

Survey of American Literature  
AML 2070, Section 0535  
Matherly Hall (MAT), Room 115  
Tuesday, Period 8-9 (3:00-4:55) Thursday, Period 9 (4:05-4:55)

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### **Course Description and Objectives:**

Survey of American Literature (AML 2070) is basically an introduction to college level English. This can mean many things, especially considering how open every term in the title (“Survey”, “American” and “Literature”) happens to be. This “survey” will pertain to specifically to women writers, with a focus on representations of femininity and womanhood. Through this generally feminist lens, we’ll analyze the language and symbolism of gender as it relates to political and existential questions of femininity. The images and ideas we’ll confront range from mythical to cultural, compelling us to constantly relate theories and ideas to stories and our own life experiences. All the texts selected for this course are from women writers in some way operating in this vein of critical thinking.

It’s no surprise that this class involves a lot of reading and writing. It also involves a lot of discussing. Every class will be a seminar of some sort, with minimal lecturing on my part. Which is to say, this class will be as much about the “topic” as what we choose to do with the topic. And we’ll engage this topic in several ways. Part of this involves crafting analytical essays that argue and offer ways of reading particular works. Part of this involves taking notes on every text, and using those notes to generate seminar discussions. The most important part (to me, anyway) involves *rewriting* these works. This will take on a variety of forms: re-writing texts (according to a variety formulae), imitating the “voice” or style of writer by re-writing the work as your own, and creating original, creative works directly inspired by one or more of the class texts. In sum, we’ll constantly experiment with forms of expression and use our expressions to engage the class material.

### **Course Texts:**

*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs  
Modern Library Classics, 2004. ISBN: 0345478231

*My Mortal Enemy* by Willa Cather  
Vintage Classics, 1990. ISBN 0679731792

*Sleeping with the Dictionary* by Harryette Mullen  
University of California Press, 2002. ISBN 0520231430

*Tender Buttons* by Gertrude Stein  
Any Edition

*Literal Madness* by Kathy Acker  
Grove Press, 1994. ISBN 0802131565

*In A Different Voice* by Carol Gilligan  
Harvard University Press, 1993. ISBN 0674445449

*The Discent of Allette* by Alice Notley  
Penguin Books, 1996. ISBN 0140587640

*Coeur De Lion* by Arianna Reines  
Fence Books, 2011. ISBN 1934200484

*Storyteller* by Leslie Marmon Silko  
Penguin Books, 2012 ISBN 0143121286

## **Assignments:**

### **Gordon Rule Writing Assignments:**

There are essentially four writing assignments for this class.

The first three are the most explicitly essay-like. This means that they expect you to make an argument and/or offer an analysis that directly engages one or more texts. I'm not interested in making you write "English essays," per se. If you're an English major or might like to be one, we can certainly discuss how to write these. But for most of you, learning to write "English essays" will not be particularly enlightening. I believe, instead, that there are a lot of creative ways to draft essays, and we'll experiment with how to do this throughout the semester. I'll have general expectations for the class and particular expectations for each of you, based on our conferences, your interests and your previous work.

Generally speaking, I want you to use these essays as a way of "inhabiting" one or more texts. This means scrutinizing a small section of a text or particular theme. Pay direct attention to words or stylistic tones and explore them. Your "argument" can be as simple as a claim about how you see a writer do some particular thing. What I want more than anything, however, is for you to intermix the text's words with your own. This means that you'll *describe* the text instead of summarizing it. The more creative your descriptions, the better. And the more you *imitate* the text you're discussing, the better.

### **Final Project (1000 Words)**

Your final project will be a creative work. You'll have almost free-reign over how you approach this. My one requirement is that one or more of the course texts

directly inspire it. You'll write a 1000 word essay accompanying this project, documenting your composing process—how you drew on other texts and/or ideas in the process of creating your own.

### **Non-Gordon Rule Writing Assignments:**

These assignments are “completion” based, meaning I grade the extent to which they meet expectations.

### **Reading Notes**

We will take notes on all our readings. My expectation is that we write about 100 words for every four pages of the assigned reading. Basically, divide the number of pages in the assigned reading by four—that'll be the amount of notes you will write (for example, if the text is 80 pages, we'll write 20 notes). When division results in a decimal, round down to the nearest note (if the text is 87 pages, don't write 21.75 notes, just write 21). Space these notes however you see fit; you don't need to write them every four pages. Indeed, I'd rather you save your notes for passages or pages you find particularly note-worthy.

These notes are important for three reasons. First they *compel us* (a pretty way of saying *force us*) to pay careful attention to the text. Second, they help us remember thoughts and ideas about the text, which is especially helpful when we discuss the works in class or when you're drafting an essay. And third, they insure that we're constantly writing, which will help us get comfortable with our own words and with writing about literature.

