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AML 2070 – 4085: Survey of American Literature “Space, Maps, and Travels”

“Writing has nothing to do with meaning. It has to do with landsurveying and cartography, including the mapping of countries yet to come.”

—Gilles Deleuze

Course Description

As detailed in the undergraduate catalog, this course should introduce you “to some of the major writers, issues and forms found in the history of American literature.” To this end, we will be reading key and influential American writers (both inside and outside of the “canon”), ranging widely in time, place, context, identity, style, and success. Likewise, we will be exploring several literary genres (novel, short story, play, and poem), as well as the respective methods with which we can analyze such works. The course aims to give you a working knowledge of American literature at large, as well as the ability to speak and write on such literature at a university level.

For our specific purposes, the broadly conceived topic of “space, maps, and travels” will serve as a guiding point of thematic departure, as well as an anchor. While some of our texts will engage this topic more explicitly than others, we will nevertheless recursively return to this topic as a means to ground our readings and writings. As we will discover—and as you perhaps already know—the general concept/question of “space, maps, and travels” has long influenced American history, spirit and, of course, literature. As such, we will use this topic to not only connect texts from otherwise disparate origins/places, but we will also use this topic to thread at least one singular, comprehensive idea regarding the vast index that is American literature.

Assignments

Analysis Paper (750+ words) – 15% of Final Grade

This paper will perform a close-reading, literary analysis (formalism/New School) on a single text. **Due: Oct. 1**

I-magine/I-mapping Assignment (1,000+ words) – 15% of Final Grade

This assignment will ask you to create and sustain an argument that draws primarily from personal experience. As we will discover, *Moby Dick* quite clearly represents more than just a whale. This assignments ask you to imagine (one of) your *Moby Dick*(s); how and why it became such; and how you intend to map a hunt for its “death.” Use of text will be required. This will be explained in detail in advance. **Due: Nov. 3**

Mapping Assignment (N/A) – 20% of Final Grade

This assignment will ask for the construction of a map (of any kind) that uses space and cartography to establish thematic and thetical connections between encountered texts. This will be explained in detail in advance. **Due: Nov. 24**

Final Paper (3,000 words) – 20% of Final Grade

This in-depth research paper can take many shapes: a comparative analysis between two (or more) works; research into a particular literary movement or issue we have covered; a sustained close-reading of a single work (using either formalism/New School criticism or another method of literary criticism); a deeper investigation into a particular author, etc. All topics must be proposed to, and approved by, me in advance. **Due: Dec. 17**

Weekly Blogs (250+ words per week) – 10% of Final Grade

Students will be responsible for maintaining a blog, updated weekly. Due every Sunday by midnight.

Weekly Quizzes – 10% of Final Grade

Weekly quizzes will test students’ completion of readings.

Attendance and Participation – 10% of Final Grade

Note: The major assignments (Analysis Paper, “Legal Brief,” Mapping Assignment, and Final Paper) will all be introduced with detailed assignment sheets and grading rubrics.

Course Policies

Statement of Composition Credit

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

Statement of 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-and-math-requirement.aspx>

Attendance and Late Work

Attendance is mandatory and expected. In the event of a necessary absence, please attempt to contact me ahead of time. Habitual absenteeism may negatively impact your grade. Additionally, do your best to arrive on time. Habitual tardiness may also negatively impact your grade. All late work must be approved by me in advance. Incomplete assignments will not be accepted. For more information, please consult the university's policies at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Behavior

Be polite and courteous—to me and to each other. This generally covers decorous conduct: engaging in civil debate; not talking over each other, or while someone else is talking; staying awake during class; and consuming food and/or beverages in a polite manner.

Disability Policy

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, 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.

Online 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/>.

Academic Honesty

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “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 (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the

possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Harassment

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>

Required Texts

Acker, Kathy. *Pussy, King of the Pirates*. New York: Grove Press, 1996. Paperback.

Cooper, James Fenimore. *The Pathfinder*. New York: Signet Classics, 2006. Paperback.

Kerouac, Jack. *On the Road*. New York: Penguin Books, 1999. Paperback.

Melville, Herman. *Moby Dick*. New York: Bantam Classics, 1981. Paperback.

Shue, Larry. *The Foreigner*. New York: Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1998. Paperback.

Wilson. August. *Fences*. New York: Plume, 1986. Paperback.

Note: The rest of the texts (short stories and poems) will be provided.

Grading

93-100 = A

90-92 = A-

87-89 = B+

83-86 = B

80-82 = B-

77-79 = C+

73-78 = C

70-72 = C-

67-69 = D+

62-66 = D

0-61 = F

Note: A detailed assignment sheet and grading rubric will accompany the introduction of every assignment. Please be sure to contact me with any questions or concerns regarding my grading procedure *in advance*.

Final Grade Appeals

Students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant.

