Course Syllabus

ENG 4936

Honors Seminar: The Great American Novel

Course Meetings: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, period 3 (9:35-10:25) in CBD 0212
Instructor: Professor Susan Hegeman / shegeman@ufl.edu/
Office hours: Fridays, 1-3 pm in Turlington 4119, or by appointment, via Zoom. https://ufl.zoom.us/j/3087752224 (Links to an external site.)Meeting ID: 308 775 2224

Course Description

The term "the Great American Novel" originated in 1868, in an essay by a minor novelist named John William DeForest, whose disappointing conclusion was that such a thing did not exist -- or at least not yet. Since that time, there have been many candidates for this title, so much so, that it is a cliché of literary marketing. In this class, we will investigate DeForest and others' criteria for the "Great American Novel," and consider them in historical and social context. We will also read novels that have at various times been identified this way, beginning with DeForest's half-hearted nominee for the title, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* We will then proceed through 20th century nominees for the title, including William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, John Dos Passos's *The Big Money*, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Students will have the opportunity to propose and argue for their own GAN, which we will then read as a group.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

- Students will learn about American literary history, in terms of both popular and critical reception.
- Students will learn about the theory and history of the novel as a form in the United States.
- Through careful reading of some challenging and rewarding examples, students will develop their skills in interpreting novels, through close reading and contextual analysis
- students will develop advanced skills in critical thinking, analysis, argumentation, and oral communication
- students will develop advanced critical writing skills through the completion of academic research papers

Required Course Materials

Books

The following books are listed in the order in which we will read them. ISBN numbers and publishers are provided for the recommended print editions. Other editions, including e-books, are acceptable, but students are responsible for keeping up with locations of passages discussed in class, and for being able to properly cite the editions referenced in papers.

- Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). This book is out of copyright, and so is available from many publishers. A free epub edition is available in a variety of formats ([Project Gutenberg (Links to an external site.)](#)). If you get a hard copy, be sure it is from a reputable publishing house, or you may be disappointed with the text quality.
- William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) Vintage; Reissue edition (ISBN 978-0679732181)
- John Dos Passos, *The Big Money* (1936) Mariner Books (ISBN 978-0618056835)
- Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952) Vintage (978-0679732761)
- Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1987) Vintage (978-1400033416)

A final novel will be selected collectively, by the class.

Course Content Note

The course materials describe, and we will discuss, potentially disturbing topics, including racial and sexual violence and abuse. If you ever feel the need to leave a class discussion, either for a short time or for the rest of the class session, you may do so without academic penalty. You will, however, be responsible for any material you miss. If you do leave the room for a significant time, please get notes from another student or contact me individually. You are welcome to discuss your personal reactions to the course material with me in office hours. If you or a friend are in distress, please contact *U Matter, We Care* or the Counseling and Wellness Center at 352 392-1575.

Tech Requirements and Policies

You are required to have access to Canvas for accessing course materials and turning in assignments.

For help with all tech issues, contact the UF Computing Help Desk:

Web: [http://helpdesk.ufl.edu (Links to an external site.)](http://helpdesk.ufl.edu)
Phone: (352) 392-HELP (4357)
Email: helpdesk@ufl.edu

Walk-in: HUB 132

Any requests for accommodations (e.g. credit for overdue work) due to technical issues must be accompanied by the ticket number received from LSS when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem.

Recording Policy

According to state law, 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" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

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. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, 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.

Class Comportment Expectations

1. Respectful interactions among students are expected. Participation grades will be negatively affected by a failure to adhere to professional, polite, scholarly, and respectful communication in all formats, both written and oral.
2. [Per university policy (Links to an external site.)](), you are expected to wear approved face coverings at all times during class and within buildings even if you are vaccinated against COVID.
3. If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available at no cost and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit this link for details on where to get vaccines and

boosters: https://coronavirus.ufhealth.org/vaccinations/vaccine-availability/ (Links to an external site.).

4. If you get sick, you are expected to stay home and self-quarantine. Please visit the UF Health Screen, Test & Protect (Links to an external site.) website about next steps, retake the questionnaire and schedule your test for no sooner than 24 hours after your symptoms began. 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 (or email covid@shcc.ufl.edu) to be evaluated for testing and to receive further instructions about returning to campus. UF Health Screen, Test & Protect (Links to an external site.)offers guidance when you are sick, have been exposed to someone who has tested positive or have tested positive yourself. Continue to regularly visit coronavirus.UFHealth.org (Links to an external site.) and coronavirus.ufl.edu (Links to an external site.) for up-to-date information about COVID-19 and vaccination.