### **Participation**

“Participation” is a catchall for non-graded work that nonetheless affects your final grade. No matter how they're defined, “participation points” are always somewhat arbitrary and you cannot appeal them like written assignments. To be clear, I don't like the idea of “participation points.” I see “participation” as the most important expectation of any class, and *quantifying* this expectation in terms of “points” makes participating in class more oppressive than liberating. But I do, however, want to stress that class participation is just as important as any assignment. Really, *your* success in this class (what you get out of it) will ultimately depend on the successfulness of the class itself, and that depends entirely on our collective participation.

I want to therefore address this matter in detail the first week of class. It's important that we reach some kind of agreement about the ways we can meaningfully involve ourselves in this class. For example, I see “participation” to include regularly asking questions, responding to classmates, and contributing ideas to a discussion. But again, we must address and agree upon what this looks like.

### **Assignment Point Totals**

First Essay (1500-1750 words)	100 Points
Second Essay (1500-1750 words)	100 Points

Third essay (1500-1750 words)	100 Points
Final Project (1000 words)	100 Points
Reading Notes	100 Points
Participation	400 Points
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1000 Points</b>

### **Grading Scale**

A	930-1000	C	730-760
A-	900-920	C-	700-720
B+	870-890	D+	670-690
B	830-860	D	630-660
B-	800-820	D-	600-620
C+	770-790	E	0-590

### **Grades and Grade Meanings**

#### **Self-Grading**

Every Gordon Rule assignment is, with some exceptions, self-graded. It is up to every student to determine what they think a fair grade would be for each assignment.

You will submit a one-page, single spaced letter with each assignment making a case for why you should receive your proposed grade. The content of each letter will largely consist on your own reflections about what you struggled with and what you succeeded in accomplishing. Letters will give little attention to the general topic or issue you address in the assignment. Instead, the letter should focus on issues—positive and negative—you had with conveying your topic or issue *in writing*. The letter does not count toward the assignment’s word count.

I will read each assignment according to your reflections. My feedback will occasionally point toward problems or flaws in your writing that you may not see, but otherwise my feedback will be my own reflections on your piece. What I believe works and does not work is based on my opinions, and my critiques will generally be advice. My feedback will not, however, be determinate of your grade.

I reserve the right to make exceptions to this overall policy. If I see clear disparities in the quality of work you submit and your proposed grade, I will arrange a time to meet with you to discuss the disagreement. In severe cases, I reserve the right to reject your grade entirely. More likely, however, we’ll meet to find a common ground about what we consider to be a fair grade.

You will determine your grade based on how hard you worked toward accomplishing what you set out to accomplish. Ways of indicating the level of work include:

- *Time spent revising*: Revision is not simply proofreading; it encompasses how

you structure your paper, your sentences, your arguments and your information. Every assignment will likely be revised several times prior to submission. If you find, for example, that the order in which you present your information isn't helpful to the point you're trying to make, you'll spend time rearranging sections of the essay and rewriting sentences to reflect the direction of the overall work.

- *Developing a cohesive style*: Style generally refers to the rhetorical and grammatical choices you make to influence how your reader receives your work. Rhetorical choices often infuse texts with tonal qualities like urgency, irony, patience, playfulness, rationality, etc.—qualities that you can't necessarily *point to* but nonetheless have an effect on the reader. Tonal qualities are expressed through structural, grammatical choices. There are no "rules" for effecting tone, but you'll encounter numerous examples in the texts you read and in our class's style guides.
- *Voice*: I use "voice" as a catchall for your sense of ownership of your own writing. It refers to your writing habits, both good and bad, and the ways you try to develop what works and fix what doesn't. "Voice" is also a reflection about what matters to you as a writer. How do you want your reader to imagine "you" behind this text? What presence do you hope to solicit? In writing, you can never control how your reader imagines you or reacts to your text, but you can always influence that reaction.

You need not reflect on each of these facets of your work in every letter. Indeed, if you feel that your biggest obstacle in a particular assignment is structuring and presenting your research, feel free to focus on developing that in the assignment. I do ask that, throughout the course, you address each of these facets in detail at least once.

Students with more college writing experience can reflect on previous work to put their current work into context. Less experienced college writers will work toward developing that context. But in the end, no assignment exists in a vacuum; each paper is indicative of your development both in and outside of this class. I can only come to understand this development in the assignments you submit, but your work as a writer is always greater than this class.

### **Grade Meanings**

The following grade meanings reflect your *final grade*. They can certainly pertain to each assignment, but they largely pertain to the overall quality of work you produce in this class. If you only aim for B grade in this class (which I don't advise), you can get a sense, here, of how to achieve that.

- A      You did what the assignments ask for at a high quality level, and your work shows originality and creativity. You clearly articulate, in class and in conferences, what your work is attempting to achieve. In each assignment, it's clear that you took pains to make your work meaningful.

You attended class regularly (no more than two absences). You consistently participated in class discussions by asking questions, expressing ideas/opinions and by responding to the questions and opinions of your classmates. You kept up with all note taking and non-Gordon rule writing assignments.

An A- grade will reflect all of these qualities, but likely means that you missed too many classes, put inconsistent effort into assignments, were inconsistent with class participation, or were otherwise less-than-regularly abiding by class standards.

