

AML4242: Studies in Twentieth-Century American Literature and Culture  
New York City



*New York Mural* (1932) by Stuart Davis

**AML4242: Studies in Twentieth-Century American Literature and Culture**  
**New York City**  
(Section 4C90, Class #10208)  
Summer 2024 Syllabus

**COURSE INFORMATION:**

Instructor	Debakanya Haldar
E-mail I.D.	<a href="mailto:d.haldar@ufl.edu">d.haldar@ufl.edu</a>
Class Meetings	MTWRF – Period 3 (11:00 AM – 12:15 PM) in MAT 0114
Office Hours	Monday – 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM in TUR 4325 Wednesday – 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM in TUR 4325 Or by appointment
Course Website	Canvas

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Robert Moses, the (notorious) American urban planner who transformed New York City in the twentieth century, called the Empire City “too big, too complex to be served by any one writer.” While his actions remain contentious, he was right about this: few cities have inspired as much great art and literature.

In this course, we will look at twentieth-century literary and visual representations of New York City. We will read some of Sara Teasdale’s New York poems and O. Henry’s story, “The Duel” (1910). We will then analyze the visual poetics of the City Symphony film *Manhatta* (1921) by Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler. We will study the importance of Harlem, a predominantly Black neighborhood, and the Harlem Renaissance with the poems of Langston Hughes and Claude McKay and the music of Bessie Smith. Paul Rosenfeld’s *Port of New York*, F. Scott Fitzgerald’s “My Lost City,” and John Steinbeck’s “Making of a New Yorker” (1953) are important essays to understand the city’s impact on the twentieth-century artist. We will also analyze the visual depictions of the city and gender roles in Blake Edwards’ *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* (1961) and Martin Scorsese’s *Taxi Driver* (1976). Finally, we will read the New York chapters of Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar* (1963) and *Bright Lights, Big City* (1984) by Jay McInerney to analyze the city’s growing consumerism and impacts on the individual.

Course assignments include two position papers, a group panel presentation, library trip fieldnotes, and an informative social media post. Students will learn how to critically engage with literary and visual texts and develop sound argumentative skills in their writing.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES:

By the end of AML4242, students will be able to:

1. Closely analyze literary and visual texts and make logical and nuanced interpretations.
2. Critically engage with academic writings and social theories.
3. Write college-level analysis papers containing clear thesis statements, strong textual evidence, and well-integrated secondary materials.
4. Engage with social media literacy and create educational content.

## ASSIGNMENTS:

- Position Papers: The course requires you to complete **any two** out of five weekly position papers. These papers are 500 words long. Students are expected to focus on a central issue or theme in one of the texts and provide critical speculations.
- Panel Presentations: Every week, two groups of 3-4 students will deliver a presentation on important figures and landmark events in each decade of New York City's history. It should tie into the discussion of that week's module. Presentations will be followed by class discussions.
- Social Media Post (Instagram): The class will have a shared Instagram account which will map some of the landmark locations mentioned in the texts covered in the course. Each post should have a 300-word caption that details the history and significance of the place in art, literature, and culture of New York City. Students should utilize the resources accessed during the field trip to the Map and Imagery Library at UF.
- Library Trip Fieldnote: Students must submit a 1000-word assessment of their trip to the Map and Imagery Library at UF. The assessment should include a description of the activities in the library, a summarization of the various resources/data accessed, the main takeaway from the librarian's lecture/interaction with the librarian, and your reflection on how you will utilize this visit for the social media post assignment.
- Attendance and participation: Your attendance and participation are necessary for holistic discussions on the topic and the texts.

## ASSIGNMENTS OVERVIEW:

ASSIGNMENT	WORD COUNT	POINTS
Position Paper (2)	500x2= 1000	100x2=200
Panel Presentation (1)	-	100x1 = 100
Social Media Content (1)	300x1 =300	50x1=50
Library Trip Fieldnote	1000x1=1000	100x1=100
Attendance and Participation	-	50x2 = 100

## REQUIRED TEXTS:

Additional readings will be available on Canvas.