Daily Schedule

Aug. 25

- Introductions
 - Syllabus
- Course Overview

Homework: Read Larry Shue's *The Foreigner* (1-25)

Aug. 27

- Introduction to Drama and Theater
 - Stage Left: How to Read a Play
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Larry Shue's *The Foreigner* (26-50)

Aug. 29

- A Tough Crowd: The Function and Execution of Comedy
 - Discussion

Homework: Finish Larry Shue's *The Foreigner*

Sept. 1

NO CLASS

Homework: Read Handout on Introductory Literary Analysis

Sept. 3

- Quiz
- Building a Type: Introduction to Characterization
 - Discussion

Homework: Read selections from James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pathfinder*

Sept. 5

- This is Boring!: How to Appreciate Classic Texts
- The Emergence of an Idea: American Myth, Ideology, and Literary Style

- Discussion

Homework: Read Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1-150)

Sept. 8

- Quiz
- Hepcats: Introduction to Beat Literature
 - Discussion

Homework: Finish Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*

Sept. 10

- Pathfinders to Roadtrippers: Tracing/Mapping an American Tradition
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Joyce Carol Oates' "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"

Sept. 12

- Narrative Economy: Introduction to the Short Story
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Raymond Carver's "So Much Water So Close to Home"

Sept. 15

- Quiz
- A Debriefing on Eighties Minimalism
- Short Clip of Robert Altman's *Short Cuts*
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1-50)

Sept. 17

- Who's Afraid of *Moby Dick*? An Explanation
 - Novel Beginnings
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (51-100)

Sept. 19

- Reading Strategies: Staying with a Whale of a Text
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (101-150)

Sept. 22

- Quiz
- Is This All Necessary?: An Introduction to Close Reading and Literary Analysis
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (151-200)

Sept. 24

- Peer Review
- Discussion (Time Permitted)

Homework: Read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (201-250)

Sept. 26

- Where Are We Going, Where Have We Been: *Moby Dick* Review
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (251-300)

Sept. 29

- Quiz
- Mapping Parallels: *Jaws* vs. *Moby Dick*
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (301-350)

Oct. 1

- A Search For Meaning: Beginning to Assign Symbolic Significance to Various Subjects and Objects in *Moby Dick*
 - Discussion
 - PAPER DUE

Homework: Read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (351-400)

Oct. 3

- Mapping Parallels: The Sea Expedition, The Road Trip, Space Exploration (or, Why It Takes *So Long To Find* What We're "Looking" For)
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (401-450)

Oct. 6

- Quiz
- Writing/Reading People: Literary Character Analysis
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (451-500)

Oct. 8

- Review and Considerations
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (501-550)

Oct. 10

- Personal Relation: "Your" *Moby Dick*
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (551-600)

Oct. 13

- Quiz
- The Anatomy and Structure of the Epic Novel
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (601-650)

Oct. 17

NO CLASS

Homework: Finish Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*

Oct. 20

- Quiz
- A Canon Debate: Thinking Through the Merit of *Moby Dick*

Homework: Read assigned poems by Walt Whitman and T.S. Eliot

Oct. 22

- Line by Line: An Introduction to Scansion and Poetry Analysis
 - Crash Course in Free Verse and Modernism
 - Discussion

Homework: Read assigned poems by Charles Bukowski and ee cummings

Oct. 24

- "You Gotta Have Fuel": Experiments in Form and Content
 - Short Clip of Barbet Schroeder's *Barfly*
 - Discussion

Homework: Read assigned poems by John Ashberry and John Berryman

Oct. 27

- Quiz
- Peer Review
- Say What?: The Postmodern and Surrealist Confessional
 - Discussion

Homework: Read assigned poems by Langston Hughes and Gwendolyn Bennett

Oct. 29

- The Harlem Renaissance
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter"

Oct. 31

- Writing About Writing: The Purloined Letter, Space, and Signification
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Ernest Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants"

Nov. 3

- Quiz
- Symbolism: White, Wide, Open
 - Discussion
 - PAPER DUE

Homework: Read Kathy Acker's *Pussy, King of the Pirates* (1-50)

Nov. 5

- The Other Way: Feminist and Subversive Literature
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Kathy Acker's *Pussy, King of the Pirates* (51-100)

Nov. 7

- A Brief History of Banned Books and the Function of "Obscenity"
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Kathy Acker's *Pussy, King of the Pirates* (101-150)

Nov. 10

- Quiz

- Mapping Parallels: Kathy Acker vs. *Treasure Island*
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Kathy Acker's *Pussy, King of the Pirates* (151-200)

Nov. 12

- Close Reading Review
 - Discussion

Homework: Read Kathy Acker's *Pussy, King of the Pirates* (201-250)

Nov. 14

- Debate Redux: Thinking Through the Merit of Kathy Acker
 - Discussion

Homework: Finish Kathy Acker's *Pussy, King of the Pirates*

Nov. 17

- Quiz
- Peer Review
- Discussion

Homework: Read August Wilson's *Fences* (1-50)

Nov. 19

- Rethinking the Function of Space in Literature (and Beyond)
 - Discussion

Homework: Finish August Wilson's *Fences*

Nov. 21

- An Exercise: Making Fences
 - Discussion

Homework: Read assigned poems by Clark Coolidge, Nathaniel Mackey, and Charles Olson

Nov. 24

- Quiz
- L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E: Language School Poets
 - Discussion
 - MAP DUE

Homework: Read assigned poems by Diane di Prima and Gregory Corso

Nov. 26

NO CLASS

NOV. 28

NO CLASS

Dec. 1

- Quiz
- B-Sides: “Lesser Known” Beat Poets
 - Discussion

Homework: Read assigned poems by Emily Dickinson and Hilda Doolittle (HD)

Dec. 3

- Experiments in Content and Form, Take Two
 - Discussion

Homework: Read assigned poems by Maya Angelou and hypertext poets

Dec. 5

- Poetics: Where We Have Been, Where We Are Going
 - Discussion

Dec. 8

- Quiz
- Group Work/One-on-One Meetings/Review

Dec. 10

- Peer Review
- Group Work/One-on-One Meetings/Review
 - Evaluations

FINAL PAPER DUE DECEMBER 17