

**AML 2070: Survey of American Literature**  
**Reading Cities: Representations of the City and City Life in American Literature**  
**Fall 2016 | Section 1625**  
**Matherly 15 | MWF 3**

**Instructor:** Srimayee Basu

**Email:** sbasu@ufl.edu

**Office Hours:** Monday and Wednesday Period 4, and by appointment

### **Course Description**

**This course seeks to understand the manner in which urban space and the attendant social experiences within it are represented through the written word. From the “city upon a hill” of the colonial era, to South Side Chicago’s Black Metropolis Bronzeville, the city depicted through the experience of immigration and the postmodern city in the aftermath of 9/11, the texts included in this course map the manner in which the city has informed the American literary imagination. While an examination of spatial planning reveals the manner in which space informs and replicates the structures of race, class and gender, the city portrayed in literature becomes a text unto itself, produced by spatial imaginaries. Furthermore, since the city represented in literature is a performed rather than a monolithic entity, the course will also address the way in which these representations interrogate the regimented socioeconomic planning that marks urban spaces.**

The primary aims of this course are 1) to expose students to the writings of both canonical and non-canonical American authors 2) to engage with the cultural, historical, political, and personal contexts of various texts in order to more fully analyze both the text and the circumstances of the period in American history 3) to close read each text (individually and as a class), and to better understand how to write about texts critically.

### **Outcomes**

By the end of AML 2070, students will be able to:

- read, write, and think critically about American Literature
- discuss the historical and critical context of various texts
- use evidence to effectively support argumentative claims or theses
- write an organized, logical argument
- avoid plagiarism
- write coherent, cohesive, and clear paragraphs
- understand the larger context of the American literary canon

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

**To Purchase:**

Cisneros, Sandra, and Ester Hernández. *Have you seen Marie?* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012. Print.

Connell, Evan S. *Mrs. Bridge: A Novel*. San Francisco, Calif: North Point Press, 1981. Print.

Danticat, Edwidge. *Behind the mountains*. New York: Orchard Books, 2002. Print.

McKay, Claude. *Home to Harlem*. Chicago; London: Black Classics, 2000. Print.

Roth, Philip. *Exit Ghost*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007. Print.

Wright, Richard. *Native Son*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2005. Print.

These texts have been ordered at the UF bookstore; they are also all easily obtainable online. You may use electronic versions of these texts so long as you ensure that the version you choose is unabridged and unaltered.

**Full Texts or Excerpts Available Online, on Canvas or Via Course Reserves:**

Note: As you will be assigned various readings from online sources, you must print or download any assigned online reading and bring it to class on the day indicated on the course schedule.

Edward Soja, “The City and Spatial Justice.”

Don DeLillo, “In the ruins of the future.”

Herman Melville, *Bartleby the Scrivener* (1853).

John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity” (1630).

Selections from Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself,” *Leaves of Grass*.

Selections from Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States* (1980).

Selections from George Lipsitz’s *How Racism Takes Place* (2011).

Selections from Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space*.

Selections from Michel de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

Selections from Bill Mullen’s *Popular Fronts: Chicago and African-American Cultural Politics, 1935-46*.

Selections from Robert A. Beauregard’s *When America Became Suburban*.

Selections from Richard Lehan’s *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History*.

**Assignment Descriptions** (Total Points Possible: 1000)

*Participation, Homework, and Reading Quizzes* 75 pts

To become a better writer, it is necessary to become a more critical reader. To encourage detailed

reading, there will be weekly quizzes in order to ensure and supplement out-of-class assignments. Quizzes will take place during the first ten minutes of class, and will be on the reading assigned for that day. They can be both open and closed book, and they can be both announced and unannounced. There are no make-ups on quizzes for any reason.

*Reading Responses (500 words, 5 entries) 25 pts each*

Reading responses will be focused and organized, showing critical thinking and an attempt to integrate ideas into course topics and objectives. Each student is responsible for writing a response to five total readings, and each student will choose which days to respond. Reading responses are due at the beginning of class. No late responses will be accepted. Part of the first week of class will be evaluating examples as models for successful reading responses.

One additional reading response may be turned in to replace your lowest reading response grade. If you choose to do this additional assignment, you will write a total of six responses, but only five grades will count for your overall class average.

*Essay One: Close Reading (750 words) 100 pts*

Choose a passage from a novel or short story we have read in class, or a poem (or section of a poem) to read closely. Students will analyze the passage by paying close attention to its composition (diction, syntax, rhyme, rhythm, meter) and will make an argument about the way in which the author's composition influences your thematic reading. This assignment is particularly useful when analyzing poetry. Students might find it helpful to contact me with a selected passage before beginning the writing process to help facilitate a successful close reading.

*Essay Two: Midterm Paper (1200 words) 200 pts*

This paper will consist of a thematic analysis of one of the texts we are reading for class. The essay will incorporate at least two critical sources that speak to similar issues and themes you are exploring in your texts. Consider the ways in which criticism can help you to build your own original arguments on the text. As always, I encourage you to consult with me before you begin the writing process.

