

AMERICAN LITERATURE SURVEY II

English 399

Spring 2010

Section 001 TTh 9:30-10:45 am, 406 Daniel

Section 003 TTh 11:00 am – 12:15 pm, 406 Daniel

Section 002 TTh 2:00-3:15 pm, 114 McAdams

Dr. Brian Croxall

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(864) 656-3457

615 Strode Tower

Office Hours: TTh 3:30-5:00 pm and by appointment

Digital Office Hours: MW 11 am – 12 pm or whenever I'm shown as available on [the class wiki](#)

* I reserve the right to modify this syllabus.

Course Description

This course is a survey of American writing from the Civil War to the present. We will read essays, poetry, short stories, novels and drama, observing how their form and content shift and change in response to literary trends and the larger culture. Our investigation will identify common traits in literature that causes it to fit within three very broad historical categories—realism, modernism, and postmodernism. At the same time, however, we will observe how these literary conventions are embraced differently by women, writers of color, and writers of different economic classes. We will track how these authors created a space for themselves and for others within a nation that became so powerful that the twentieth century has frequently become known as “The American Century.”

Goals

By the end of the semester, successful students should be able to:

1. Identify stylistic, thematic, and ideological aspects of writing by many authors in different periods of nineteenth-, twentieth-, and twenty-first-century American literature
2. Compare and contrast the work of different authors in terms of literary style, intellectual orientation, and historical and cultural perspective
3. Identify and describe important literary/intellectual movements and understand how particular writers were shaped by and helped to shape those movements
4. Develop arguments about how literature represents and engages social conflicts, both within particular texts and across a range of texts

Texts

The **required** texts for this course are

- *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* Volumes C (1865-1914), D (1914-1945), and E (Literature since 1945) (Norton, ISBN: 978-0-393-92994-2)
- Nella Larsen, *Passing*, ed. Carla Kaplan, Norton Critical Edition (Norton, ISBN: 978-0-393-97916-9)
- Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (Harper, ISBN: 978-0060913076)

Finally, there will occasionally be texts that are only available on [the course wiki](#). **You are required to bring a hard copy of these texts to class with you on the day that we will discuss them.**

Assignments

Papers: There will be two essay assignments throughout the semester. I will distribute the assignments before the due dates. I am happy to discuss drafts, outlines, or ideas in office hours. I am unlikely to respond helpfully to an email message sent the day before the paper is due.

Timeline: Throughout the semester, we will be building a dynamic timeline of the period we are studying. You will be responsible for researching and adding events to the timeline for two different years throughout the semester. Find details shortly at <http://briancroxall.pbworks.com/Spring-2010-Timeline>.

Wiki Class Notes: Class notes are, to borrow from a colleague of mine, “epistemologically weird.” On the one hand, they are an individual account of what you learned during a class. On the other hand, if your notes are too individualized or idiosyncratic it means you will have likely missed what was most important. To be effective, in other words, class notes should reflect the collective experience of the classroom. To this end, you will be working in groups this semester to create class notes using the [course wiki](#). I will provide examples for the first few days of class.

Each group will write 4 entries on the wiki and the assignment is worth 150 points total. Each entry is worth 30 points. The remaining 30 points will be allocated at the end of the semester based on how a report that group members will make to me--privately--about how the group dynamic functioned. In other words, don't slack off; everyone must carry their own weight in this assignment. Finally, since I am teaching three sections of this course, it is extremely important that you make sure you are editing **your section's** set of notes.

Having a semester's worth of class notes aggregated on the wiki will also help you see exactly how much work takes place in an English classroom and it will be a useful resource for reviewing material that you might have missed or when preparing for exams. I have been known to consult *your* notes on the wiki when preparing my exam questions.

Exams: There will be a mid-term and a final exam; both will likely consist of identification questions and an essay.