Course Requirements and Grading

GRADING SCALE

A	4.0	94-100	940-1000	C	2.0	73-76	730-769
A-	3.67	90-93	900-939	C-	1.67	70-72	700-729
B+	3.33	87-89	870-899	D+	1.33	67-69	670-699
B	3.0	83-86	830-869	D	1.0	63-66	630-669
B-	2.67	80-82	800-829	D-	0.67	60-62	600-629
C+	2.33	77-79	770-799	E	0.00	0-59	0-599

BREAKDOWN OF FINAL GRADE

Attendance and participation	200 points; 20% of final grade
discussion questions	200 points; 20% of final grade
GAN group project	200 points; 20% of final grade
Final Paper	400 points; 40% of final grade

Attendance and participation (200 points; 20% of final grade)

In this class, we will all learn by respectfully listening to, reading, and engaging with each each others' ideas. It is therefore expected that students come to class, and that they come prepared to discuss the material assigned for that day. Students will be graded on their attendance and on the quality of their oral and written contributions to classroom discussion. Participation includes oral and chat contributions to class discussions via Canvas. The best grades will be given to those who offer informed, incisive, and relevant comments regarding the course readings and related discussions. Poor attendance will adversely effect students' participation grade.

University policy requires that absences be accepted with prior notice for university sponsored events (e.g., athletics) and religious holidays.

Students who are ill or test positive for COVID are expected to be considerate of others and self-quarantine. Students' grades will not be adversely affected by this if you inform the instructor of your situation. Students are expected to contact the instructor if they anticipate extended medical absences so that we can work on a plan to keep up with the class. Documentation will be required.

Discussion questions (20% of grade)

Students will submit discussion questions for each novel we read via Canvas "Discussions."

GAN Group Project (30% of grade)

Students will work in groups to propose a novel to read in the last few weeks of the course. They will present an argument for why it is a Great American Novel. The course will vote on the proposals to select the final reading for the course.

Final paper (400 points; 40% of final grade)

Students will write a formal academic paper, of 2100-3000 words. The paper will substantially address a work of literature assigned for the class. Full details on the paper assignment, including topics and formatting guidelines, are available on Canvas, under the "Assignments" navigation tab. The paper is due on April 22.

Papers will be graded wholistically on the following criteria, in general order of emphasis:

- Argumentation: clear thesis, logical sequence of argument, logical conclusions
- Use of appropriate evidence from the texts
- Demonstrated understanding of contextual issues in relation to works discussed (accurate explication of concepts and arguments; accurate use of terminology and historical information; accurate application to texts)
- Mechanics: punctuation, spelling, word choice and usage, sentence construction, paragraphing
- Proofreading and citations

Accommodations for Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, https://disability.ufl.edu/). Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor. Students needing accommodations should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Academic Honesty Policy

Students are required to review the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code (https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/). Plagiarism or any other violation of the Student Honor and Conduct Code will result in an automatic failure of the assignment. A report will be filed with the Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution Office. https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-honor-code/

According to the Student Conduct Code,
"Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:
1. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
2. 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.
3. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
4. 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."

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals. 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/.

Campus Resources

Health and Wellness

- U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend are in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out.
- Counseling and Wellness Center: http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc, or 352 392-1575.
- Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS): Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.
- University Police Department: 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), or http://www.police.ufl.edu/.

Academic Resources

- E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu. https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml.

- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. https://www.crc.ufl.edu/ .
- Library Support, http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask . Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/ .
- Writing Studio, 2215 Turlington Hall, 846-1138. Help with brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/ .
- Disability Resource Center, Reid Hall. 392-8565. Help with academic and other accommodations. https://disability.ufl.edu/

Schedule of Readings, Discussions, and Assignments

This represents my current plans for readings and discussions. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change based on the interests and needs of the class as a whole. Any such changes will be communicated early, in class and via Canvas. Students are responsible for staying informed about any changes in the class schedule by regularly consulting the Canvas course page.

JANUARY

- 5 course introduction: review syllabus
- 7 Anderson, Ch. 3

    Actions

- 10 Buell

    Actions

- 12 DeForest
- 14 Stowe
- 17 No class: MLK holiday
- 19 Stowe
- 21 Stowe
- 24   Stowe
- 26 Stowe
- 28 Stowe
- 31 Faulkner

FEBRUARY

- 2 Faulkner
- 4 Faulkner
- 7 Faulkner
- 9 Faulkner
- 11 Faulkner
- 14 Dos Passos
- 16 Dos Passos
- 18 Dos Passos
- 21 Dos Passos
- 23 Dos Passos
- 25 Dos Passos
- 28 Groups present GAN proposals

MARCH

- 2 Groups present GAN proposals
- 4 Groups present GAN proposals
- 7 Spring break
- 9 Spring break
- 11 Spring break
- 14 Ellison
- 16 Ellison
- 18 Ellison
- 21 Ellison
- 23 Ellison
- 25 Ellison
- 28 Morrison
- 30 Morrison

APRIL

- 1 Morrison
- 4 Morrison
- 6 Morrison
- 8 Morrison
- 11 Course-selected novel
- 13 Course-selected novel
- 15 Course-selected novel
- 18 Course-selected novel
- 20 Course-selected novel