TEXTS/FILMS	AUTHORS/DIRECTORS
“The Duel” (1910) [short story]	O. Henry
“Gramercy Park”, “In the Metropolitan Museum”, “Coney Island”, “Union Square” (1911), “Broadway” (1915) [poems]	Sara Teasdale
<i>Manhatta</i> (1921) [film]	Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand  <a href="https://video-alexanderstreet-com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/watch/manhatta">https://video-alexanderstreet-com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/watch/manhatta</a> [USE UF VPN]
Epilogue, <i>Port of New York</i> (1924) [essay]	Paul Rosenfeld
“My Lost City” (1936) [essay]	F. Scott Fitzgerald
“The Weary Blues” (1925) [poem]	Langston Hughes
“On Broadway” (1922) [poem]	Claude McKay
“Down Hearted Blues” (1923) [song]	Bessie Smith
“Making of a New Yorker” [essay]	John Steinbeck
<i>Bell Jar</i> (1963) [novel excerpts, Chapters 1-9]	Sylvia Plath
<i>Breakfast at Tiffany’s</i> (1961) [film]	Blake Edwards  <a href="https://digitalcampus.swankmp.net/uf1275793/watch/E2F0C49DD2869E1A?referrer=direct">https://digitalcampus.swankmp.net/uf1275793/watch/E2F0C49DD2869E1A?referrer=direct</a> [USE UF VPN]
<i>Taxi Driver</i> (1976) [film]	Martin Scorsese  <a href="https://digitalcampus.swankmp.net/uf1275793/watch/F0C090BF0D807642?referrer=direct">https://digitalcampus.swankmp.net/uf1275793/watch/F0C090BF0D807642?referrer=direct</a> [USE UF VPN]
<i>Bright Lights, Big City</i> (1984) [novel]	Jay McInerney

## COURSE POLICIES:

1. You must complete **all assignments** to receive credit for this course.
2. Attendance: Like all lecture-discussion courses, this one needs you! Use your allotted absences wisely (for emergencies, major illness) as you would for any job. **You will fail the course if you accrue more than five 75-minute absences.** You will earn a lowered course grade if you accrue four absences. Please contact me ahead of time to have your absence excused and to see what content you will miss. UF attendance policies:  
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>
3. Tardiness: Although we all run late sometimes, please try to be on time, as we have a lot of material to cover and little time. Multiple tardies or arriving more than 15 minutes late may count as an absence. If you are running late, be sure to chat with me at the end of class to catch up on any announcements you may have missed.
4. Classroom Behavior and Netiquette: Whether you are participating in person, via Zoom, or on Canvas: treat each other, your instructor, and yourself with respect. Remember that you don't know what's going on in others' lives. We all come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. If you are disruptive, disrespectful, rude, or otherwise engaging in inappropriate behavior, you will be asked to leave and counted absent.
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: All papers will be submitted through Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on the day they're due (unless otherwise specified). Your assignments should be in MLA format, Times New Roman 12-point font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins. Be sure to cite all sources in MLA format, including any films you may be citing. (If you have MLA questions, check the Purdue OWL website first, then ask me if you're still unsure.) Include your last name and the page number in the upper right-hand corner. The first page should also include your name, my name, the class, and the date on the top left.
7. Late Papers/Assignments: Any extensions are granted at my discretion and **only if you ask in advance of the due date.**
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.

The current UF Student Honor Code defines plagiarism this way: 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:

- Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
- 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.
- Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
- 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 experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>.

It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible 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: A student who wants to appeal a final grade should reach out to Prof. Kenneth Kidd (Associate Chair and Director of Undergraduate Studies) at [kbkidd@ufl.edu](mailto:kbkidd@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/>

## COURSE SCHEDULE (Tentative):

Subject to change—watch for Canvas announcements or messages regarding any updates.