Grades

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Participation: 10%
Paper 1: 10%
Paper 2: 15%
Timeline: 10%
Wiki Class Notes: 15%
Mid-Term: 15%
Final: 25%

Course Policies

Attendance: You can miss three class sessions without penalty. After three, I reserve the right to lower your final grade; after six absences you risk failing the course. Note that this policy does not distinguish "excused" from "unexcused" absences—such a distinction puts me in a role I don't want to play. If you must miss a class, you are responsible for obtaining the relevant notes and information from your classmates. Also, be on time to class. I make note of when people are late, and being late three times is

akin to an absence. Finally, if you do not have a hard copy of the text that we are discussing, you cannot participate effectively in our discussion, and I will mark you absent.

Preparation and Participation: This is a class based on collaborative discourse. As such, being prepared to participate in discussions is a course requirement. This entails having **read, annotated, and thought** about the complete assignment carefully before class starts. Furthermore, you **must** bring your copy of the text to class every day. Since we will be engaged in closely examining the texts we read and the language that they use, if you don't have your text then you aren't prepared for class, even if you have read the assignment. Naturally, this admonition applies to the texts that you will find online.

More broadly speaking: Ask questions. Be curious. You are more than welcome to have a different interpretation of a text than a classmate or me; just be sure to share your perspective in a productive and supportive manner. Your thoughts and questions will provide the starting point for our discussions. **Your active participation will be consequently factored into your final grade for the course.** If you're reluctant to speak up, please talk to me and we'll figure out a way for you to participate.

Office Hours: As noted above, my office hours are from 3:30-5:00 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I consider this *your* time, and I encourage you to make use of it. Please don't think of meeting with me as something to do only as a last resort but rather as an important and integral part of your learning. While you are welcome to just show up during office hours, given my schedule this year and the number of students I have, you might be best served by letting me know ahead of time that you are coming. Additionally, feel free to chat with me online during my digital office hours, the link to which you can find on [the course wiki](#). I've been known to be there at times around the clock. If it says I'm available, I am.

Papers:

- Writing assignments will be graded on the strength of the argument, the structure in which that argument is conveyed, the use of evidence to support the argument, and the clarity of the essay's style. **Hard copies** of papers are due **at the beginning of class**. If you will miss class the day a paper is due it is still your responsibility to turn in **a hard copy** of that paper **before class**. **Late work will not be accepted**, except at my discretion (with a significant grading penalty). Assignment deadlines are not flexible.
- Papers must be typed in 12 point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins and must be in standard MLA style format. Furthermore, the pages should be numbered in the upper right corner and must be stapled together. I know, I know: I'm picky. As Kurt Vonnegut has it in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, "So it goes."
- You may not turn in work to me that you originally completed for another course (including one of mine). Should you wish to draw on a paper that you have written or are currently writing for another course, please discuss the matter with me.

Late Instructor: In the unlikely event that I am late to class, you may feel free to leave 10 minutes after the scheduled start of the class. Don't count on this happening, though.

Technology Problems: At some point during the semester you **WILL** have a problem with technology: your laptop will crash, a file will become corrupted, a server will go down, or something else will occur. These are facts of life, not emergencies. Sadly, technological excuses ("my printer died," etc.) cannot be accepted under any circumstances. Always make back-ups for your work, and plan ahead so that you will have time to use the on-campus computers and printers if necessary. You may **not** submit papers by e-mail. If for some reason you feel you have to do this, you must ask permission first; furthermore, you may **not** consider an e-mailed paper to be submitted until you have received a reply from me confirming that I have received it.

Academic Integrity: When writing, one needs to give credit when one uses the ideas of others. It is important, therefore, to not only give citations for direct quotations but also summaries or paraphrases. Thus, not only are you expected to avoid stealing others' ideas, but you are also expected to know how to cite your sources in your papers. Please see me if you have any questions about proper citation of sources. Plagiarism may result in a failing grade for the course.

What follows is Clemson University's official statement on academic integrity:

“As members of the Clemson University community, we have inherited Thomas Green Clemson's vision of this institution as a ‘high seminary of learning.’ Fundamental to this vision is a mutual commitment to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, without which we cannot earn the trust and respect of others. Furthermore, we recognize that academic dishonesty detracts from the value of a Clemson degree. Therefore, we shall not tolerate lying, cheating, or stealing in any form.”

