



American Literature, 1865-Present

English 2302, Section 5
Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:50pm
Tuttleman 0405A
Professor Paul Benzon
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Contact Information

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Course Description

In this course we will study the diverse scope of American literature from the late nineteenth century to the present. We will consider a wide range of questions and issues as we approach this literature, including the ways in which American writers across this period use literary innovation represent and respond to issues such as modernization and urbanization, the changing shape of racial, ethnic, and gender relations, multiple world wars, the emergence of the American counterculture, and the increasing technological saturation of American life. Taking these and other issues as our focal points, we will attempt to think about how the American literature of the last 150 years functions as a history of our own complex cultural moment.

Over the course of the semester, we will complement our discussions of American literature in two ways: first, as a way of setting this literature within a larger cultural context, we will consider it alongside other media from the period, including film, music, and art. In addition, we will experiment with several digital tools for literary and cultural study as a way of exploring new ways to understand the American literature of this period.

Required Texts

The Norton Anthology of American Literature, 7th Edition, Volumes C, D, and E (ISBN 9780393929942)

Selected other literature and articles (marked with an asterisk and available on Blackboard or online as noted)

The book version listed above is available at the Temple University bookstore. If you choose to order books elsewhere online, be sure that you order versions with the ISBN numbers listed above, and that you have access to all reading materials before we will be using them in class.

Materials on Blackboard should be printed out and brought to class on the days we will be discussing them. I recommend that you print this material out at the beginning of the semester and keep it all together so that you will have it in hand well before it is due.

Grading

You must complete all of the following course assignments in order to pass the course:

In-Class Participation	15%
Course Blog	14%
Mascot Naming	1%
Digital Exercise 1	7.5%
Digital Exercise 2	7.5%
Course Paper	20%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	20%

Attendance

Consistent attendance, preparation, and participation are crucial to your success in this course. I will expect that you come to class on time and ready to work. **More than three absences will have a negative impact on your final course grade, and more than five absences will result in your failing the course. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences.** More than two latenesses of more than 15 minutes will be considered equal to one absence (however, even if you are more than 15 minutes late, you should still always come to class). If you miss class, it is your responsibility to keep up with the work—make sure to turn in any written work that was due for the day, and check the course blog and course website on Blackboard or come see me during my office hours to see what you might have missed in class.

Preparation, Participation, and Class Structure

We will spend our class time each day on a variety of different activities, including full-class discussions, small-group discussions, presentations, screenings, and in-class writing. While I may occasionally give short lectures, the bulk of our time will be spent talking and engaging together with the course material and with each other's ideas. In order to do this, it is essential that you come to class prepared to address the day's material. This means printing out (if necessary) and completing all reading before class, bringing the reading to class, and being prepared to discuss the reading thoughtfully. You should have interpretations, questions, and responses to share with the class, and you should be prepared to offer these and to be called on in our conversation. Discussion and work in class are important parts of this course, so active, thoughtful participation will have an impact on your final grade. More generally, the more each of you brings your own thinking to the discussion, the more all of us will get out of class—I encourage you to offer perspectives, ideas, examples, oppositions, questions, and other contributions as much as possible. If you are uncomfortable with speaking in class, please let me know or come see me at the beginning of the semester so that we can work together to make things easier for you.

Although I will lecture rarely, if ever, that does not mean that you should not take notes on what the class has to say about the material we are discussing, just as you would in a lecture course. On the contrary, even when it seems as if we are “just talking” about a reading, a piece of culture, or something else, you should still be actively thinking and writing—do not let the discussion just pass you by without actively engaging it, even if only as a listener and note-taker at certain moments. Having a record of the class' comments, opinions, debates, etc., will be extremely valuable to you in preparing to develop topics and arguments for further writing and thinking in the course.

All phones, iPods, and other technological devices should be turned off and kept in your bag or pocket for the duration of class. Sleeping, texting, listening to music, talking outside of class discussion and other similar behaviors are disrespectful to me and to your classmates and disruptive of our work in class. Students who engage in such behaviors may be asked to leave class and marked absent for the day.

