

ENG 2130: American Literature
Individual, Society, and Community in American Literature, 1620-present
Meeting Times: 2:30-3:45pm
Instructor: Owen Cantrell
Room: Classroom South 409
Office: Langdale Hall 949
Office Hours: TR 1:00-2:00pm
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“Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind” *Ralph Waldo Emerson*
“Something there is that doesn’t love a wall” *Robert Frost*

Course Description

Throughout the history of American literature, the negotiation between the individual and society has been central. In a common narrative of American literary history, the story of American literature is a young nation declaring its intellectual and artistic independence from European models and founding a unique literature by breaking free of literary convention and societal constraints. In this class, we will investigate this traditional narrative of American literary history by injecting a third term: community. The term community will help us to negotiate the position of the individual and society within our texts this semester, as well as potentially locate common roots of the American literary desire for connection beyond self-reliance or social conformity.

The American Literature survey (ENGL 2130) provides both a historical survey and an overview of literatures of the United States. 2130 is both an option for fulfilling the university core humanities requirement and a required course for all English majors.

Course Goals

- Identify and explain the fundamental features of the genres of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and drama
- Define key literary terms/concepts and implement these in oral/written discussion as well as in literary interpretation
- Describe, examine, and evaluate their own reading practices and oral/written critical analyses
- Analyze literature and explain how various components of literature work together to create meaning.
- Apply writing and revision as tools for understanding literature and its interpretation
- Recognize and describe American literary history as chronological, developmental (moving through time periods), and generic/thematic
- Recognize and interpret relationships between American literature and its literary history and culture

Required Texts

Baym, Nina, ed. *Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Shorter 8th ed. New York: Norton, 2012.

Grading Breakdown

A	100-93
A-	92-90
B+	89-87
B	86-83
B-	82-80
C+	79-77
C	76-70

Grades below are considered failing grades

D	60-69
F	below 60

Grading

Participation and Attendance: 10%
Short Position Papers: 10%
Leading Class Discussion Assignment: 10%
Critical Essay Annotated Bibliography: 20%
Midterm Exam: 20%
Final Exam: 30%

Leading Class Discussion Assignment

Each student will lead a class discussion on one of texts studied in the course. The objective will be to present the class with historical and authorial context for the text studied, a general understanding of its place within American literary history, and questions designed to guide class discussion. Presentations will be approximately 10 minutes in length (not including discussion), and must include:

- a brief hand-out for the class
- clear connection to other course readings
- leading questions for the class (to spark discussion)
- 1.5-2 page “position paper” arguing for your interpretation of the text

Critical Essay Annotated Bibliography

As one of the course goals is to introduce students to the disciplinary conventions of Literary Studies, one of the major assignments is to do the necessary research within the field to write an original interpretation of a literary text studied in the course. In the Critical Essay Annotated Bibliography, students will be required to find 10 sources (1-2 primary, 2-3 secondary, and 5-7 scholarly) and construct an argument utilizing those sources. Each source must have a précis, and correct bibliographic information. Students will write a brief one-two paragraph summary of their proposed argument in the Critical Essay, with a strong thesis and outline of how all sources would have been deployed.

Short Position Papers

Part of your reading process should always be the process of writing. Throughout the semester, you will write 10 Short Position Papers (1-2 pages). These response papers should have a **central argument** about a text, **specific details** chosen from the text to support that argument, and be as **well-developed** as can reasonably be accomplished in 1-2 pages. **Five**

of these response papers should be submitted prior to the midterm and **five** should be submitted after the midterm. Finally, the response papers *must* be submitted prior to class discussion over the text and no more than two response papers can be submitted in one class period. Your Leading Class discussion assignment counts as one of these position papers.

Midterm & Final Exam

The midterm exam will be over the text studied throughout the first part of the semester and consist of definitions, short answer, and essay questions. The midterm is worth 20% of the overall course grade and will take approximately one hour and fifteen minutes.

The final exam is a cumulative exam over what we have studied throughout the semester. The exam format will be a mixture of definition, short answer, and essay. The final exam is worth 30% of the overall course grade and will last approximately 2.5 hours. Our assigned final exam time is **December 11, 2014 from 1:30p-4:00p**

Attendance & Participation

Attendance is mandatory. I will allow for four (4) absences per semester. I will not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, so please plan wisely. I would not advise missing class for any reason other than absolutely necessary in case emergencies should arise and absences become necessary. If you have to miss class for extra-curricular activities, please see me regarding what verification I will need from your coach/advisor.

Anyone more than fifteen (15) minutes late to class will be as a half absence, regardless of the reason. This is a good reason to keep your four (4) absences in mind when planning for the semester. If you are going to be more than fifteen (15) minutes late, I would advise taking this tardiness as one of your absences and make sure to be prompt in the future.

Late Work

Late work will not be accepted, even for a reduced grade. If you are absent on the day an assignment is due, I expect you to make arrangements to have the assignment to me by class time. In-class assignments or class participation cannot be made up for credit if you are absent. There are plenty of grading opportunities during the semester and I do not expect a one or two missed in-class assignments or class participation grades to significantly affect your overall grade.

In case of emergency, I will allow assignments to be made up, within one week (7 days) from assignment due date. An emergency is a very serious situation so please do not fabricate or exaggerate events to delay due dates. Events that qualify as an emergency that would permit a make-up assignment will be at my discretion.