“When, in the opinion of a faculty member, there is evidence that a student has committed an act of academic dishonesty, the faculty member shall make a formal written charge of academic dishonesty, including a description of the misconduct, to the Associate Dean for Curriculum in the Office of Undergraduate Studies. At the same time, the faculty member may, but is not required to, inform each involved student privately of the nature of the alleged charge.”

Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities who need accommodations should make an appointment with Arlene Stewart, Director of Student Disability Services, to discuss specific needs within the first month of classes. Students should present a Faculty Accommodation Letter from Student Disabilities Services when they meet with instructors. Student Disability Services is located in G-20 Redfern (telephone number: 864-656-6848; e-mail: sds-l@clemson.edu). Please be aware that accommodations are not retroactive and new Faculty Accommodation Letters must be presented each semester.

Counseling Services: Confidential and free (for students paying the health fee) counseling services are available from Clemson's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). Call (864) 656-2451 for more information or see <http://www.clemson.edu/studentaffairs/redfern/caps/care.php>.

Writing Center: The Writing Center in 305 Daniel is an excellent resource for writers of all skill levels. It offers assistance with all aspects of writing, including brainstorming, organization, thesis formation, style, wording, and revision. I strongly encourage each of you to schedule a meeting at the Writing Center at least once this semester. It is a good idea to secure appointments as far in advance as possible, especially towards the end of the semester, when the Writing Center is busiest. You can schedule appointments by calling (864) 656-3280.

Paper Grading Criteria

Your papers should make a compelling argument based upon convincing interpretation of textual evidence. When reading your papers, I employ the entire scale of letter grades. These are my grading criteria:

- A** The “A” paper makes an original argument and does so persuasively. It is the product of work of consistently high quality and occasional brilliance. It uses this argument to open up new avenues of interpretation, including some avenues that it does not have time to explore. It cites evidence, but does not rely too heavily upon quotation. It anticipates the criticisms and questions that a skeptical reader might have, and it uses those criticisms and questions to make its argument even more complex. The paper does not merely prove an argument; it develops an argument in a provocative and logical manner. Of course, an “A” paper is free of grammatical errors. In addition, it meets the criteria described directly below.
- A-, B+** These grades are awarded to careful and engaged work combining concise and accurate interpretation with analysis. The paper explains its insights carefully and addresses the implications of those insights. The essay states a clear thesis, but does not repeat its own conclusions unnecessarily. The central argument is narrow and well-defined, and the writer has begun to consider the new questions that this argument raises. The essay is written with clarity, style, and grace.
- B** The “B” paper puts forward a persuasive argument and successfully marshals evidence to support it. The paper is largely cohesive and coherent. Each paragraph develops a single point, and the transition from one paragraph to the next makes logical sense. The “B” paper often fails to question its own reasoning in a consistently rigorous manner and sometimes lacks a provocative conclusion. It may also linger too long over points that could be made more concisely — or may move too quickly past points that require further explanation.
- B-, C+** These are the highest grades that a paper relying extensively on summarization or quotation will receive; these are also the highest grades that I will award any paper with serious grammatical errors, such as run-on sentences or sentence fragments. This grade is often awarded to papers that address too broad a topic and/or that contain a major organizational flaw. These papers often look at problems too superficially and try to solve them too simplistically; a paper in this range usually fails to engage questions that naturally follow from its own argument.
- C** The “C” paper puts forward a cogent thesis but usually fails to argue its merits in a persuasive manner. It too heavily relies on quotation and summarization, and it stretches out points that do not require so much attention. It often fails to notice important objections to its argument and/or the important implications of its argument. Its logic is not as coherent as it could be, and the writer often fails to make his or her argument as clear as it needs to be. Its structure is generally clear, though perhaps rigidly mechanical: there is an introduction, body, and conclusion (the dreaded “five-paragraph theme”); points are arranged in a perceptible way; and paragraphs are adequately structured, though there may be irrelevant points or nonfunctional digressions, an unsteady sense of “movement,” or lapses in the writer/reader contract. Improvement is desirable, but you should remember that a “C” grade does indicate average college work.
- D** The “D” paper rarely articulates a clear and defensible thesis and usually suffers from either a lack of supporting evidence and/or serious organizational problems. It may also be an argument whose intelligibility is seriously flawed—it may read as a mere “collection of thoughts” or as a rant. The writer has not been able to make his or her ideas accessible to the reader, and the paper does not adequately support its argument. The paper does not engage the issues that are most important to its focus. The paper may also suffer from important grammatical and syntactical problems.
- F** The “F” paper does not meet the requirements of the assignment: the paper is not completed or not handed in; or it falls significantly short of the minimum length requirement; or it addresses no topic under discussion; or it seriously violates common standards of civility and argumentation; or it is plagiarized or involves self-plagiarism (modification of a paper used for a different class).

