

AML2070: Survey of American Literature  
Sect.0211: Contemporary U.S. Literature

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Office Hours: T 6-7, R 7-8 or by appointment

Class Time/Period:  
T 8-9, R 9  
MATO 116  
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### **Course Description**

This is a 2000-level literature course that introduces you to a variety of authors, genres, movements, and themes in American literature beginning with post-WWI literature. Specifically, we will focus on issues of class, race, gender, and sexuality and how those issues interact to both create and critique the idea of nation in the United States. The course will help you examine the role American literature plays in shaping American identity and how different texts struggle to find a place within the imagined culture. While we will read texts considered part of classic modern American literature, we will also analyze texts that have not always been considered part of the American literature canon; in doing this, we will examine some of the possible reasons why certain works are included and/or excluded from typical understandings of American literature within academia and the public.

There will be an emphasis on reading and class discussions throughout the semester, but you should also be prepared to do a considerable amount of writing (6000 words). This is a literature course, which means that apart from the writing assignments, you are required to complete the reading assigned for each day and participate in the class discussions throughout the semester.

### **Course Objectives**

Through class discussions, reading and writing assignments, students will learn different ways of engaging critically with a work of fiction as well as different scholarly approaches to reading and writing about literature in an academic setting. Different writing activities will help students develop research, composition and critical thinking skills at a college level; some of those skills include: conducting thorough library/scholarly research, incorporating research into your writing, writing a sophisticated thesis statement, building a solid argument, and providing detailed and pertinent support. An oral presentation will help students develop their ability to communicate their ideas and analysis verbally.

The University's General Education student learning outcomes for this course are detailed in the Undergraduate Catalog at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/advisinggened.html> - [requirements](#)

**Required Texts:**

**Fiction**

NOTE: The following titles are available in most online bookstores, such as Amazon.com, as well as the UF Bookstore

Junot Diaz, *Drown* (1998)  
F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1929)  
Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959)  
Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* (1993)  
Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (1949)  
Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1987)  
Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963)  
Kathryn Stockett, *The Help* (2009)

**Poetry Packet (provided by instructor)**

Elizabeth Bishop, Selected Poems (1955-1976)  
Louise Erdrich, "Dear John Wayne" (1984)  
Maurice Kenny, "Reading Poems in Public" (1988)

NOTE: The following texts are required but will be provided by your instructor. You must print them out and bring them to class when we are discussing them

**Criticism (More titles will be added later in the semester)**

Patricia Hill Collins, "Mammies, Matriarchs and Other Controlling Images" from *Black Feminist Thought* (2000)  
Michael S. Kimmel, "'Temporary about Myself': White-Collar Conformists and Suburban Playboys, 1945-1960" from *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (1996)

## Assignment Descriptions:

### **Participation** (80 pts)

This is a discussion-based course so participation is key to your success in the class. Most of what we learn in class will come in the form of class discussions, so you must be ready to participate every day. Be prepared to answer questions about the reading, make comments and even ask your own questions to the class. Participation points will be given to those students who actively engage with the discussion and create useful contributions to the class through their comments and questions. **Participation points are *not* guaranteed, they are earned.** NOTE: Keep in mind that attendance has a strong effect on your participation grade; at the same time, just because you attend class, it does not mean you are guaranteed a good participation grade.

### **Reading Quizzes** (80pts)

Given that this is a literature course, reading is required. I will give reading quizzes throughout the semester as a way to make sure you are keeping up with the reading. These quizzes will ask you specific questions about the texts (plot, characters, etc.) but should not be difficult for those who have done the reading. Quizzes are unannounced. NOTE: Occasionally, Some quizzes may come in the form of homework assignments or other miscellaneous activities. **Quizzes can only be made up through extra credit, no make up quizzes are given regardless of excused/unexcused absences.**

### **Short Papers** (500 words, 30pts/each)

You are responsible for writing **four** short papers (min: 500 words) this semester. Your response papers should be submitted through E-Learning. Response papers will include: two close readings, one character analysis, and an annotated bibliography

### **Oral Presentation and Class Discussion** (100pts)

At the beginning of the semester each student will sign up for a text they want to present on. You will have to give a Power Point presentation on a research topic given by the instructor. You will then have to submit **three** discussion questions related to the topic.

### **Midterm In-Class Exam** (100pts)

The midterm exam consists of identifying quotes and explaining their significance.

