of your questions.

Critical Analysis Essays (2000 words total, 300 points total)

At the end of each unit, you will write a critical analysis on one of the texts we read during that unit, using a particular analytical method. You will write 3 critical analyses total: two close readings, and a contextual analysis. Each of these analytical methods is described briefly below, but we will talk about them in detail as well as practice them in class.

Close Reading, 600 words (100 pts.)

Close reading or explication looks closely at a short passage of text and attempts to unfold or unpack its larger effect or significance. Pick a short passage from the text and quote this at the beginning of your paper. Analyze it closely, paying attention to word choice, rhythm, repetition, sentence structure, and images. Basically, you're picking the passage apart in an attempt to understand how it works. This kind of close and careful analysis is slow work, of course, but it leads to a much greater understanding of the passage and, often, to intriguing and important insights about the text as a whole.

Close Reading 2, 600 words (100 pts.)

You will perform another close reading on a different passage from a different text, but you should pay specific attention to the feedback you received on your first close reading. Use that feedback to guide your approach to the second close reading, and to improve your analysis.

Contextual Analysis, 800 words (100 pts.)

For this analysis, you will examine how one of the contextual materials we read in class (*Ladies' Home Journal* magazines, Nisetich's "Reading Race," the materials in the Baldwin Library, etc.) reveals insight into one of the course texts. What connections can you draw between the contextual material and the literary text? For instance, what specific elements (language or images) of the *Ladies' Home Journal* help you understand the thoughts, ideas, motivations, or actions of *The Bell Jar*'s Esther Greenwood? What children's books in the Baldwin Library highlight the social critique of *The Bluest Eye*?

Proposal, 300 words

To help solidify ideas for your final project, you will turn in a brief paragraph that describes what issues, questions, and themes you want to explore in your final project. We will discuss the proposal further as the end of the semester approaches.

Final Project: Souvenir Book, 1300 words (300 pts.)

A "souvenir" is a thing or a fact remembered. Your final project will compile the souvenirs you are taking away from this class. These can be passages, images, lines of dialogue, or ideas from the literary texts and contextual materials. For this reason, your souvenir book should be something you compile throughout the semester, and it should draw on your earlier critical analysis essays and reading journals. The souvenir book can take various forms depending on the students' interests, but it must identify at least four souvenirs from the texts, with your accompanying analysis explaining the souvenir's literary, cultural, and personal significance. We will discuss the form and function of the souvenir book at length in class.

Reading Schedule

Readings and due dates are subject to change during the course of the semester. **Readings are due the day they are listed on the syllabus. You must bring a hard copy of the text(s) we will be discussing each day (if the text was acquired online, you are responsible for printing out a copy).**

Unit 1

Week 1

Tues. 1/5 – Introductions

Thurs. 1/7 – Appiah’s introduction to Jacobs and Douglass (pages xi-xvi).

Week 2

Tues. 1/12 – *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (17-66)

Thurs. 1/14 – *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (67-119)

Week 3

Tues. 1/19 – *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (125-189)

Thurs. 1/21 – *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (190-242)

Week 4

Tues. 1/26 – *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (243-313); Writing Workshop: close reading

Thurs. 1/28 – *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (314-371)

Week 5

Tues. 2/2 – Writing Conferences

Thurs. 2/4 – **Close Reading due;** in-class writing reflection

Unit Two

Week 6

Tues. 2/9 – *Passing* (Part 1, pages 9-47)

Thurs. 2/11 – *Passing* (Part 2, pages 51-81)

Week 7

Tues. 2/16 – *Passing* (Part 3, pages 85-114)

Thurs. 2/18 – “Reading Race in Nella Larsen’s *Passing* and the Rhinelander Case,” Rebecca Nisetich

Week 8

Tues. 2/23 – *The Bell Jar* (Ch. 1-6); In-class analysis of *Ladies' Home Journal* magazine

Thurs. 2/25 – *The Bell Jar* (Ch. 7-15)

Week 9: Spring Break

Tues. 3/1 – spring break

Thurs. 3/3 – spring break

Week 10

Tues. 3/8 – *The Bell Jar* (Ch. 16-20)

Thurs. 3/10 – **Close Reading 2 due**; in-class writing reflection

Unit 3

Week 11

Tues. 3/15 – *The Bluest Eye* (foreword, 1-59)

Thurs. 3/17 – *The Bluest Eye* (61-110); Class visit to the Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature

Week 12

Tues. 3/22 – *The Bluest Eye* (111-163)

Thurs. 3/24 – *The Bluest Eye* (164-206)

Week 13

Tues. 3/29 – *The Things They Carried* (stories TBA)

Thurs. 3/31 – *The Things They Carried* (stories TBA); **Proposal due**

Week 14

Tues. 4/5 – *The Things They Carried* (stories TBA); Writing Workshop: Contextual Essay

Thurs. 4/7 – *The Things They Carried* (stories TBA)

Week 15

Tues. 4/12 – **Contextual Essay due**; in-class writing reflection; introduction of final assignment

Thurs. 4/14 – Reading TBA; Writing Workshop: Souvenir book

Week 16

Tues. 4/19 – Conferences

Final Project due: Tues. 4/26 by 12pm.

Course Policies

Submitting Papers

All papers should be formatted with 1 inch margins and 12 pt. Times New Roman (or similar) font. All papers should be submitted at the beginning of class.

Attendance

Absences

As this is a discussion-based course, attendance is crucial. You are allowed **3 unexcused absences** over the course of the semester. 30 points will be deducted from your overall grade for each additional unexcused absence. **You cannot pass the course if you receive 6 unexcused absences.** Excused absences include university sponsored events (athletic, band, theater, etc.). Students who will need to miss class due to an excused absence should let me know before-hand and will be responsible for making up any missed work. As a general rule, you are responsible for making up any work missed due to an absence, excused or unexcused.

Lateness

Being late is disruptive, so be in class on time. If you arrive after I take attendance at the beginning of class, make sure you see me after class so I can mark you as late instead of absent. If you're late two times it will count as an absence.

Grade Appeals

If you have questions or concerns regarding your final course grade, meet with me first. After we meet, if you want to appeal your final grade, contact Carla Blount, Program Assistant in the Department of English and fill out the appropriate form. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

University Policies

Disability Services

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>

Academic Honesty

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

General Education Requirements

Composition (C) and Humanities (H) credit

This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition or Humanities. For more information, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/generaleducationrequirement.aspx>
Writing Requirement

This course can provide 6000 words toward fulfillment of the UF requirement for writing. For more information, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/writing-requirement.aspx>