

## English 342 Syllabus: Twentieth-Century American Literature (Spring 2016)

Instructor: Dr. Andrew Crooke

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Class: Tuesday/Thursday 10:20-11:30 in 303 Memorial Hall

Office and Phone: 302 Zinzendorf Hall, 610-625-7810

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 1:00-2:30, or by appointment

### Course Description

This advanced course explores American literature during the first half of the twentieth century. With the two world wars serving as bookends for our selections, we will discuss poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction prose from this robust period of literary production. While in some ways indebted to the traditions of romantic, realist, naturalist, and regionalist writing that preceded it, in other aspects American modernism broke radically from earlier eras to reflect the turbulence of cultural, economic, and political activities during these decades. Both expanding the content and experimenting with the forms of previously accepted literature, many modernists concerned themselves with expressing what seemed irrevocably lost as well as electrifyingly new about the United States in the interwar years. Moreover, many writers from this period became expatriates just as committed to international artistic movements as to intellectual affairs on the home front. From the Great Migration to the Great Depression, from jazz to blues to cubism to surrealism to feminism to photojournalism, from the Harlem to the Chicago to the Southern Renaissances, we will sample the diverse strands and strains of American literature in the modern age.

### Course Goals

Students should complete English 342 with the following objectives either learned or reinforced:

- an appreciation for the full range of American literary production during the first half of the twentieth century, along with specific knowledge of certain works and writers;
- an awareness of historical events, cultural developments, and artistic movements that provided material, themes, and inspiration for writers of this period;
- an understanding of traditions and innovations within different literary genres, as well as an enhanced grasp of techniques employed in poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction;
- the ability (both spoken and written) to ask incisive interpretive questions, formulate arguable claims, and react to others' ideas about literary devices, styles, and structures;
- the skills to research critical responses, synthesize them with one's own, and write persuasively about works of modern American literature.

### Required Books (available at the Moravian College Bookstore)

*The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Volume D: 1914-1945*, 8th edition, Nina Baym, et al, eds., Norton, ISBN: 9780393934793

*Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, James Agee and Walker Evans, Houghton Mifflin, ISBN: 9780618127498

Note: You must acquire these books and bring them to class on the days they are assigned or else you will be marked absent. Please obtain these editions (see the publishers and ISBNs above) so that we will all be on the same page during our discussions. Any changes to our schedule will be announced in class. If classes are canceled, I may notify you by email of alternative assignments.

### Attendance and Participation

Regular attendance is essential to participation in this or any other course that revolves around group discussion. If you must miss a session, please let me know in advance and arrange to pick up any supplemental materials. More than two absences will adversely affect your overall grade, and more than four will result in failure of the course. Arriving late or leaving early can be very disruptive, so two such incidents will equal one absence. Mere attendance, however, is only the beginning of useful participation. In short, you must be in class mentally as well as physically. Always bring the day's assigned reading, a writing implement, and sufficient paper. Stay alert for the entire class period. Please come prepared to listen attentively, to contribute your opinions thoughtfully, to engage in activities with enthusiasm, and to treat your classmates with respect. In order to keep distractions to a minimum, the use of cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices is not permitted for any purpose, unless I specify an exception. Furtive texting, emailing, calling, chatting, browsing, etc., will drastically lower your participation score, since such acts are as disrespectful to your peers as to your instructor. I appreciate your cooperation in helping me to establish a hospitable learning environment for everyone involved in the course.

### Course Work

*Essay One:* This paper should address two of the poets discussed during the beginning of the semester and incorporate at least one additional source. Compare and contrast works by your chosen writers in terms of their formal components, thematic correspondences, or any other poetic devices that interest you. Outside sources may include critical perspectives, authorial commentaries, and/or historical assessments. 2,000 words minimum, plus works cited page.

*Essay Two:* This paper should address one of the novels and incorporate at least two additional sources. Consider your chosen work in terms of (a) its characterization; (b) its mode of narration; (c) its structure, style, and symbolism; (d) its handling of race, class, religion, gender, sexuality, or domesticity; and/or (e) its imaginative reconstruction of actual cultural milieus or geographic settings. 2,000 words minimum, plus works cited page.

*Responses:* At regular intervals throughout the semester, you will submit informal writing about our selections. You may treat these responses as journal entries, ranging as widely or reflecting as deeply as you like on the previous weeks' readings. You might focus, for instance, on matters related to genre, on social issues and moral concerns broached across several pieces of literature, or on how language (imagery, rhythm, diction, syntax) generates meaning within a single piece. Why do certain works of literature resonate emotionally, esthetically, or philosophically for you? Be sure to cite page numbers for any quotations. Each response (six total) should be at least 400 words. We will share portions of them in class on the days they are due.

*Discussion Questions:* Twice during the semester, you will help lead a discussion by contributing at least five extended interpretive questions about the day's assigned reading. Pose questions that cannot be answered factually but rather that acknowledge a degree of ambiguity and complexity in the works at hand. Type your questions and bring copies for everyone. I will model discussion questions for you during our first few class meetings.

*Final Exam:* This cumulative exam will build on your earlier papers, responses, and discussion questions by asking you to identify passages and to draw connections among texts we have read together. For passage identification, you will supply the authors, titles, context, and significance of certain pieces. You will also write short essays dwelling on similarities and differences among

several works on our syllabus, explicating how they reveal shared or divergent emphases in the study of twentieth-century American literature.