Reading Schedule

Complete all assigned reading before coming to class. Please keep in mind that all reading assignments are **subject to change**. All page numbers refer to the editions/ISBNs that I have ordered. For some readings, you will download and print the text, which is available on [the course wiki](#).

Jan. 7 Th Introductions, Syllabus

Jan. 12 Th Frederick Jackson Turner, from "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (Norton C: 1148-53)
Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" (Norton C: 21-25)
Emily Dickinson, 225 [I'm 'wife' – I've finished that], 236 [Some keep the Sabbath going to Church –] (Norton C: 74-81 passim)

Regionalism

Jan. 14 Th Mark Twain, from *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Chapters 1-2, 14-15 (Norton C: 100-114, 154-160)
Joel Chandler Harris, "The Wonderful Tar-Baby Story" and "How Mr. Rabbit Was Too Sharp for Mr. Fox" (Norton C: 512-516)
Charles Chesnutt, "The Goophered Grapevine" (Norton C: 688-696)

Jan. 19 T Sarah Orne Jewett, "A White Heron" (Norton C: 522-528)
Kate Chopin, "The Storm" (Norton C: 531-534), "Desiree's Baby" (in *Passing*: 213-218)

Jan. 20 W *Last day to drop classes*

Realism

Jan. 21 Th Henry James, "Daisy Miller," (Norton C: 391-429), from "The Art of Fiction" (Norton C: 918-920)

Jan. 26 T Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (Norton C: 808-819)

Naturalism

Jan. 28 Th Stephen Crane, "The Open Boat" (Norton C: 1000-1016)
Frank Norris, "A Plea for Romantic Fiction" (Norton C: 923-926)

Feb. 2 T Frank Norris, "Fantaisie Printanière" (Norton C: 931-938)
Theodore Dreiser, from *Sister Carrie* (Norton C: 938-954)

Modernism(s): Poetry

Feb. 4 Th Carl Sandburg, "Chicago" (Norton D: 1436-1438)
Ezra Pound, "A Pact," "In a Station of the Metro," from *The Cantos* I (Norton D: 1477-1494 passim); from "A Retrospect" (Norton D: 1505-1507)
Frost, "The Pasture," "Mending Wall," "The Death of the Hired Man," "After Apple-Picking," "The Road Not Taken," "Birches," "Fire and Ice," "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (Norton D: 1388-1403 passim)

- Feb. 9 T Wallace Stevens, "The Emperor of Ice Cream," "Anecdote of the Jar," "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" (Norton D: 1439-1456 passim)
Mina Loy, "Parturition," "Brancusi's Golden Bird," (Norton D: 1456-1462)
William Carlos Williams, "The Young Housewife," "The Red Wheelbarrow," "This Is Just To Say" (Norton D: 1462-1477 passim)

Modernism(s): The Harlem Renaissance

- Feb. 11 Th WEB DuBois, from *The Souls of Black Folk* (Norton C: 894-901)
Paul Laurence Dunbar, "When Malindy Sings," "An Ante-Bellum Sermon," "We Wear the Mask," "Sympathy," "Harriet Beecher Stowe" (Norton C: 1039-1044)
Paper 1 Due

- Feb. 16 T Nella Larsen, *Passing*, Part One (1-34)

- Feb. 18 Th Nella Larsen, *Passing*, Parts Two and Three (35-82)