*Essay Three: Final Paper (1800-2200 words) 300 pts*

In this essay, you will use the skills we have built throughout the course and in our previous essays. Your paper should have a strong, clear, and creative argument about a text of your choosing, and should consult at least five critical sources. This should not be a regurgitation of the issues, ideas, and themes we have discussed in class, but should instead be a result of your own critical thinking and understanding of the text.

*Two Revisions 100 pts each*

Students will revise two earlier papers based on comments from the instructor and knowledge gained from in-class discussion. Revisions must include a one-page memo clearly and effectively outlining the changes you have made to strengthen your new draft. Additionally,

students must include their original essay with instructor's comments and should highlight each change made. Where students disagree with comments, please circle the original comment and explain why you are not following it. Revisions should be significantly improved from the original essay, and all changes should be made critically and with clear explanation.

### Grading and Course Credit Policies

Grading for this course will be rigorous. If an assignment illustrates disregard for spelling, grammar, citation guidelines, or a general carelessness in the writing, the assignment will be failed. Do not rely on your instructor for copyediting, even on drafts.

The writing assignments for this course are designed to meet the minimum requirements of the University Writing Requirement credit. To satisfy this requirement, **every** assignment's word count must be fulfilled. **Submitted assignments short of the minimum word count will receive a major point deduction.**

### Grading Scale

Letter Grade	GPA	Percentage (Point %)
A	4.0	93–100
A-	3.67	90–92
B+	3.33	87–89
B	3.0	83–86
B-	2.67	80–82
C+	2.33	77–79
C	2.0	73–76
C-	1.67	70–72
D+	1.33	67–69
D	1.0	63–66

D-	0.67	60–62
E	0.00	0–59

## Grade Meanings

- A** Student did what the assignment asked at a high quality level, meeting all of the composition objectives required of the assignment. Additionally, his or her work shows originality, creativity, and demonstrates that the student took extra steps to be original or creative in developing content, solving a problem, or developing a style. Since careful editing and proofreading are essential in writing, papers in the A range must be free of typos and grammatical or mechanical errors.
- B** Student did what the assignment asked at a quality level, meeting most of the composition objectives required of the assignment. Work in this range needs revision; however, it is complete in content, is organized well, and shows special attention to style.
- C** Student did what the assignment asked, but overlooked some of the composition objectives. 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** Student 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 students who do not do the work or do not come to class.
- However, if a student's work is shoddy, shows little understanding of the needs of the assignment, and/or an inability to meet the composition objectives, he or she will receive a failing grade.

## Classroom Policies

### *Attendance and Tardiness*

Attendance is required. Each student is allowed four absences with no penalty. 50 points will be deducted from a student's final grade for each subsequent absence. If a student misses more than six periods during a semester, he or she will fail the entire course. For classes in which there is a double block, attendance will be taken twice. Only those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays will be exempt from this policy. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with the instructor prior to the date that will be missed. Students are responsible for keeping track of their own attendance record. The instructor is not responsible for informing students of their attendance record; however, students are encouraged to ask the student for the number of absences they

have accrued should they have any concerns.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this class are consistent with university policies that can be found at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

**Note:** If students are absent, it is their responsibility to make themselves aware of all due dates. If absent due to a university-sponsored event, students are still responsible for turning assignments in on time.

**Tardiness:** Students who enter class after the start of class are late and are marked as tardy. Three instances of tardiness count as one absence. Additionally, if you arrive more than 15 minutes late to class, you will be counted as absent for that period. Tardiness disrupts the class and shows a disregard for your instructors and your classmates, so make it a habit to be in your seat when class begins.

### *Late Work*

Students should turn in a copy of his or her essay on the day that it is due, even if he or she cannot make it to class. The mailbox location is listed above; the mailroom is open during regular business hours. A student may e-mail his or her essay for the purpose of avoiding lateness but is still required to turn in a copy for grading. Computer or email problems are not valid excuses for late work; save documents frequently and on multiple disks.

**Late work will not be accepted.** Any other work that is not turned in by class time on the due date will not be accepted and will automatically count as a zero. Exceptional circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### *Essay Submission*

Students will submit essays BOTH as a hardcopy in class and through Canvas.

- Because I use the reviewing feature in Microsoft Word, papers must be saved in a Word-compatible format, generally .doc or .docx, or .rtf.
- You should save your papers using your last name and the assignment name as the filename.
- Submit through the assignment tab by attaching the document to the assignment page.
- If you are experiencing technical difficulty with the website, print a hard copy of the paper and bring to class and/or email me your assignment. However, you will still need to attach the assignment once the website is running again.

### *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.

### *Participation*

Everyone is expected to participate in class. Be prepared to discuss the readings, answer questions about them, and have written questions about parts you did not understand to share. On these occasions, any disruptive or unconstructive behavior will be dealt with strictly. In any case, if students come to class unprepared (e.g., without the required materials) and unable to participate, his or her participation grade will be penalized and he or she may be dismissed from class for the day.