This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Contact Disability Resources and Services at 215-204-1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy# 03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link:www.policies.temple.edu

Course Blog

Over the course of the semester, we will all post regularly to a course blog focused on the texts and issues we will be discussing in class. This work will serve three purposes: firstly (and most immediately), it will give you a chance to think critically about some of the course material before we discuss it in class and to gear our discussion towards issues and questions that are important to you. Secondly, it will give us all first-hand experience with a form of writing that is becoming increasingly central to American literature and culture. Finally, by giving you the opportunity to bring new material and new areas of concern into our conversation, it will help you to generate topics and ideas for the final paper.

Note that the blog is located at <http://templeamericanlit2.wordpress.com/>, **not on Blackboard** (although we will use Blackboard for email, papers, and other elements of the course). You are not required to register with WordPress in order to post on the blog, but you must subscribe to the blog so that you receive notifications of new material that I post. The most recent main post will appear at the top of the page—

click on the comments link for that post to read what others have written and post your response.

Content. Your work on the blog will take different forms at different points in the semester. Sometimes I will post a prompt for you to respond to, while at other times your posts can be more open-ended; sometimes I will ask you to address a particular passage or other element from the reading, while at other times I will ask you to think about a broader literary or cultural phenomenon. The blog is a space for us as a group to be reflective about the material we are discussing, and to begin to air initial responses, interpretations, and reactions before we pursue them more fully in discussion. In this spirit, your posting to the blog should be thoughtful and analytical—you should offer interpretations and questions rather than summaries. Because a blog allows discussion to happen over time, you should always read what has already been posted to the blog on a given week before you make your own post, and you should try to address that material in what you say—thoughtful responses that oppose, expand, rethink, complicate, or otherwise complement what others have written are as helpful and meaningful as “standalone” comments (if not more so). I will participate in conversations as they develop as well as posting opening threads.

Each post should be at least 200 words—you might write and edit your post in Microsoft Word or a similar program so that you know the length of your post and so that you have a backup of it on your computer. I will sometimes ask you to include images, links, video clips, and other media elements in your posts—this is fairly easy to do and we will discuss it in class at the beginning of the course.

Scheduling. Unless I specify otherwise, there will be a blog post due before each Tuesday class. In order to ensure that everyone has a chance to read comments and absorb the online discussion before we meet on Tuesday, your posts are due by **midnight on Monday night**. Because of the time-sensitive nature of the blog, late posts will not receive credit.

Grading. I will grade your blog posts on a \checkmark , $\checkmark+$, $\checkmark-$ basis each week. I will decide your grade based on the your engagement with the text and your consideration of and response to other students' posts.

Mascot Naming. The hand and torch on the cover of this syllabus belong to the Statue of Liberty as exhibited in the 1876 World's Fair in Philadelphia. If you look closely, you can see a person up in the turret around the torch—this person will be our class mascot, our guide through the complex world of post-Civil War American literature. He/she will appear frequently throughout the course—on the course blog, on assignment sheets and handouts, and in other as-yet unknown locations. He/she is also the subject of a semester-long contest in our class to name the mascot in a way that reflects the concerns of our discussions and thinking as a class. There is a separate thread on our course blog to post suggestions—everyone must post at least one suggestion over the semester, although you may post as many suggestions as you like at any time. The student who suggests the best name will receive a 2% bonus to his/her participation grade. Entries will be judged on the basis of originality and relevance to the subject matter of the course.

Digital Exercises

This course requires two short digital exercises, each two to three double-spaced typed pages in twelve-point Times New Roman font. These are designed to allow you to explore and experiment with some of the new tools for literary study made possible by digital technology. Each exercise will ask you to work with an online digital application in relation to some of our reading for the course and to reflect on your findings. The applications we will use will be fairly straightforward; no technological expertise is necessary. I will evaluate your papers based on the depth and thought involved in your discussion of your findings: you should not only report what you find, but also respond to it critically and analytically. I will provide more specific information about each exercise closer to their due dates. Late work will be marked down one grade level for each class period after the due date (for example, from a B+ to a B for one late day). Extensions will only be granted in the case of an emergency documented by a college dean.

