

# AML 2070: Survey of American Literature

## American Horror Stories: Trauma and the American Imagination

### Class 10344, Section 1625

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**Instructor Name:** Erika Rothberg (she/her/hers)

**Course meeting times & locations:**

T | Period 8 – 9 (3:00 PM - 4:55 PM), WEIL 0238

R | Period 9 (4:05 PM - 4:55 PM), FLI 0101

**Office Location and Hours:** 5-6pm T R and by appointment, TURL 4409

**Course website:** Canvas

**Instructor Email:** erikarothberg@ufl.edu

### Course Description:

America may have been founded upon the principle that all humans are free and equal, but the history of our nation belies this notion. The enslavement of humans, the unequal treatment of the sexes, and the restriction of class mobility are but a few of many historical horrors with which America has grappled. How can we reconcile these truths with the optimism and determination of the American spirit that has also infused our country's mythology? For whom is the American Dream a possibility? Are all humans truly equal in America? How do the traumas of these events shape the consciousness of—and literature produced in—our nation?

This course will trace the evolution of American literature while looking at—not away from—the often-fraught historical moments that helped shape this path. We will read texts from multiple literary legacies and movements, as well as a diverse range of forms of literature (poetry, short stories, novels, plays, films, and comics). We will be charting the vast, incredible landscape of American literature in this survey course, beginning with indigenous pre-contact oral tradition all the way to present-day literature.

### General Education Objectives:

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) or Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.
- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

## General Education Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- **Communication:** Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

## Required Texts:

You must purchase, rent, or otherwise obtain the following texts (either in physical or digital form):

- *Kindred*, Octavia E. Butler
- *Beloved*, Toni Morrison
- *Blood Meridian*, Cormac McCarthy
- *Exit Stage Left: The Snagglepuss Chronicles*, Mark Russell & Mike Feehan (in trade form or issues #1-6)
- *Maus (I and II)*, Art Spiegelman
- *The Low, Low Woods*, Carmen Maria Machado and Dani (in trade form or issues #1-6)

You must access the following films:

- *The Purge* (2013) Director: James DeMonaco (streamable via HBOMax)
- *Get Out* (2017) Director: Jordan Peele (available at Library West)

All texts on the syllabus not listed here will be provided to you via Canvas→Files→Readings.

## Assignments (see below for grading scale):

The assignments in this course will be:

Project Name	Percent Weight	Word Count
Participation	25%	(n/a)
Five (5) discussion questions	1% each/5% total	(n/a)
Three (3) blog posts	5% each/15% total	500 each
Two (2) response papers	10% each/20% total	1000 each
Midterm theory response paper	10%	1000
Final project	25%	1500

The course total will be equivalent to 6,000 words.

### 1. *Participation and in-class discussion (daily)*

Students are expected to read/view the assigned texts before class. Consistent participation in class discussions and demonstrated knowledge of the assigned readings will also contribute to this portion of the final grade. This course thrives on class discussion, so please be prepared to share your thoughts with the class every period (be it in small groups or full-class discussions). Your thoughts make this class worth taking—please share them with us!

## 2. *Five discussion questions*

Students must bring and raise a discussion question at least five times in the course of the semester. Please post your discussion question on our weekly Canvas board, and raise the question in class. You must space these out throughout the semester and can only raise **one question per week** (ex. do not expect to share five discussion questions on the last day or two of class).

## 3. *Blog Posts (three)*

Three times over the course of the semester students are required to write a brief (500 word) response to the day's text(s). **These responses must be uploaded to our course blog BEFORE class the day on which they are due (so: by 11:59pm Monday for a Tuesday class and 11:59pm Wednesday for Thursday's class).** These responses should be practice for your longer-form analysis papers, though these will likely not incorporate outside sources. This post should comment on a topic, theme, or element of the text; this post should enrich our understanding of the text in some way. Ideally, you will present this analysis during class time. The goal is to help each other learn more about these texts, and think deeply and critically as we engage with them. You should be spacing your three posts throughout the semester so that you can comment on a variety of texts and continuously engage with the course themes; as such, you will have points taken off if more than one blog post is submitted in the last week of class. I encourage you to submit one in September, one in October, and one in November.