### *Classroom Disruptions*

Common courtesy is mandatory in our classroom. Silence all cell phones, pagers, alarms, and so on when you enter the classroom; unexpected noises interrupt everyone's concentration. *If a student is found text messaging in class, he or she will be asked to leave and will receive an absence for the day.* Sleeping, holding private conversations, and reading other material are also inappropriate behaviors during class time. *Students will not need to use a laptop for this class for anything but assigned texts, so please put it away before class begins and take it out only for accessing Canvas or Course Reserves.* Disciplinary action (dismissal from the classroom, grade deduction, and beyond) will be taken if a student disrupts the learning environment in any way.

### *Technology*

E-readers will be allowed; this does not include cell phones, which must be put away and on silent during class. Other devices, such as laptops and tablets, will be allowed on a provisional basis. I reserve the right to ban them from the classroom at any time.

### *Statement on Harassment*

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

<http://www.hr.ufl.edu/eo/sexharassment.htm>

### *Statement on Academic Honesty*

All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/student.honor.code.aspx>

### *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.

**Important Tip:** You should never copy and paste something from the Internet without providing the exact location from which it came.

### *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 may engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from the class.

### *Final grade appeals:*

After discussing any apparent grade discrepancies with the course instructor, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant in the English Department. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

### *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>

### *Evaluations*

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when



they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

### *Students with Disabilities*

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

**Tentative Course Schedule** (Readings are due on the day that they appear. Readings are subject to change.)

### **Week 1**

#### **8.22 Course Introduction; Syllabus Overview**

Selections from Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*.

#### **8.24 The city as Puritan utopia**

John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity."

8.26 Howard Zinn. "Drawing the Color Line" from *A People's History of the United States*.

### **Week 2**

#### **8.29 Urban Spaces and the Market Society**

Herman Melville, *Bartleby the Scrivener*.

#### **8.31 Mapping New York City through Walt Whitman's poetry**

Selections from Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself," *Leaves of Grass*.

#### **9.2 Harlem as a Black Metropolis**

Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem*

### **Week 3**

9.5 No Class

9.7 Discussion on *Home to Harlem* continued

Michel de Certeau, Selections from *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

9.9 **The Great Depression and the segregated northern city**

Selections from Bill Mullen's *Popular Fronts: Chicago and African-American Cultural Politics, 1935-46*.

**Week 4**

9.12 Richard Wright, *Native Son*

9.14 Discussion on *Native Son* continued

9.16 **The Spatial Politics of the Suburbs**

Evan S. Connell, *Mrs. Bridge*

**Week 5**

9.19 Discussion on *Mrs. Bridge* continued

9.21 Selections from Robert A. Beauregard's *When America Became Suburban*.

9.23 Workshop on Essay 1

**Week 6**

9.26 Peer Review Essay 1

9.28 **Policing and Repression in Urban Spaces**

John Edgar Wideman, *Philadelphia Fire*

9.30 Discussion on *Philadelphia Fire* continued.

**Essay 1 Due**

**Week 7**

10.3 Jason Osder's *Let the Fire Burn* (to be screened during class).

10.5 **Negotiating the Impersonal City**

Sandra Cisneros, *Have you seen Marie?*

10.7 No Class

**Week 8**

10.10 Discussion on *Have you seen Marie?* continued

10.12 Workshop on E2 assignment; ESSAY 2 Proposals in Class

10.14 Peer Review on E2

### **Week 9**

10.17 **Immigration and Urbanity**

Edwidge Danticat, *Behind the Mountains*

#### **Essay 2 Due**

10.19 Discussion on *Behind the Mountains* continued

10.21 Edward Soja, "The City and Spatial Justice."

### **Week 10**

10.24 **Postmodern Cities**

Philip Roth, *Exit Ghost*.

10.26 Discussion on *Exit Ghost* continued.

10.28 Selections from Richard Lehan's *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History*

### **Week 11**

10.31 Discussion on Richard Lehan's work continued.

11.2 **Understanding the Post-9/11 American City**

Don DeLillo, "In the ruins of the future."

11.4 Discussion on Don DeLillo, "In the ruins of the future" continued

### **Week 12**

11.7 Workshop on Final Paper

11.9 Discussion on topics for the research paper; Mandatory Conferences

11.11 No Class

### **Week 13**

11.14 Jules and Gedeon Naudet's documentary film *9/11* (to be screened in class)

11.16 Discussion on the documentary film continued

11.18 Discussions on memory, public spaces, monuments and memorials based on key American architectural structures.

### **Week 14**

11.21 Draft for Final Paper due; Peer Review

11.23 No Class

11.25 No Class

### **Week 15**

11.28 **Reimagining Urban Spaces- Revolutionary Street Art**

Selections from George Lipsitz's *How Racism Takes Place*.

11.30 Critical readings of street art and artists from major American cities

<http://www.freep.com/story/entertainment/arts/mark-stryker/2015/08/21/detroit-street-art-must-see-pieces/32145547/>

<https://atlantastreetart.wordpress.com/>

<https://www.eventbrite.com/rally/oakland-best-street-art-photos/>

12.2 Discussion continued

### **Week 16**

12.5 Final Discussions and Reviews

12.7 **Final Papers Due**