

**ENG4936 (Honors) – Desperate Domesticity: The American 1950s**  
**Professor M. Bryant**  
**1.11.25**

Class # 11678

Section 1MB1

(Spring 2025)

*Class meets* F2F in TUR 2305 on Tuesdays, Per. 6-8 (12:50 – 3:50 pm with a break)

\*If unforeseen circumstances require a remote meeting, I'll put a Zoom Link on Canvas.

*Office Hours:* Thursdays in TUR 4221 from 1:30-3:00 + by appointment

*E-mail:* [mbryant@ufl.edu](mailto:mbryant@ufl.edu) & Canvas message

*Web:* <http://people.clas.ufl.edu/mbryant/>

## DESCRIPTION

This course explores fraught constructions of domesticity in American literary and popular culture of the 1950s: including the nuclear family, gender roles, consumerism, the rise of suburbia, the civil rights movement, and alternative domesticities. Our literary texts will include Flannery O'Connor's *The Complete Stories*, Patricia Highsmith's *The Price of Salt*, Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, and Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*. In addition to this lively range of literature, we'll explore fifties family sitcoms (*Ozzie and Harriet*, *Father Knows Best*, *Leave It to Beaver*) plus the teen rebellion films *Rebel Without a Cause* and *Blackboard Jungle*. Our unit on Campus Life features an archive visit to explore UF student publications from the 1950s. Toward the end, we'll consider how the American 1950s in plays out in contemporary culture.

This course neither promotes nor compels a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint, or belief. Instructional materials for this course consist of only those materials specifically reviewed, selected, and assigned by the instructor. The instructor is only responsible for these instructional materials.

## COURSE GOALS

1. Students will be able to identify key factors that shaped domesticity in the American 1950s.
2. Students will hone their close reading strategies for interpreting fiction, poetry, advertising, magazines, film, and television.
3. Students will write convincing interpretations and arguments about course texts, improving their writing in response to instructor feedback.
4. Students will practice public speaking and professional exchange through presentations.
5. Students will connect to campus by time-traveling to UF in the 1950s.

## COURSE TEXTS

John Cheever *The Stories of John Cheever*

Gwendolyn Brooks, *Maud Martha*

James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*

Flannery O'Connor, *The Complete Stories*

Patricia Highsmith, *The Price of Salt*

Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*

Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*

Ray Bradbury, *The Martian Chronicles*

- Films, TV episodes & short Course Reserves materials accessible through Canvas

## ASSIGNMENTS (details on Canvas)

- Class Participation – 20 %
- Seminar Presentation – 15%
- Digital Participation (Annotations) – 10%
- 2 Worksheets (ungraded)
- Short Ad Analysis Paper – 15%
- Seminar Paper Proposal – 5%
- Seminar Paper Pitch – (ungraded)
- Seminar Paper – 25%
- Faux Fifties Ad – 10%

## POLICIES

1. You must *complete all assignments* to receive credit for this course.
2. *Attendance*: Like all lecture-discussion courses, this one needs you. Life happens, so everyone has **1** allotted absence this semester without penalty. Use it wisely (for emergencies, illness). You will earn a lowered course grade if you accrue **3** absences, and you will fail the course if you accrue **4** absences (4 weeks of the semester). If you have a medical condition/emergency that will affect your absences, you should contact me about a possible accommodation. Providing *documentation* will protect you should you need a long extension, a medical withdrawal or equivalent. For other circumstances, this course follows [UF Attendance Policies](#).
3. Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center](#). It is important that students share their accommodation letter with their instructors and discuss accessibility issues as early in the semester as possible. DRC phone # is 352-392-8565. Note that I have an ADA accommodation for no hybrid teaching.
4. *Latecomers* receive partial absences.
5. *Class Participation*: Learning to participate effectively and to move our conversation forward will help you understand the material and develop professional communication skills. If you're shy about offering opinions, try asking questions. Remember that if you are confused about a text, others are, too. (Note that our course also includes credit for Digital Participation.)
6. *Netiquette*. While our course communications needn't be formal, *they must always be professional*. This includes respecting diversity in race, ethnicity, class, gender, region, sexuality, and ability. Inappropriate communications in class, office hours, on email or in digital assignments (Annotations, Discussion Posts). violate this rule. Remember: your emails and other communications through UF are public records.
7. *Social Media Policy*. Let us be respectful of one another on social media as well as in our course communications. I often post about my teaching, and it's always something positive. I never describe or name my students on social media. On my blog I only share (and credit) student's work by permission. Whether in person or online, we are a community.
8. *Paper Format for Canvas submissions*: Please put your name & email address on the front page of your paper and number your pages. Use a 12 point font, 1-inch margins, and double spacing. Grammatical errors will cost you, so proofread (good practice for preparing job market materials).
9. *Late Paper Submission*. Late papers and other assignments earn grade reductions. Work submitted over a week late will earn an E *unless* you have an extension. (Note Canvas will be Canvas and late-stamp submissions even if I've given you an extension. Just ignore that.)
10. *Save That Assignment!* Always make backup copies of your work for your records.
11. *UF's policy on Harassment*: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. Read the policy [here](#).
12. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism*. Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the [Student Honor Code](#).

Plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity outlined in *The Orange Book* will be penalized, and may involve failure of an assignment or the course. (see also AI statement below)

13. *The Writing Studio* is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.
14. Students who face difficulties completing the course and need counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus [Counseling and Wellness Center](#): (352) 392-1575. Other useful numbers: University Police Department (392-1111) or 9-1-1 for emergencies.
15. For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
16. *Course Evaluations*. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course through GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>.

### **About In-Class Recordings**

*Note that this course format includes discussion and student presentations; it is not a lecture course. Student participation in discussion counts toward the course grade.*

UF students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. *A class lecture does not include academic exercises involving student participation.* Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section such as uploading or posting, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

### **About AI and Course Assignments**

Note that UF’s definition of plagiarism now includes Entities (such as AI) on p. 14, #5. *If detection software picks up AI-generated or AI-assisted sentences in your Papers*, I will consult with you about the findings. You may need to rewrite all or part of that assignment.

### **What If You’re Sick?**

In response to COVID-19, UF made these recommendations to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones. This class continues these general campus guidelines:

- If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus.
- If you are sick, stay home. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 to be evaluated.

- As with any excused absence, you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up missed work.

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Date	Wk/Module	Read/View <i>before</i> class	DUE
1.14	1 Fifties Frameworks	Introductory readings by John Cheever, Gwendolyn Brooks & Sylvia Plath; <i>Leave It to Beaver</i> episode	
1.21	2 Nuclear Family Fictions	Selected stories by John Cheever Essay by Elaine Tyler May	<b>Annotation 1</b> <b>Presentations 1 &amp; 2</b>
1.28	3 Sitcom Families	Selected episodes of <i>Ozzie &amp; Harriet</i> , <i>Father Knows Best</i> , <i>Leave It to Beaver</i> Essays by Elaine Tyler May and Erin Lee Mock	<b>Sitcom Worksheet</b> <b>Presentations 3 &amp; 4</b>
2.4	4 Black Metropolis	Gwendolyn Brooks, <i>Maud Martha</i> + poems <i>LitHub</i> and <i>New Republic</i> pieces on Brooks	<b>Annotation 2</b> <b>Presentations 5 &amp; 6</b>
2.11	5 Segregation & Resistance	James Baldwin, <i>Notes on a Native Son</i> Recordings of Baldwin on TV and at UF	<b>Annotation 3</b> <b>Presentations 7 &amp; 8</b>
2.18	6 Rural Domesticity	Selected stories of Flannery O'Connor Essay TBA	<b>Annotation 4</b> <b>Presentation 9</b>
2.25	7 Lover's Secrets	Patricia Highsmith, <i>The Price of Salt</i> Essay by Margaret Talbot	<b>Presentations 10 &amp; 11</b> <b>Ad Analysis Paper</b> (Thursday)
3.4	8 Teen Rebellion	<i>Rebel Without a Cause</i> (Nicholas Ray, 1955) <i>Blackboard Jungle</i> (Richard Brooks, 1955) teen educational films Essay by Ramona Caponegro	<b>Annotation 5</b> <b>Presentations 12 &amp; 13</b>
3.11	9 Campus Coeds	1955 UF Yearbook, Yearbook Highlights projects from UF students MEET IN LIBRARY	<b>Archive Worksheet</b> (Wednesday)
3.17	10 Spring Break Week!	Relax.	
3.25	11 Family Secrets	Sloan Wilson, <i>The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit</i>	<b>Annotation 6</b> <b>Presentations 14 &amp; 15</b>

4.1	12 Feminine Mystiques	Sylvia Plath, selected poems and <i>The Bell Jar</i> Essays by Renee Dowbnia and Betty Friedan	<b>Annotation 7</b> <b>Presentations 16 &amp; 17</b> <b>Seminar Paper Proposals</b> (Friday)
4.8	13 Otherwordly Domesticity	Ray Bradbury, <i>The Martian Chronicles</i> essay by Andrea Krafft,	<b>Presentations 18 &amp; 19</b>
4.15	14 Paper Pitches!	Paper Pitches	<b>Seminar Paper Pitch</b>
4.22	15 Reframing the Fifties	Ad slide show and homemade cookies	<b>Faux Fifties Ad</b>
4/29	Finals Week		<b>Seminar Paper</b>