

ENGL342
20th-Century American Literature (“to 1950”)
TR 8:50-10 a.m.

Dr. Joel Wingard
Zinzendorf 304
M-F 10:30-11:20
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"I am large. . . . I contain multitudes"

Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself"

Course description and objectives

In this course we will read and study the work of more than forty authors who wrote prose fiction and nonfiction and poetry from the turn of the 20th century to its end. These forty-plus writers represent a sort of literary *e pluribus unum*: They include several "major" writers from the canon of American literature, as well as a number of writers whom you may not have heard of, let alone read, because their work they has long been unanthologized or out of print. This kind of variety should be one way for us to call into question the American idea of *e pluribus unum* and its dominant metaphor, the melting pot.

Outcomes – by the end of this course you should be able to:

- demonstrate awareness of the range of American literature in the 20th century, including its development as part of the national cultural and historical experience over that time
- recognize issues of the literary canon, canonicity, and canon formation as they apply to American literature in the 20th century
- read and write critically through rhetorical analysis about literary texts, literary history, authors and their reception, and American cultural history (e.g. such figures as the melting pot and such stories as rags-to-riches) over the period
- collaborate with classmates to create knowledge about the course subject matter
- use bibliographic resources to find and identify relevant published criticism related to American literature in the 20th century.

Grades and evaluation –

- Midterm and final exams (take-home essays): 20 percent each
- Group presentation on a 20th-century Am. Novel, incl. other representations thereof: 15 percent
- Group paper on a 20th-century Am. Novel, incl. other representations thereof: 15 percent
- Group Discussion leading (twice): 10 percent each
- Attendance/participation - 10 percent

Required books –

Cain, William E., ed. *American Literature*, vol 2. 3rd ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2004.
(*AL* in assignment schedule)

Hart, Roderick P., and Suzanne Daughton. *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*, 3rd ed. New York:
Pearson Longman/Penguin, 2005. (*MRC* in assignment schedule)

One novel selected by group

Statement on academic honesty --

It is every student's responsibility to be aware of College policy regarding academic honesty and plagiarism. The policy is laid out on pp. 26-31 of the *Student Handbook*.

Statement on disabilities --

If you have a learning disability and believe you may require accommodation to succeed in this course, you should contact the Learning Services Office at 1307 Main Street. Its phone number is 861-1510. Do this as soon as possible to enhance the likelihood that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. Any student who wishes to disclose a disability and request accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for this course first **MUST** meet with either Mrs. Laurie Roth in the Office of Learning Services (for learning disabilities and/or ADD/ADHD) or Dr. Ronald Kline in the Counseling Center (for all other disabilities).

Tentative assignment schedule --

- Week I
M 1/14 – F 1/18
- T – Introduction etc.
- R – **Background and context** – *AL*: “Welcome: Suggestions for Students,” pp. xix-xxi; “A Chronology of Works and Events that Shaped American Literature, 1860 to Present Day,” pp. 1527-37; and introductions to “American Literature at the end of the Nineteenth Century” and “Modern American Literature,” pp. 3-21, 297-324.
- Critical approach** - *MRC*: Preface, pp. vii-ix, and Chapters 1 & 2: “The Rhetorical Perspective” and “The Critical Perspective,” pp. 1-20, 21-36.
- Week II
T 1/22 – F 1/25
- T – **Critical applications** - *MRC*: Chapters 4, 6, 7 & 8: “Analyzing Ideas,” “Analyzing Form,” “Analyzing Syntax and Imagery,” “Analyzing Lexicon,” pp. 57-74, 101-123, 125-50, 151-75.
- R - (no class meeting) *MRC*: Chapters 9, 11, & 13: “Analyzing Media,” “Cultural Criticism,” and “Feminist Criticism,” pp. 177-210, 233-58, 283-308.
- Week III
M 1/28 – F 2/1
- T – **Toward the New American Century (prose fiction)** - *AL*: Washington – introduction and chapter from *Up From Slavery*, pp. 160-72; DuBois – introduction and chapter from *The Souls of Black Folk*, pp. 238-53.
- R – *AL*: Wharton – introduction and “The Other Two,” pp. 219-37; London – Introduction and “To Build a Fire,” pp. 279-94; Anderson – introduction and “Hands,” pp. 406-12.
- Week IV
M 2/4 – F 2/8
- T – **Toward the New American Century (poetry)** - *AL*: Robinson – introduction and poems, pp. 327-31; Frost – introduction and poems, pp. 390-405; Williams – introduction and poems, pp. 444-54; Millay – introduction and poems, pp. 573-78.
- R – **Transnational Literary Modernism (poetry)** - *AL*: Pound – introduction and poems, pp. 455-61; H.D., introduction and poems, pp. 462-69; Cummings – introduction and poems, pp. 580-86.
- Week V
2/11 – F 2/15
- T – **Transnational Literary Modernism (prose fiction)** - *AL*: Stein – M introduction and “The Gentle Lena,” pp. 355-84; Hemingway –

