

Survey of American Literature, 1865 – Present

Professor Ethan Mannon

Course Description:

As one might expect from the title of our course, we will be surveying the works of a wide range of American authors. In addition to situating each author and text within his or her particular historical moment, we will also explore the impact of race, class, and gender on American literary discourse of the last 150 years. Along the way, we'll examine what defines an "American" as well as "American Literature," and discuss how those definitions shifted over time. We will also take up, in turn, the various movements that influenced the literature of our period—regionalism, local color, realism, naturalism, modernism, postmodernism, environmentalism—and consider how the application of these terms grew out of and shaped literature and the culture at large.

Covering the last 150 years of American literature in 15 weeks will be a challenge for all of us. Certainly, such an ambitious undertaking runs the risk of overwhelming you all with a dizzying array of texts and authors; however, it also holds the potential to inform and inspire. With diligent effort and proper discipline, I'm confident we can achieve the latter result. We will be reading, studying, and writing about works held among the most important and most beautiful in human history—this, I would argue, is cause for excitement.

Required Texts*:

The Norton Anthology of American Literature. 8th Edition. Volumes C, D, & E.

Mark Twain. *Pudd'nhead Wilson: And, Those Extraordinary Twins*. Penguin Classics Edition.

Willa Cather. *A Lost Lady*. Vintage Classics Edition.

Carl Hiaasen. *Double Whammy*. 2005 Edition

*The course texts will be supplemented by handouts and E-Reserve materials that you will be required to bring to class in either analog or digital form.

CALENDAR OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

→ Readings designated with an asterisk (*) are not contained within the Norton anthologies and are available on the E-Reserve library webpage designated for this course.

T, 8/28: Introductions. Syllabus. Close Reading (with handouts of Whitman and Dickinson poems).

Postbellum Poetry

*R, 8/30: Whitman; Melville

Realism:

T, 9/4: James, "The Beast in the Jungle"; Wharton "The Other Two" & "Roman Fever"

Naturalism:

R, 9/6: Norris, "A Deal in Wheat" (*); London, "To Build a Fire"; Garland, "Under the Lion's Paw"

Regionalism and Local Color:

T, 9/11: Jewett, "A White Heron"; Chopin, "The Storm"; Chesnut, "The Goophered Grapevine," "The Wife of His Youth," and "The Passing of Grandison"

Race and Ethnicity in America:

R, 9/13: Sui Sin Far, "In the Land of the Free"; Zitkala Sa,

T, 9/18: Booker T. Washington, from *Up From Slavery*; W. E. B. Du Bois, from *The Souls of Black Folk*

R, 9/20: Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, "A Whisper to the Reader" & chs 1-8

T, 9/25: Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, chs 9-14

R, 9/27: Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, chs 15-conclusion

Modernism and Poetry

T, 10/2: Frost, Jeffers (*)

R, 10/4: Pound, Eliot

T, 10/9: Stevens, Williams

R, 10/11: Moore, Bishop (*)

T, 10/16: **MIDTERM**

Modernism cont'd

R, 10/18: Fitzgerald, "Winter Dreams" & "Babylon Revisited"; Anderson, "Hands," "Mother," "Adventure"

T, 10/23: Cather, *A Lost Lady*, Part 1

R, 10/25: Cather, *A Lost Lady*, Part 2

T, 10/30: Hemingway (*), "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," "Big, Two-Hearted River" parts 1 & 2; Faulkner "Barn Burning"

R, 11/1: Hughes; Wright, "The Man Who Was Almost a Man"

T, 11/6: O'Neill, *Long Day's Journey into Night*

R, 11/8: O'Neill, *Long Day's Journey into Night*

Postmodernism:

*T, 11/13: O'Connor, "A Good Man is Hard to Find"; Pynchon, "Entropy"

R, 11/15: Modernist Manifestos: Willa Cather, from "The Novel D meubl "; William Carlos Williams, from *Spring and All*. On Postmodernism: Hunter S. Thompson, from *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*; Frank O'Hara, "Personism: A Manifesto"

PAPER DUE

T, 11/20: NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK

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Environmentalism

*T, 11/27: Leopold, Carson, Berry

*R, 11/29: Snyder, Merwin

T, 12/4: Hiaasen, *Double Whammy* chapters 1-8

R, 12/6: Hiaasen, *Double Whammy* chapters 9-24

T, 12/11: Hiaasen, *Double Whammy* chapters 25-end

R, 12/13: Flex Day. Review for Final Exam.

DATE, TIME, and LOCATION of **FINAL EXAM** TBA