*TL;DR Big details on Blog Posts:*

- Due by 11:59pm the day before the class where we examine the text you comment on
- 500 words commenting on topic, theme, or element of the text
- Ideal schedule: first post in September, second post in October, third post in November

## 3. *Response papers (two)*

This assignment is an open-ended argumentation paper. You may select any text that we read and perform a longer, extended analysis that examines a theme, topic, or component of the text (similar to the course blogs, but on a deeper, larger scale). These will be due within a week of finishing the text you examine: for example, we finish *Kindred* on Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup>, so if you write about this text, your paper would be due Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>. You can approach this from multiple angles—be it literary theory, historical context, close reading, etc.—but I expect this to be an arguable, formal paper that is more refined and elevated than your blog posts. At least two external scholarly sources are required for each paper, and a paper without a Works Cited will be given an automatic zero. I encourage you to submit one in September and one in November.

*TL;DR Big details on Response Papers:*

- Open-ended argumentation regarding a theme, topic, or component of the text, with more detail, refinement, and rigor than blog posts
- Due within a week of finishing the text you're writing about
- Are 1000 words and include at least two external scholarly sources and a Works Cited (automatic failure if excluded)
- Ideal schedule: first paper submitted in September, second paper submitted in November

## 4. *Midterm theory response paper*

This assignment will ask you to find a scholarly article related to one of the texts we have read prior to *The Wasteland*. You will need to assess the strength of the argument and interrogate the claims made by that article. Please limit yourself to one text and one article (ex. do not look at two poems and one article that covers each poem—select only one main text and one scholarly article.)

## 5. *Final project*

You will have two options for this assignment:

- 1.) a creative piece + a 750-word accompanying essay
- 2.) a critical work of 1,500 words

This project will ask you to make an extended argument about the importance of a text within American literary history. You may also choose to do a creative piece that reflects a concept we studied and a shorter essay that explains the connection between your creation and our class themes. More information on this project will be provided towards the end of the semester.

## Course Policies:

1. You must complete all *assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance*: Your grade will be lowered course grade after **three** 50-minute unexcused absences + automatic failure if you miss **2 weeks** of class (failure *at* the sixth 50-minute absence). Note that missing a double-period means **2 absences**. Please stay in touch with me if circumstances arise that necessitate time away (ex. student athlete commitments). Details on the university's attendance policies may be found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>
3. *Tardiness*: Latecomers receive partial absences (with three tardy arrivals equaling one absence), and must see me after class so I know you attended.
4. *Classroom behavior*: This class will cover some difficult subject matter, as we will be discussing ethics, morals, trauma, and disturbing events in our country's history. As such, we may disagree with each other at times. Disagreements are welcome in this course, but when we challenge each other, you are absolutely expected to be polite, open-minded, and generous in listening to one another. Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and bigotry in any format or fashion will not be tolerated.
5. *UF's policy on Sexual Harassment*: The University of Florida is committed to providing a safe educational, working, and residential environment that is free from sexual harassment or misconduct directed towards any and all members of the community: <https://titleix.ufl.edu/about/title-ix-rights/>
6. *Paper Format & Submission*: You must turn in your paper digitally on Canvas the day it is due. (Tardiness will still be counted as a partial absence on dates when assignments are due, so keep this in mind as you turn in your work.) Physically printed papers will not be collected.
7. *Late Papers/Assignments*: I do not accept late papers. If you need an extension, you **MUST** contact me at least 24 hours prior to the deadline to make arrangements with me. Extensions requested day-of will not be approved.
8. *Paper Maintenance Responsibilities*. Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
9. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism*. UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: 'On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing

this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions.>

UF’s definition of **plagiarism**, from the current UF Student Honor Code:

A Student must 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. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
- b. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student’s own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student’s own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
- c. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
- d. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.>

10. Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu/>), which will provide appropriate documentation to give your instructor early in the semester.

11. *Students who are in distress* or who are in need of counseling or urgent help: please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to you. UF’s Counseling and Wellness Center offers additional support: 352-392-1575, or contact them online: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>

12. For information on UF Grading policies, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

13. *Grade Appeals*. In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Please contact Ms. Blount at [cblount@ufl.edu](mailto:cblount@ufl.edu) Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

14. *Course Evaluations*. Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages requesting that you do this online: <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>

15. *Policy on environmental sustainability*. Whenever possible, I will use paper-sparing electronic media to distribute our course materials. Consider purchasing electronic editions of assigned texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts. If you do not elect to keep your print books, consider sharing them with others after the semester ends. (For example, you could donate them to the Alachua County [Friends of the Library](#) annual book sale.)

## GRADING SCALE:

A	4.0	93-100	C	2.0	73-76
A-	3.67	90-92	C-	1.67	70-72
B+	3.33	87-89	D+	1.33	67-69
B	3.0	83-86	D	1.0	63-66
B-	2.67	80-82	D-	0.67	60-62
C+	2.33	77-79	E	0.00	0-59

A rubric will be provided for each assessment signifying what constitutes an A, B, C, D, and F level paper.