Course Paper

This course requires one paper of six to eight double-spaced typed pages in twelve-point Times New Roman font. This paper is intended to give you an opportunity to apply the skills of literary interpretation we will develop in class in a larger context, both in terms of a particular text and in relation to the broader themes and questions of the course. This paper should go beyond summary or evaluation to make a larger argument about the text you are discussing based on close readings of multiple passages: beyond just tracing a character or theme at a general level, you should consider carefully **how** the author represents those things through the language of the text and advance an interpretive viewpoint about **why** he or she does that and the larger significance of that act. The strongest papers will offer original, individual arguments that add to or go beyond the ideas and examples raised in class discussion. I will provide topic possibilities for this paper closer to the due date, and you are also more than welcome to develop your own topic in consultation with me. I will evaluate your papers based on the rubric attached at the end of this syllabus. Late work will be marked down one grade level for each class period after the due date (for example, from a B+ to a B for one late day). Extensions will only be granted in the case of an emergency documented by a college dean.

Exams

This course requires a midterm exam and a final exam. These will both likely consist of identification questions and essays.

Technology and Course Work

Technology will be a frequent tool in our work together in this course: in addition to posting on the class blog and communicating with me and your classmates via email, you will be handing in papers electronically as well as in hard copy form, and I may ask you to view multimedia material online and work with various online applications as part of certain readings and paper assignments. In addition, some of our reading will be accessible online through Blackboard for you to download and print out to read. As such, you are responsible for making sure that you have the technological tools and access necessary to keep up with the reading and writing for the course. Expect that you will have technological problems at some point in the semester, and plan accordingly. I recommend that you do this in a few ways: print out readings ahead of time save your papers frequently, back up all of your written work frequently using a USB drive or an online space such as mybackpack.temple.edu (preferably both), make sure you have access to alternate computers and printers (a friend's or roommate's, a lab in the library or TECH Center, etc.), and give yourself time to use these backup resources if you need to rather than relying on everything working perfectly at the last second. If you have questions about how to use any of these resources (or anything else technology-related), please don't hesitate to come ask me.

Office Hours and Additional Help

I want each of you to be successful in this class. Helping each of you develop as students of literature is important to me, and I want to do what I can to help you achieve those goals. If you have any questions, problems, or things you want to discuss—about the course, the readings, writing assignments or paper ideas, material for the exams, life at Temple, future academic or career plans, or anything else at all—or if you simply want to talk more about what we're doing in class, please come see me. My office hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30-3:00pm in Anderson Hall 1127—this time is set aside for us to talk and for me to help you and work with you. If you aren't free during that time, get in touch with me before or after class or by email and we can set up a time that is more convenient. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you are having trouble or feel you need help.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Independent thinking is a crucial component of your work in this course. **If you plagiarize, you will fail the course.** If you are uncertain about anything, ask **before** you hand in the work. The following rules cover several basic concerns involving plagiarism. If you are in any way uncertain about citation or about what constitutes plagiarism, do not hesitate to consult me.

- a) The language in your paper must be either your own or a direct quote from the original author.
- b) Changing a few words or phrases from another writer's work is not enough to make the writing your own. The writing is either your own or the other person's; there are no in-betweens.
- c) In-text citation and an accurate bibliography acknowledge that the fact or opinion expressed comes from another writer. If the language comes from another writer, quotation marks are necessary, in addition to a correct citation.

Course Schedule

In addition to reading the literary selections listed below, you should also read the headnote for each author on the day we will be discussing them.

The schedule of readings below may change over the course of the semester. It is your responsibility to keep abreast of these changes by attending class, checking your email and the class blog regularly, and contacting me or coming to my office if you have any questions.