WEEK	DATE	AGENDA	ASSIGNMENTS
1	5/13	Introduction to the course	
	5/14	History of New York City (1900-1919)	
	5/15	“The Duel” by O. Henry	
	5/16	Sara Teasdale poems	
	5/17	City Symphony Films and <i>Manhatta</i> (1921)	Position Paper 1
2	5/20	Trip to the Library: Group 1	
	5/21	Trip to the Library: Group 2	
	5/22	Panel Presentation 1 (1900s), Panel Presentation 2 (1910s)	
	5/23	History of New York City (1920-1939)	
	5/24	Paul Rosenfeld, Epilogue, <i>Port of New York</i> (1924) “My Lost City” (1936) F. Scott Fitzgerald	
3	5/27	<b>NO CLASS</b>	
	5/28	Langston Hughes “The Weary Blues” (1925), Claude McKay “On Broadway” (1922), Bessie Smith music (1923)	Position Paper 2
	5/29	Panel Presentation 3 (1920s), Panel Presentation 4 (1930s)	Library Fieldnotes
	5/30	History of New York City (1940-1959)	
	5/31	John Steinbeck “Making of a New Yorker” (1953)	Position Paper 3
4	6/3	Chapters 1-9 from <i>Bell Jar</i> (1963)	
	6/4	Panel Presentation 5 (1940s), Panel Presentation 6 (1950s)	
	6/5	History of New York City (1960-1979)	
	6/6	Blake Edwards <i>Breakfast at Tiffany's</i> (1961)	
	6/7	Martin Scorsese <i>Taxi Driver</i> (1976)	Position Paper 4
5	6/10	Panel Presentation 7 (1960s), Panel Presentation 8 (1970s)	

WEEK	DATE	AGENDA	ASSIGNMENTS
	6/11	History of New York City (1980-1999)	
	6/12	<i>Bright Lights, Big City</i>	
	6/13	<i>Bright Lights, Big City</i>	
	6/14	<i>Bright Lights, Big City</i>	Position Paper 5
6	6/17	<i>Bright Lights, Big City</i>	
	6/18	Panel Presentation 9 (1980s), Panel Presentation 10 (1990s)	All social media posts must be up on Instagram
	6/19	<b>NO CLASS</b>	
	6/20	Writing Day	
	6/21	Writing Day	

### GRADING SCALE AND RUBRIC:

A	4.0	94-100	940-1000		C	2.0	74-76	740-769
A-	3.67	90-93	900-939		C-	1.67	70-73	700-739
B+	3.33	87-89	870-899		D+	1.33	67-69	670-699
B	3.0	84-86	840-869		D	1.0	64-66	640-669
B-	2.67	80-83	800-839		D-	0.67	60-63	600-639
C+	2.33	77-79	770-799		E	0.00	0-59	0-599



A	4.0	94-100	Shows an exceptional level of thoughtful engagement with the text(s), complex, creative and well-reasoned arguments, and a clear prose style. The paper uses several logical examples to fully develop a persuasive thesis and is organized in such a way that invites the reader to follow along. The prose is clear and interesting, and there are no errors in formatting, grammar, syntax, or spelling.
A-	3.67	90-93	
B+	3.33	87-89	Needs more attention to one or two of these areas: sophistication and nuance of arguments (a more arguable thesis statement, use of more evidence or analysis, qualification of arguments, etc.), prose style/formatting (sentence structure, diction, clarity), or organization (paragraph construction, flow of ideas).
B	3.00	84-86	
B-	2.67	80-83	
C+	2.33	77-79	Needs to push further in order to go beyond a surface-level interpretation. Needs more textual evidence and analysis to support them. The overall argument might not be clearly or convincingly articulated. A 'C' paper also needs improvement in clarity of prose and/or organization.
C	2.0	74-76	
C-	1.67	70-73	
D+	1.33	67-69	Indicates a superficial engagement with the text, and inattention to argument, prose style, and mechanics. The paper uses few or no examples, and the argument is unclear and unpersuasive. The organization is difficult to follow. The prose is unclear, and there are major errors in formatting, grammar, syntax, or spelling that impede comprehension.
D	1.00	64-66	
D-	0.67	60-63	
E	0.00	0-59	Shows little understanding of the assignment, is turned in extremely late, and/ or shows extreme problems with argument and grammar. Or, you may have committed any one of the following failing errors: failure to meet the word count, plagiarism, or failure to address the prompt.