- B You did what the assignments asked of you, but you did not always take strides to optimize your work. You would heed some of my advice, but applied it inconsistently. You did not always come prepared to conferences with clear ideas or completed drafts. You were inconsistent with attendance, participation and note taking.
- C You did what the assignments asked of you but hardly ever took strides to develop your work. You missed several classes and rarely ever participated in class. You completed most of your work but never seemed to take it that seriously.
- D You rarely did what the assignments asked of you. You missed several classes and hardly ever participated.
- E An E is usually reserved for people who don't do the work or don't come to class. This grade also applies to students who turn in work that fails to meet the basic requirements of multiple assignments.

### **Absence and Tardiness Policy**

Because this course draws heavily on the dynamics of seminar discussions, consistent attendance is critical to successfully completing the semester. Each student is allowed **two unexcused absences. Missing Tuesday's class (double block) will count as two unexcused absences.** Any unexcused absences beyond that point will reduce the overall participation points that student is capable of earning. An absence due to illness or family crisis may be excused if properly documented to the instructor's satisfaction. However, prolonged absences, even for medical reasons, will not be excused, as discussion of reading & writing assignments is a key part of the course content. In addition, if you participate in a university-sponsored event (athletics, music, theater, field trip), you must provide me with documentation from an appropriate authority, preferably before the missed class. **Students who miss more than six classes may not pass the course.**

**Repeated tardiness is unacceptable.** Any student arriving more than five minutes late for class will be considered tardy. Two episodes of tardiness will equal one absence.

### **Conferences**

Conferences are an excellent opportunity for you to receive direct feedback on your writing. The drafts you bring to conference should be complete—notes and outlines are not acceptable. My feedback is most helpful when it pertains to work that you see as finished.

Conference attendance is mandatory on class days specifically set aside for that purpose. Each student will sign up for one 15-20 min meeting during conference weeks. I will treat

missed appointments as absences.

If you do not have a complete draft ready for conference, I may not grade the final version, and you will therefore receive zero points for that assignment.

### **Submission and Formatting**

All work to be turned in must be typed and multiple pages must be stapled. All papers must be in 12-point Times New Roman font and double-spaced. All work must be in MLA format.

Each assignment requires both a physical and digital submission. The print copy is due the day of class. The digital copy, submitted via Sakai, is due anytime before midnight the day the assignment is due.

If the print copy is late it will not be accepted. Exceptions to late work are awarded only for excused absences such as illness (see Attendance Policy for what counts as an excused absence). Forgetting to submit the electronic version on time may result in penalization toward the assignment's final grade.

Electronic copies must be in MS Word format.

### **Preparation**

You are expected to be prepared for every class, including completing all reading and writing assignments on time. Failure to be prepared for or to contribute to in-class activities and discussion will lower your participation grade. Papers and drafts are due at the beginning of class. Late papers will not be accepted. Failure of technology is not an excuse.

### **Final Grade Appeals**

Students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

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

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

### **Statement of Composition (C) and Humanities (H) credit**

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>

### **Statement of Writing requirement (WR)—formerly Gordon Rule**

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

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

### **Student 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 and Classroom Behavior**

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>

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 opinions. Diverse student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Those who engage in inappropriate behavior may be dismissed from the course.

### **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>

### **Class Schedule:**

Classes will be fairly predictable in terms of how you should prepare. We'll commit Tuesday (our double block day) to seminar about the week's text. You'll also exchange your notes with another student. For Thursday's class, we'll reconvene to discuss those notes, likely with an eye toward differences and similarities between yours and theirs.

You will schedule a time to meet with me during conference week. Attending your conference is mandatory.

#### **Week 1**

January 6 Introduce ourselves and the class

January 8 Read excerpt from *Feminism is for Everybody* (handout)

Week 2 Read *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

January 13 Discuss

January 15 Compare Notes

Week 3 Read *My Mortal Enemy*

January 20 Discuss

January 22 Compare Notes

Week 4 Read *Storyteller* (Selections)

January 27 Discuss  
January 29 Compare Notes

Week 5 Conferences  
February 3  
February 5

Week 6 Read *In A Different Voice* (Chapter 1, 2, 5, 6)  
February 10 Discuss DUE: Essay 1  
February 12 Compare Notes

Week 7 Read *Coeur De Lion*  
February 17 Discuss  
February 19 Compare Notes

Week 8 Read "Kathy Goes to Haiti" from *Literal Madness*  
February 24 Discuss  
February 26 Compare Notes

Week 9  
Spring Break

Week 10 Conferences  
March 10  
March 12

Week 11 Read *Dissent of Allette*  
March 17 Discuss Due: Essay 2  
March 19 Compare Notes

Week 12 Read *Tender Buttons*  
March 24 Discuss  
March 26 Compare notes

Week 13 Read *Sleeping with the Dictionary*  
March 31 Discuss  
April 2 Compare notes

Week 14 Conferences  
April 7  
April 11

Week 15 Everyday Analysis (mini-project)  
1000 Word discussion of project, due the day you present  
April 14 Present  
April 16 Present

Week 16  
April 21 Due Essay 3