### Paper Preparation

Essays (double-spaced) and responses (single-spaced) should be typed in twelve-point font with one-inch margins. Use MLA format to cite any sources. Number your pages and insert a header with both your name and my name. For each essay, try coming up with a distinctive title, which can often help you to gain direction and maintain focus. Be sure to proofread before printing out a clean copy. You do not need cover pages, but please staple your papers.

### Late Work

Essays and responses are due at the start of class on the dates specified in the syllabus. Papers handed in after these times will be deemed late, which will result in a grade reduction for each day beyond the due date. Except in emergencies, I will not accept essays or responses via email.

### Assessment

Essay One: 20%

Essay Two: 20%

Informal Responses: 20%

Discussion Questions: 10%

Participation: 15%

Final Exam: 15%

### Resources and Plagiarism

Visit me during my office hours or send me an email to discuss your writing and any concerns you may have over grading or other aspects of the course. Please allow at least 24 hours for an electronic response. For assistance from tutors while revising your papers, contact the Writing Center, 610-861-1592, located on the second floor of Zinzendorf Hall. All writing done for this course should be yours alone, not that of friends, family members, or unacknowledged critics. Be aware that any plagiarized passages or essays will be punished severely. If you need clarification, consult the College's academic honesty policy, available in the Student Handbook.

### Disabilities

Moravian encourages persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you have any type of disability that may affect your performance in this course, please inform me as soon as possible, so that we can arrange for reasonable accommodations. To request the required authorization, contact the Academic Support Center, 610-861-1401, located on the lower level of Monocacy Hall.

### Note to English Majors

In preparation for creating an English Major Portfolio in your senior capstone seminar, please save both digital and hard copies of your work for this class, including any drafts with peer or instructor comments.

### Class Schedule

Readings should be done before class on the dates indicated below. Page numbers in parentheses refer to the 8th edition of *The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Volume D: 1914-1945*.

*Week One*

T 1/19: introductions; expectations; Robert Frost, selected poems (handout)

R 1/21: Introduction to American Literature, 1914-1945 (3-22); Robert Frost, bio plus all selections (230-252)

*Week Two*

T 1/26: World War I and Its Aftermath (214-229); Modernist Manifestos (335-350); additional anti-modern manifestos (handout); Gertrude Stein, bio plus excerpt from *The Making of Americans* (197-203); Amy Lowell, bio (191-192) plus "September, 1918" (195)

R 1/28: Ezra Pound, bio plus selections through "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" (314-328); H.D., bio plus all selections (350-357); T. S. Eliot, bio plus "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and excerpt from "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (365-375); **response 1 due**

*Week Three*

T 2/2: T. S. Eliot, remaining selections (376-399)

R 2/4: Wallace Stevens, bio plus all selections (281-295); Mina Loy, bio plus all selections (295-301); Marianne Moore, bio plus all selections (357-365)

*Week Four*

T 2/9: William Carlos Williams, bio plus all selections (302-313); E. E. Cummings, bio plus all selections (636-646); Claude McKay, bio plus all selections (480-484)

R 2/11: Sterling Brown, bio plus all selections (864-869); Langston Hughes, bio plus all selections (869-880); Countee Cullen, bio plus all selections (892-897); **response 2 due**

*Week Five*

T 2/16: Edgar Lee Masters, bio plus all selections (36-39); Carl Sandburg, bio plus all selections (278-281); Sherwood Anderson, bio plus all selections (263-278)

R 2/18: Edna St. Vincent Millay, bio plus all selections (633-636); Susan Glaspell, bio plus *Trifles* (252-262); Willa Cather, bio (45-47) plus "The Sculptor's Funeral" (181-190)

*Week Six*

T 2/23: Black Elk and John G. Neihardt, bios plus excerpt from *Black Elk Speaks* (23-36); Zora Neale Hurston, bio plus all selections (528-549)

R 2/25: Jean Toomer, bio plus excerpt from *Cane* (646-657); Nella Larsen, bio plus *Quicksand* (550-566); **response 3 due**

*Week Seven*

T 3/1: Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* (567-607)

R 3/3: Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* (608-632); **essay 1 due**

*Week Eight*

T 3/8: No Class, Spring Break

R 3/10: No Class, Spring Break

*Week Nine*

T 3/15: William Faulkner, bio plus *As I Lay Dying* (695-739)

R 3/17: William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (740-762)

*Week Ten*

T 3/22: William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (762-793)

R 3/24: William Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily" and "Barn Burning" (794-812); Eudora Welty, bio plus "Petrified Man" (handout); **response 4 due**

*Week Eleven*

T 3/29: Katherine Anne Porter, bio plus "Flowering Judas" and "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" (484-528)

R 3/31: Thomas Wolfe, bio plus "The Lost Boy" (843-863); John Dos Passos, bio plus excerpt from *U.S.A.* (690-694)

*Week Twelve*

T 4/5: F. Scott Fitzgerald, bio (658-59) plus "Babylon Revisited" (675-689); Ernest Hemingway, bio plus "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" (824-842)

R 4/7: John Steinbeck, bio plus "The Leader of the People" (881-892); Richard Wright, bio plus "The Man Who Was Almost a Man" (898-907); Pietro di Donato, bio plus "Christ in Concrete" (908-918); **response 5 due**

*Week Thirteen*

T 4/12: James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, photographs plus text from title page through p. 39

R 4/14: James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, pp. 40-98; **essay 2 due**

*Week Fourteen*

T 4/19: James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, pp. 99-193

R 4/21: James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, pp. 194-278

*Week Fifteen*

T 4/26: James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, pp. 279-380

R 4/28: James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, pp. 381-416; **response 6 due**

Final Exam: Friday 5/6, 8:00-10:00 am