Note: A grade of C– is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, or College Basic distribution credit. For further information on UF’s Grading Policy, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

<http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>

## Schedule of Classes

\*This is subject to change based on course needs, so pay attention to in-class announcements and emails to stay apprised of any changes. Readings are due on the day they are listed.

### Week 1

Thursday August 25<sup>th</sup>: Syllabus, class introductions

### Week 2

Tuesday August 30<sup>th</sup>: Introductory discussion: What is America? Who is an American?; Iroquois Creation Tale

Thursday, September 1<sup>st</sup>: The Declaration of Independence and “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” (Frederick Douglass)

### Week 3

Tuesday, September 6<sup>th</sup>: Diagnostic writing exercise; Excerpts from Avery Gordon’s *Ghostly Matters*

Thursday, September 8<sup>th</sup>: Introduction to literary theory (handout provided in advance); “Ain’t I A Woman?” (speech) (Sojourner Truth)

### Week 4

Tuesday, September 13<sup>th</sup>: *Kindred*, first two-thirds (Octavia E. Butler)

Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup>: *Kindred*, first two-thirds (Octavia E. Butler)

### Week 5

Tuesday, September 20<sup>th</sup>: “Song of Myself” (Walt Whitman); “Ligeia” and “The Masque of the Red Death” (Edgar Allan Poe)

Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>: “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether” (Edgar Allan Poe)

**\*I highly encourage you to make sure you’ve turned in at least one blog post and one response paper at this time (9/22/22)**

### Week 6

Tuesday, September 27<sup>th</sup>: “The Yellow Wallpaper” (Charlotte Perkins Gilman); start “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (Herman Melville)

Thursday, September 29<sup>th</sup>: “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (Herman Melville)

### Week 7

Tuesday, October 4<sup>th</sup>: *The Wasteland* (T.S. Eliot)

Thursday, October 6<sup>th</sup>: “A Rose for Emily” (William Faulkner)

**Midterm critical theory response paper due today (10/6/22)**

### Week 8

Tuesday, October 11<sup>th</sup>: “A Good Man is Hard to Find” and “Good Country People” (Flannery O’Connor)

Thursday, October 13<sup>th</sup>: Poetry of Sylvia Plath: “The Colossus,” “Fever 103,” and “Lady Lazarus”

### Week 9

Tuesday, October 18<sup>th</sup>: *Beloved*, first two-thirds (Toni Morrison)

Thursday, October 20<sup>th</sup>: *Beloved*, concluded (Toni Morrison)

### **Week 10**

Tuesday, October 25<sup>th</sup>: *Blood Meridian*, first quarter (Cormac McCarthy)

Thursday, October 27<sup>th</sup>: *Blood Meridian*, second quarter (Cormac McCarthy)

### **Week 11**

Tuesday, November 1<sup>st</sup>: *Blood Meridian*, finished (Cormac McCarthy)

Thursday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>: *The Crucible* (Arthur Miller) (read the whole play)

### **Week 12**

Tuesday, November 8<sup>th</sup>: *The Crucible* (Arthur Miller); *Exit Stage Left: The Snagglepuss Chronicles* (Mark Russell & Mike Feehan) (#1-6; entire miniseries)

Thursday, November 10<sup>th</sup>: *Maus, Part 1: A Survivor's Tale*, first half (Art Spiegelman)

**\*I highly encourage you to ensure you've completed both response papers and at least two blog posts at this time (11/10/22)**

### **Week 13**

Tuesday, November 15<sup>th</sup>: *Maus, Part 1: A Survivor's Tale*, second half (Art Spiegelman) and *Maus, Part 2: My Father Bleeds History*, first half (Art Spiegelman)

Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup>: *Maus, Part 2: My Father Bleeds History*, second half (Art Spiegelman)

### **Week 14**

Tuesday, November 22<sup>nd</sup>: Zoom conferences (appointments to be made the week prior)

Thursday, November 24<sup>th</sup>: No classes—Thanksgiving break. Have a lovely and restful time off.

### **Week 15**

Tuesday, November 29<sup>th</sup>: *The Low, Low Woods* (issues #1-6) (Carmen Maria Machado and Dani)

Thursday, December 1<sup>st</sup>: *The Purge* (Director: James DeMonaco)

### **Week 16**

Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup>: *Get Out* (Director: Jordan Peele); "This is America" music video (Childish Gambino); class wrap-up

**\*Any remaining response papers and blog posts are due EOD 12/6**

***Final projects will be due by 3pm on Thursday, December 15<sup>th</sup>***