- Feb. 23 T Langston Hughes, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," "Mother to Son," "I, Too," "The Weary Blues," "Mulatto," "Song for a Dark Girl," "Visitors to the Black Belt," "Note on Commercial Theatre," "Words Like Freedom," "Madam and Her Madam," "Madam's Calling Cards," "Silhouette," "Theme for English B" (Norton D: 2026-2037 passim); from "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (Norton D: 1512-1513)
Claude McKay, "The Harlem Dancer," "Harlem Shadows," "The Lynching," "If We Must Die," "America," "Outcast" (Norton D: 1686-1689)
Countee Cullen, "Yet Do I Marvel," "Incident," "Heritage," "From the Dark Tower" (Norton D: 2060-2065)

- Feb. 25 Th **Midterm Exam**

Modernism(s): Fiction and Drama

- Mar. 2 T Ernest Hemingway, "Big Two-Hearted River, Part I," "Big Two-Hearted River, Part II," "Now I Lay Me," "Indian Camp" (on wiki)

- Mar. 4 Th F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Winter Dreams" (Norton D: 1822-1839)

- Mar. 9 T Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, Act 1 (Norton E: 2325-2357)

- Mar. 11 Th Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, Act 2 and Requiem (Norton E: 2357-2392)

- Mar. 15 – 19 **Spring Break**

Kitchenettes, Confessionals, and Beats: Mid-Century Poetry

- Mar. 16 M Gwendolyn Brooks, "kitchenette building," "the mother," "a song in the front yard," "The White Troops Had Their Orders But the Negroes Looked Like Men," "We Real Cool," "The Blackstone Rangers" (Norton E: 2409-2420 passim)

Theodore Roethke, "Weed Puller," "Frau Bauman, Frau Schmidt, and Frau Schwartz," "My Papa's Waltz," "Dolor," "The Waking," "I Knew a Woman" (Norton E: 2133-2146 passim)

- Mar. 18 W Allen Ginsberg, "Howl," "Footnote to Howl," "A Supermarket in California" (Norton E: 2574-2584)
Sylvia Plath, "Morning Song," "Lady Lazarus," "Daddy," "Words," "Child" (Norton E: 2698-2711 passim)
Robert Lowell, "Memories of West Street and Lepke" (Norton E: 2392-2394, 2404-2405)
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Postmodern Pastiche

- Mar. 23 T Donald Barthelme, "The Balloon" (Norton E: 2679-2683)
Hunter S. Thompson, from "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas" (Norton E: 2492-2493)
Ishmael Reed, "Neo-HooDoo Manifesto" (Norton E: 2844-2848)

- Mar. 25 Th Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*, chapters 1-2
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- Mar. 30 T Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*, chapters 3-4

- Apr. 1 Th Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*, chapters 5-6
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Postmodern Multiculturalisms

- Apr. 6 T Sandra Cisneros, "Woman Hollering Creek" (Norton E: 3163-3171)
Gloria Anzaldúa, from *Borderlands/La Frontera* (Norton E: 2935-2941 [second break], 2947-2955)

Paper 2 Due

- Apr. 8 Th Alice Walker, "Everyday Use" (Norton E: 3009-3016)
Toni Morrison, "Recitatif" (Norton E: 2684-2698)
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- Apr. 13 T Sherman Alexie, all poems and "Do Not Go Gentle" (Norton E: 3239-3248), "Because My Father Always Said He Was the Only Indian Who Saw Jimi Hendrix Play 'The Star-Spangled Banner' at Woodstock" ([on wiki](#))
Joy Harjo, all poems (Norton E: 3127-3134)

- Apr. 15 Th Jhumpa Lahiri, "Sexy" (Norton E: 3248-3264)
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- Apr. 20 T [Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries](http://yhchang.com) (<http://yhchang.com>), Texts TBA

- Apr. 22 Th Richard Powers, "Modulation" ([on wiki](#))
Closing Thoughts and Course Conclusions
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Final Exams

- Section 001 (9:30-10:45am): Wednesday, April 28, 8:00-10:30am
Section 003 (11:00am-12:15pm): Wednesday, April 28, 3:00-5:30pm
Section 002 (12:30-1:45pm): Monday, 26 April, 3:00-5:30pm