All of our major assignments are **mandatory** and part of the course requirements. This means that **all assignments must be completed in order to pass the course**, regardless of when they are turned in, even if you do not get any points for it. I do not accept late work for a grade but I still require all assignments to be completed since they are of educational value and essential to your growth as a writer. Please make sure to note this policy because I do not want to have any surprises later in the semester.

Late work should not be an issue to anyone in this class. There are plenty of opportunities to meet with me, each other, or a tutor at the Writing Studio to discuss your work during the semester. Please see me if you are having any difficulties completing an assignment so we can talk through an assignment before it becomes late and affects your grade.

Technology

I expect everyone to act as adults in the classroom. This means respecting the right of each and every student to learn in an environment relatively free of electronic distractions. While I will not ban all cell phones, iPods, or laptops from the classroom, I do reserve the right to tell any student to put any electronic media away when it proves to be a distraction from course material. If it becomes a consistent distraction, I will ask students to leave the classroom until they are able to control their cell phone, laptop, or iPod usage.

Lore Course Management System

I will be using the Lore Course Management System to post readings, and initiate class discussion. **It is required that you join for this class.** Please go to Lore.com and input the code: **AHQ34P** to join this course. I will be checking at the end of the first week and grading you joining as a homework grade.

Engrade

We will be using Engrade to keep track of grades and attendance throughout the semester. Engrade will also allow you to see your grade in real time, so you will always be aware of exactly how you are doing in the class. I will invite you through your student email after the first class period.

Writing Studio

The Writing Studio, located in room 976 in the General Classroom Building, provides personal, one-on-one service for students to help them at all levels of the writing process. You can schedule an appointment in person or online for thirty minutes at a time. There is no charge for this service, so I suggest you take advantage of the Writing Center if you need additional assistance working through a writing assignment. As a point of courtesy to the tutors, please make sure to be prompt for your appointment and come prepared to talk about your writing, with sample in hand. The more prepared you are for your appointment, the more productive it will be for you and the tutor.

Course Evaluation

Your constructive assessment of this course plays an indispensable role in shaping education at Georgia State. Upon completing the course, please take time to fill out the online course evaluation.

Course Schedule

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topics Covered</i>	<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Readings #1</i>	<i>Readings #2</i>
Community, Society, and the Individual in American Literature				
August 26 th	Course Introduction	Pass Out Leading Class Discussion and Position Papers		
August 28 th	Individual, Society, Community; Historical Overview		Raymond Williams, "Community," "Society," "Individual" (handout)	
September 2 nd	Colonial Period		John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity"	
September 4 th	Colonial Period		Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"	
September 9 th	Revolutionary War		Benjamin Franklin, "The Way to Wealth," <i>Autobiography</i> , Ch.2	
September 11 th	American Renaissance		Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance"	
September 16 th	American Renaissance		Henry David Thoreau, "Economy," "Where I Lived"	
September 18 th	American Renaissance		Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"	
September 23 rd	American Renaissance		Edgar Allan Poe, "Man of the	

			Crowd” (handout); “William Wilson” (handout)	
September 25 th	American Renaissance		Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”	
September 30 th	American Renaissance	Pass out Midterm Study Guide	Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself” (Sections TBA) “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”	
October 2 nd	American Renaissance		Emily Dickinson, selections TBA	
October 7 th	American Renaissance	<i>Last of Five Position Papers Due by Today</i>	Herman Melville, <i>Benito Cereno</i>	
October 9 th	MIDTERM EXAM			
October 14 th	Realism/Naturalism		Mark Twain, “The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg” (handout)	
October 16 th	Realism/Naturalism		Kate Chopin, “Story of an Hour”	Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper”
October 21 st	Realism/Naturalism		Stephen Crane, “The Blue Hotel”	Charles Chesnutt, “Dave’s Neckliss” (handout)
October 23 rd	Harlem Renaissance		Paul Laurence Dunbar, “We Wear the Mask;” Claude McKay, “America,” “If We Must Die”	Langston Hughes, “The Weary Blues;” “Negro Speaks of Rivers”
October 28 th	Modernism		Robert Frost, “Directive,” “Mending Wall”	Sherwood Anderson, “Hands”
October 30 th	Modernism		Wallace Stevens, “Anecdote of the	

			Jar," "Sunday Morning"	
November 4 th	Modernism		T.S. Eliot, "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"	
November 6 th	Modernism		F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Absolution," (handout) "Winter Dreams"	
November 11 th	Southern Literature		William Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily"	Flannery O'Connor, "Good Country People"
November 13 th	Post-War		Ernest Hemingway, "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" (handout)	John Cheever, "The Swimmer"
November 18 th	Contemporary		Raymond Carver, "A Small Good Thing," (handout) "Cathedral"	
November 20 th	Contemporary	<i>Critical Essay Annotated Bibliography Due</i>	Alice Walker, "Everyday Use"	
November 25 th	NO CLASS			
November 27 th	NO CLASS			
December 2 nd	Contemporary		Junot Diaz, "Drown"	Jhumpa Lahiri, "Sexy"
December 4 th	Postmodern	<i>Final Position Paper Due</i>	David Foster Wallace, "A Radically Condensed History of Postindustrial Life" (handout); <i>Infinite Jest</i> (selections) (handout)	
December 11 th	FINAL EXAM			