Realism and Naturalism

- Tuesday, Jan. 18 Course Introduction
- Thursday, Jan. 20 Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," 21-25
Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," 1148-1153
Blog Post Due Midnight Wednesday
- Tuesday, Jan. 25 **No Class: Read Ahead in James**
Volume C Introduction: "American Literature 1865-1914," 1-14
Henry James, *Daisy Miller*, Chs. 1 and 2, 391-409
Blog Post Due Midnight Monday
- Thursday, Jan. 27 Henry James, *Daisy Miller*, Chs. 3 and 4, 409-429; "The Art of Fiction," 918-920
- Tuesday, Feb. 1 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper," "Why I Wrote 'The Yellow Wallpaper?'," 808-820
Blog Post Due Midnight Monday
- Thursday, Feb. 3 Theodore Dreiser, from *Sister Carrie*, 938-954
- Tuesday, Feb. 8 Stephen Crane, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, 957-1000
Blog Post Due Midnight Monday
- Thursday, Feb. 10 W. E. B. Du Bois, from *The Souls of Black Folk*, 893-910
Booker T. Washington, from *Up from Slavery*, 663-687

Modernism

- Tuesday, Feb. 15 Volume D Introduction: "American Literature 1914-1945," 1177-1191
Alain Locke, Preface to *The New Negro**
Countee Cullen, all selections, 2061-2065
Digital Exercise 1 Due
- Thursday, Feb. 17 Langston Hughes, all selections, 2026-2036; "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," 1511-1513
Zora Neale Hurston, "The Eatonville Anthology" and "How It Feels to be Colored Me," 1700-1713
- Tuesday, Feb. 22 Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* Chs. 1-12, 1721-1762
Blog Post Due Midnight Monday
- Thursday, Feb. 24 Nella Larsen, *Quicksand* Chs. 13-25, 1762-1803
- Tuesday, Mar. 1 Jean Toomer, from *Cane*, 1816-1821
- Thursday, Mar. 3 **Midterm Exam**

- Tuesday, Mar. 8 **No Class: Spring Break**
- Thursday, Mar. 10 **No Class: Spring Break**
- Tuesday, Mar. 15 William Carlos Williams, “The Young Housewife,” 1464; “To Elsie,” 1467; “The Red Wheelbarrow,” 1469; “Landscape with the Fall of Icarus,” 1475
Hart Crane, “Chaplinesque,” 1969; “The Bridge,” 1972-1980
Wallace Stevens, “The Emperor of Ice Cream,” 1442; “Anecdote of the Jar,” 1446; “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird,” 1448-9
Blog Post Due Midnight Monday
- Thursday, Mar. 17 T.S. Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” 1577-1580; *The Waste Land*, 1587-1599
- Tuesday, Mar. 22 Ezra Pound, “A Pact,” 1481; “In a Station of the Metro,” 1482; from *The Cantos* I, 1492-1494; from “A Retrospect,” 1505-1507
Blog Post Due Midnight Monday
- Thursday, Mar. 24 F. Scott Fitzgerald, “Babylon Revisited,” 1839-1853
- Tuesday, Mar. 29 William Faulkner, “Barn Burning,” 1955-1968
John Dos Passos, from *U.S.A.*, 1853-1858
Blog Post Due Midnight Monday

Postmodernism

- Thursday, Mar. 31 Volume E Introduction: “American Literature since 1945,” 2083-2096
William Carlos Williams, “Introduction to *Howl*”
Allen Ginsberg, “Howl,” 2576-2583; “A Supermarket in California,” 2584; “America”*
- Tuesday, April 5 Sylvia Plath, “Lady Lazarus,” “Ariel,” “Daddy,” 2701-2705
Adrienne Rich, “Diving into the Wreck,” 2656-2658
Robert Lowell, “Memories of West Street and Lepke,” 2404; “For the Union Dead,” 2407
Digital Exercise 2 Due
- Thursday, April 7 Thomas Pynchon, “Entropy,” 2816-2827
Raymond Carver, “Cathedral,” 2827-2838
- Tuesday, April 12 Don DeLillo, “Pafko at the Wall”
Course Paper Due
- Thursday, April 14 Paul Auster, *Ghosts**
- Tuesday, April 19 Art Spiegelman, from *Maus*, 3090-3108; Additional Chapter from *Maus II**
- Thursday, April 21 **Open Day/TBD**
- Tuesday, April 26 Young-hae Chang Heavy Industries, *Dakota*, <http://yhchang.com/DAKOTA.html>
- Thursday, April 28 Conclusions
- Thursday, May 5 **Final Exam, 8:00-10:00 am**

