

Comprehensive Course Syllabus

Literary Explorations II *American Literature, 1900-Present*

Course Description:

In this section of Literary Explorations II, you will discover many of the important texts in American literature, from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day. Your explorations will span time and genre, from poetry and short stories to novels and a play. You will also continue to work on the skills of writing, research, and written and spoken argument that you began in your Literary Explorations I course.

Extended Course Description:

Change, violence, and upheaval marked America in the 20th century, a century which, in turn, has stamped our own. In this course, we will examine some of the diverse American authors who produced a wide range of writings in the 20th century. Our studies will include poetry, short stories, novels, and a play. In examining these texts, we will study the relationship between these works and their aesthetic and intellectual contexts. We will consider them in the context of the issues and upheavals of their time that still impact us today, including immigration, wars in Europe and Asia, the civil rights movement, growing wealth inequality, urbanism, evolving technologies, and feminism.

Instructor:

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Meeting Days, Time and Room(s)

[As determined]

Text(s) / Materials:

McMichael, George, editor, et al. *Concise Anthology of American Literature*. Fifth Edition. (2001).

*Note: This text will **frequently** be supplemented with online readings. It is strongly recommended, though not required, that students download the “Kindle for PC” for supplemental readings.*

Essential Content/SSLs and Outcomes:

- *Students will understand conventions of poetry, drama, and fiction as genres and be able to explain their uses and effects [English A.1-3, B.2-4, E.1; SSL IV.A-D].*

- *Students will evaluate the influence of historical context on form, style, and point of view [English A.4, A.7-8; SSL II.A].*
- *Students will work collaboratively to come to an understanding of readings [English A.5-6, C. 1-2, E.2, E.5; SSL I.A-B].*
- *Students will develop greater autonomy as readers and writers by generating and responding to their own substantive questions about authors and literary works [English B.1, D.1-3, E.3; SSL I.B].*
- *Students will experience writing as an incremental and recursive process by drafting, critiquing, and revising creative and expository works [C.3-5; SSL I.A, II.A, III.A, IV.A-D].*
- *Students will reflect upon literacy learning as a lifelong endeavor and set goals for themselves as literacy learners based on their strengths, needs, and aspirations [English E.3; SSL II.A, III.B, V.C].*

Instructional Design and Approach:

Literature is, at its core, an articulation of the history of ideas. As such, it is both part and product of history, philosophy, art, psychology, science, and other fields. Our examination of literature will thus examine it through these various lenses, while also fostering an appreciation for its aesthetic value and approach. We will explore literature through reading, writing, discussing, researching, and – sometimes – performing it. Activities and assignments will range from individual to small group to broad class discussion. With every reading, students should challenge themselves to consider three questions: do I like this, what does this mean, and why is it important today?

Student Expectations:

*To succeed in this class, you must: arrive on time, be prepared by having read AND prepared to discuss or ask questions about the assigned materials (not just online summaries), be active in small group **and** classroom discussion, and demonstrate originality, thorough research, and comprehensive thought on papers and assignments. Being funny doesn't hurt, either.*

Revision – You may revise two papers during the semester, and will have one additional required revision. To do so, you must first complete a “Plan for Revision” form (available on Moodle) and conference with me. The revised paper must be turned in no more than two weeks after your graded original is returned to you. Your revision grade is averaged with your original grade.

Assessment Practices, Procedures, and Processes:

Papers	(60%)
Mid-Term Exam	(15%)
Final Exam	(15%)
Participation	(10%)

Details of assessment will vary by assignment and be explained on individual prompts.

Participation

My expectation is that, at least once per class, you voluntarily respond to a question or comment from your teacher or another student. I want this class to be based on your questions and discussions about them. As to why participation in class is important beyond your grade, consider these statements from some of today's business leaders:

"We are routinely surprised at the difficulty some young people have in communicating: verbal skills, written skills, presentation skills. They have difficulty being clear and concise; it's hard for them to create focus, energy, and passion around the points they want to make."

-- Mike Summers, VP for Global Talent Management at Dell

"I want people who can engage in good discussion—who can look me in the eye and have a give and take. All of our work is done in teams. You have to know how to work well with others. But you also have to know how to engage customers—to find out what their needs are. If you can't engage others, then you won't learn what you need to know."