### **Panel Discussion** (100pts)

At the end of the year, you will have to prepare a panel discussion on *The Help*, the final book we'll be reading

### **Final In-Class Exam** (100pts)

The final exam will follow the same format as the midterm, it is not a cumulative exam

### **Rough Draft and Final Paper:** Rough Draft (7-8 pages, 70pts) Final: (4000words, 250pts)

You will submit a final paper at the end of the course. The topic must be directly connected to issues of gender, race, sexuality, class and/or nation in American literature. You are required to use **at least five** academic sources for this paper.

**Grading Scale**

A	930-1000
A-	900-929
B+	870-899
B	840-869
B-	800-839
C+	770-799
C	740-769
C-	700-739
D+	670-699
D	630-669
D-	600-629
E	0-599

**Grade Breakdown**

	Word Count	Points	Percentage
Assignments			
<b>Participation</b>	N/A	80pts	<b>8%</b>
<b>Reading Quizzes</b>	N/A	80pts	<b>8%</b>
<b>Short Papers</b>	2000 words	120pts	12%
<b>Presentation</b>	N/A	100pts	10%
<b>Midterm Exam</b>	N/A	100pts	10%
<b>Debate</b>	N/A	100pts	10%
<b>Final Exam</b>	N/A	100pts	10%
<b>Rough</b>	N/A	70pts	7%
<b>Draft/Conference</b>			
<b>Final Paper</b>	4000 words	250pts	25%
<b>Total</b>	6000 words	1000pts	100%

## **Grading Criteria**

### **A**

Demonstrates excellent and insightful literary analysis that offers productive criticism of a text; careful attention to issues concerning race, gender, sexuality, religion, class, and nation; profound analysis that reflects grasp of text's metaphors, images, diction, syntax, structure, speaker and other literary techniques; avoids irrelevant plot summary; understanding of language, no glaring mechanical or grammatical errors; no glaring misreadings; makes a strong, compelling, well-organized argument

### **B**

Demonstrates above average critical analysis of a text that takes into account aesthetics, history, criticism, and socio-economic issues with some minor errors; impressive attention to literary techniques with few errors; meaty analysis that might rely on plot summary more than an "A" paper/response; discusses text in an intelligent matter but does not fully answer the "so what?" question; presents a competent argument that might have some issues with organization, structure, etc; no glaring mechanical or grammatical errors or misreadings

### **C**

Demonstrates average analysis of a text that does not create a fully realized study of literary techniques or socio-economic issues involved in the text; shows little effort to contextualize text in history, criticism, etc or effort is not fully realized; superficial analysis that relies heavily on plot summary; may contain grammatical or mechanical errors; lack of meaty responses; argument is unclear, unfocused and/or disorganized; lack of sufficient/meaningful support; misreadings might occur

### **D**

Demonstrates below average ability to analyze a text; ignores disciplinary terminology to write an effective piece of literary criticism as well as relevant information regarding history, criticism, literary techniques, etc; consists mainly of plot summary with little or no analysis; plot description is wrong or misguided; glaring misreadings throughout; offers little to no support; argument suffers from major structure or organization issues; multiple usage/grammar errors throughout; difficult to read; fails to make word count

### **E (failing grade)**

Insufficient evidence to judge; complete lack of effort; no attempt to get close to word count; intelligible

## Course Policies

### Attendance

Discussions cannot be replicated so if you miss a day of class, you will have missed the lesson for that day. Therefore, I take attendance very seriously and expect you to come to class every day on time. You are allowed **up to three** unexcused absences, your grade will automatically drop a grade after each following absence (excused or unexcused). Two tardies (5 minutes after class starts) count as one absence. **If you reach six absences you will automatically fail the course and should withdraw from the class (or you will receive an “E” for the semester).**

No Incompletes are given for this course.

Unfortunately, given the nature of the course, if you miss more than two weeks of classes in a row—even if it is due to illness or other reasons—you will automatically fail and receive an E.

### Reading and Class Discussions

You should have read the pages assigned before coming to class on that day; **all** reading is required, that means both the fiction and the academic articles assigned. Make sure you bring the reading material to class and that you highlight, mark, or underline sections you wish to discuss. If you do not have your book with you, you will not be allowed to take the quiz for that day. Be respectful and polite to your classmates, wait for your turn to talk and avoid being offensive to others. A lot of the material we read in class will include heavy levels of profanity, explicit sexual imagery, drug use, and other material you might not be comfortable with; **if you are uncomfortable reading and talking about any of these in a professional manner, you should drop the course right away.**

### Cell Phone Use

Few things are as disrespectful as students texting or using their phones in class. Please put your phones on silent/vibrate to make sure they don't ring and refrain from using your phone in the classroom during class time (that means even if you are done with your work). If I catch you texting once, I will give you a verbal warning and you will lose all participations points for that day; if I catch you texting a second time, you will be marked as absent for that day and will be asked to leave for the remaining of the period.