introduction and “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber,” pp. 643-71.

R – **Meanwhile, back in the States** - *AL*: Fitzgerald – introduction and “Babylon Revisited,” pp. 600-20; Parker – introduction and poem, p. 579.

Week VI
M 2/18 – F 2/22

T – **The ‘New Negro’ Renaissance** - *AL*: McKay, introduction and poems, pp. 544-45; Brown, introduction and poems, pp. 678-82; Hughes – introduction and poems, pp. 683-95.

R – *AL*: Hurston – introduction and “The Gilded Six-Bits,” pp. 559-70; Toomer – introduction and “Georgia Dusk” (poem) and “Fern” (short story), pp. 593-99; Wright – introduction and “Long Black Song,” pp. 699-722.

Week VII
M 2/25 – F 2/29
(midterm)

T – Library day (?)

R – Test due

Spring break
Sa 3/1 – Su 3/9

Week VIII
F 3/14

T – **“since 1950**- *AL*: American Literature Since 1945, Cold War to M 3/10 – Contemporary,” pp. 727-61; **rediscovery of the South** - *AL*: Faulkner – introduction and “That Evening Sun,” pp. 626-42; Ellison – introduction and “Battle Royal,” pp. 877-90.

R – *AL*: Welty – introduction and “A Worn Path,” pp. 762-70; O’Connor – introduction and “Revelation,” pp. 917-35.

Week IX
M 3/17 – R 3/20

T – **upper- and lower-middle-class angst, North and South** - *AL*: Updike – introduction and “Separating,” pp. 960-70; Mason – introduction and “Shiloh,” pp. 1068-80.

R – **“the source”** - *AL*: Ginsberg – introduction and “Howl,” pp. 1378-89; Ferlinghetti - introduction and “Constantly Risking Absurdity,” pp. 1334-35.

Easter break
F 3/21 – M 3/24

Week X F 3/28	T – one variety of the dispossessed - <i>AL</i> : Silko – introduction and T 3/25 – “Lullaby,” pp. 1123-32; Erdrich – introduction and “The Red Convertible,” pp. 1161-70. R – maybe we’re all dispossessed! - <i>AL</i> : Oates – introduction and “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?”, pp. 1019-34; O’Brien, introduction and “The Things They Carried,” pp. 1107-22.
Week XI M 3/31 – F 4/4	T – order in poetry? - <i>AL</i> : Macleish, introduction and “Ars Poetica,” pp. 571-72; Warren – introduction and poems, pp. 1269-77; Lowell – introduction and poems, pp. 1321-31. R – TBA
Week XII M 4/7 – F 4/11	T – wave-three feminism - <i>AL</i> : Rich – introduction and poems, pp. 1426-31; Oliver – introduction and poems, pp. 1448-52; Piercy – introduction and poems, pp. 1453-55. R – who is ‘an American’? - <i>AL</i> : Cervantes – introduction and “Refugee Ship,” p. 1508; Morales – introduction and “Child of the Americas,” pp. 1509-10; Espada – introduction and “Bully,” pp. 1522-23; Alexie, introduction and “On the Amtrak from Boston to New York City,” pp. 1524-26.
Week XIII M 4/14 – F 4/18	T – Review/preview R – Groups 1 & 2 presentations
Week XIV M 4/21 – F 4/25	T – Groups 3 & 4 presentations R – Group 5 presentation ; course evaluations
Final exams M 4/28 – Sa 5/3	TBA – Take-home final due