-- Clay Parker, engineer and president of the Chemical Management Division of BOC Edwards

"People who've learned to ask great questions and have learned to be inquisitive are the ones who move the fastest in our environment because they solve the biggest problems in ways that have the most impact on innovation."

-- Mike Summers, VP for Global Talent Management at Dell

All quotations taken from "Rigor Redefined" (2008) by Tony Wagner of the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Notes...

I expect you to take notes in this class. For every paper I assign in this class, you will have the option to propose your own topic. Think of your class and reading notes as massive brainstorms for your own unique papers.

...and Laptops

The default position for your laptop in this class is closed. This means, from the moment class starts, unless I ask you to use it, I don't expect to see it open. We will use the laptops frequently for in-class work and research and even for online readings, but to the greatest extent possible, this will be a laptop-free class. Here's why:

Researchers have repeatedly found that students who use laptops in class learn less than their "disconnected" peers (see Cornell's 2003 study "The Laptop and the Lecture"). Studies at Princeton and the University of California have found students who take notes on laptops performed worse on evaluations such as quizzes than those who took notes by hand "even when laptops are used solely to take notes, they may still be impairing learning because their use results in shallower processing" ("The Pen is Mightier than the Keyboard," 2014).

But laptop use in class harms more than just the user – it also negatively impacts students seated nearby. Sana, Weston, et al (2013) found that:

participants who multitasked on a laptop during a lecture scored lower on a test compared to those who did not multitask, and participants who were in direct view of a multitasking peer scored lower on a test compared to those who were not. The results demonstrate that multitasking on a laptop poses a significant distraction to both users and fellow students and can be detrimental to comprehension of lecture content.

Therefore, I require that you please keep your laptop closed during class unless you have been specifically asked to use it, and I would encourage you to keep it closed in other classes, as well.

If you have a special need that requires accommodation in this area, please see me.

Technology Excuses:

Hard drives crash. Printers go down. These facts should come as a surprise to no one who has lived in the 21st century. You live on a campus inundated with technology, and your IMSA Google Drive account lets you back up your work automatically. If you aren't working in Google Docs or another program that automatically saves your work, use Google Backup & Sync to make sure you always have a current backup of your work.

It is your responsibility to ensure that your papers in this class are backed up and that you have allowed adequate time for printing. To that end, technological failures (crashing or failing printers, computers, hard drives, etc.) will *not* excuse late or missing work.

*Items on syllabus are subject to change.

Sequence of Topics and Activities

Reading due on date indicated by // (usually A / B or C / D)

Transition to the 20th Century

Week One: Introduction / Twain “Advice to Youth,” “A Salutation from the 19th Century to the 20th” / “To the Person Sitting in Darkness”

Week Two (no I): “The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg” / Zitkala-Ša “The Soft-Hearted Sioux” / Angel Island Poems

Naturalism

Week Three: London “To Build A Fire” / Crane “The Open Boat”

The Harlem Renaissance

Week Four: Harlem Renaissance – Selected Poems / Hurston – *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Weeks Five (short C, no D)-Six (DIAD): Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

The Great American Novel?

Week Seven (ABCDI): Sandburg selected poems / Frost selected poems / Fitzgerald *The Great Gatsby*

Week Eight (Clash): Fitzgerald *The Great Gatsby*

MID-TERM

Modernism: Poetry

Week Nine: Eliot “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” / Williams “The Red Wheelbarrow,” “The Fall of Icarus” / Cummings “in Just,” “next to god of course America i,”
(Spring Break)

Modernism: Fiction

Week Ten: Faulkner “A Rose for Emily” / Hemingway “Hills Like White Elephants,” “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” / Hemingway “The Big Two-Hearted River”

Week Eleven: Hemingway *The Old Man and the Sea*

Drama

Week Twelve: Miller *Death of a Salesman*

Week Thirteen (short C, no D): Miller *Death of a Salesman*

Postmodernism

Week Fourteen (DADI): Morrison *The Bluest Eye*

Week Fifteen: Morrison *The Bluest Eye*

Week Sixteen: Vonnegut *Slaughterhouse Five*

Week Seventeen (ABCDI): Vonnegut *Slaughterhouse Five*

Week Eighteen (short C, D): TBA

FINAL