### Plagiarism

**DO NOT PLAGIARIZE!** Plagiarism consists of presenting someone else's work as your own without acknowledging the original source. This can happen intentionally or unintentionally, regardless of intention, plagiarism is illegal. When you plagiarize you risk failing the course, and the infraction will become part of your permanent record. If you have any questions about citing sources, please ask. **There is a zero tolerance plagiarism policy in this class, if you plagiarize you will fail the course and the Dean of Students will be notified.**

## **General Education Requirement**

### *Composition*

This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition or Humanities.

For more information, see:

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

### *Writing Requirement (formerly Gordon Ride)*

This course can satisfy the UF requirement for Writing. For more information, see:

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

## **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.

It is your responsibility to contact the school administration regarding any disability you may have, and to inform me so we can make any necessary arrangements.

For more information, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

### *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>

### *Harassment*

UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentconductcode.php#s4041>

**Tentative Schedule**

**NOTE:** While I will do my best to stay on schedule, sometimes schedule changes are unavoidable throughout the semester so please keep in mind that there's a chance you will get a revised schedule later in the semester.

**Week One:**

**Thurs 8/22**

Syllabus and Intro to the Class

**Week Two:**

**Tues 8/27**

What is American Literature?

**Activity:** In-Class Diagnostic

**Thurs 8/29**

Elizabeth Bishop, poetry

**Handout: Presentations assignment sheet**

**Week Three:**

**Tues 9/3**

Cont: Elizabeth Bishop

Erdrich, "Dear John Wayne" (1984)

Kenny, "Reading Poems in Public" (1988)

**Handout: Short Papers assignment sheet**

**Thurs 9/5**

**Lecture:** F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Lost Generation, and the Roaring 20s

**Week Four:**

**Tues 9/10**

Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

**Thurs 9/12**

Cont: *The Great Gatsby*

**Week Five:**

**Tues 9/17**

Cont: *The Great Gatsby*

**Lecture:** The 1950s, Arthur Miller, Lorraine Hansberry

**Short Paper #1 Due**

**Thurs 9/19**

Miller, *Death of a Salesman*

Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*

**Week Six:**

**Tues 9/24**

Cont: *Death of a Salesman*

*A Raisin in the Sun*



**Thurs 9/26**

Cont: *Death of a Salesman*  
*A Raisin in the Sun*

**Week Seven:**

**Tues 10/1**

Plath, *The Bell Jar*  
**Lecture:** Sylvia Plath

**Thurs 10/3**

Cont: *The Bell Jar*

**Week Eight:**

**Tues 10/8**

Cont: *The Bell Jar*  
**Short Paper #2 Due**

**Thurs 10/10**

**Midterm Review**

**Week Nine:**

**Tues 10/15**

**Midterm Exam**

**Thurs 10/17**

**Lecture:** Toni Morrison and Black Feminism  
**Handout:** Final paper

**Week Ten:**

**Tues 10/22**

Morrison, *Beloved*

**Thurs 10/24**

Cont: *Beloved*

**Week Eleven:**

**Tues 10/29**

Diaz, *Drown*  
**Lecture:** Junot Diaz

**Thurs 10/30**

Cont: *Drown*  
**Short Paper #3 Due**

**Week Twelve:**

**Tues 11/5**

Kushner, *Angels in America*  
**Lecture:** Tony Kushner

**Thurs 11/7**

*Angels in America*

**Week Thirteen:**

**Tues 11/12**

Stockett, *The Help*

**Lecture:** Kathryn Stockett

**Handout:** Panel Discussion

**Short Paper #4 Due**

**Thurs 11/14**

Cont: *The Help*

**Week Fourteen:**

**Tues 11/19**

*The Help* screening (2011, Dir: Tate Taylor)

**Thurs 11/21**

Final Review

**Week Fifteen:**

**Tues 11/26**

**Final Exam**

**Thurs 11/28**

**Happy Thanksgiving!**

**Week Sixteen:**

**Tues 12/3**

**Panel Discussion on *The Help***

**Rough Draft Due**

**Week Seventeen: Final Paper Due via e-mail**