

AML2070: Survey of American Literature
“American Mythologies”
Fall 2013 | Section 9788
Matherly 107 | T 5-6, R 6

Instructor: Casey Wilson

Email: kubrtm@ufl.edu

Office Hours: Thursday period 7, or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will explore a number of different “mythologies” – from the American Dream to the Wild West and beyond – that have emerged in American life and American literature over the course of the past two centuries. To that end, we will read broadly, in all senses of the term. Our texts will span time from the nation’s founding to the 21st century, and their authors will come from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences. We will also read across genres and forms, looking at literature for both children and adults, and novels, short stories, poetry, plays, graphic novels, and criticism. The American mythos is diverse and wide-ranging; our reading and discussion will aim to reflect that diversity throughout the semester. In doing so, we will investigate the way that myths of American culture have evolved throughout American history, and how these myths have been used to celebrate, challenge, and critique the American identity from generation to generation. By reading and analyzing these texts, students will emerge from the class with [a broad](#) knowledge of American literature and its historical contexts. Moreover, they will improve their writing and research skills and learn how to effectively create and shape arguments about literature.

This is a General Education course providing student learning outcomes listed in the Undergraduate Catalog: <http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx#learning>

REQUIRED TEXTS

To Purchase:

(Any version is acceptable.)

Anderson, M.T. *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Volume I: The Pox Party.*

Childress, Alice. *Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White.*

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby.*

Hale, Shannon and Dean Hale. *Rapunzel’s Revenge.*

Hinton, S. E. *The Outsiders.*

Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself.*

Leeming, David and Jake Page. *Myths, Legends, & Folktales of America: An Anthology.*

Available Online or Via Course Reserves:

Alexie, Sherman. “Crow Testament”.

---. “How to Write the Great American Indian Novel”.

---. “On the Amtrak from Boston to New York City”.

---. "The Powwow at the End of the World".
---. "What You Pawn I Will Redeem".
Cashman, Nicky. "Politics, Passion, Prejudice: Alice Childress's Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White".
Chang, Diana. "Saying Yes."
---. "A Visit to the Xi'An Exhibition".
---. "We Are the Giants".
Doherty, Thomas. "Harriet Jacobs' Narrative Strategies: 'Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl'".
Honeyman, Susan. "Trick or Treat? Halloween Lore, Passive Consumerism, and the Candy Industry".
Irving, Washington. "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow".
Jefferson, Thomas. *Declaration of Independence*.
---. Selections from *Notes on the State of Virginia*.
O'Connor, Flannery. "A Good Man is Hard to Find".
Palladino, Grace. Selection from *Teenagers*.
Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Black Cat".
Smith, Andrew. "The First Thanksgiving".
Tan, Amy. "Mother Tongue."
---. "Two Kinds".
Ulanowicz, Anastasia. "American Adam, American Cain: Johnny Tremain, Octavian Nothing, and the Fantasy of American Exceptionalism".
Vandenberg, Katrina. "Jack O'Lantern".

ASSIGNMENTS

Extended Close Reading: In this assignment, you will choose a passage from one of the texts we have read and perform an extended close reading in which you analyze and explain the importance of the scene to the text as a whole. (900-1200 words; 10%)

Critical Article Analysis: For this essay, you will find an academic article related to one of the texts we have read this semester and write an essay in response to the author's argument. You must provide a brief summary of the argument, as well as a detailed analysis of its effectiveness and validity. (900-1200 words; 10%)

Mid-Term Exam: The mid-term exam for the course will consist of multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions related to the texts and discussions that we will have completed throughout the first half of the semester. (15%)

Final Paper: Your final paper will be a research paper related to one or more of the themes and texts that we will discuss throughout the semester. This paper must make a nuanced and detailed contribution to the subject you choose; you will be required to incorporate a number of academic sources into your paper to support your thesis. (1500-1800 words; 25%)

Blog Entries: Throughout the semester, you will contribute to the course blog on six separate occasions. In these blog entries, you must offer an interesting topic for

discussion related to that week's readings. These entries must be as thoughtful and original as your formal essays; they will be graded and commented upon privately. You are also responsible for making a substantive comment on a classmate's blog every week. (Entries: 500 words each; Comments: 50 words each; 20%)

Presentation and Paper: Once during the semester, you will partner with a fellow classmate and present on a selection from *Myths, Legends, & Folktales of America*. During this 20-minute presentation, you will briefly summarize the myths represented in your selection. Then you will choose one myth to discuss in more detail, tracing its development throughout American history and its current representation (or lack thereof) in American culture. Each student will separately write a paper that formally details her presentation. (900 words; 10%)

Participation and Quizzes: This grade accounts for in-class discussion, workshops, quizzes, in-class work, and other related activities. (10%)

Grading Scale:

A	4.0	93-100	930-1000	C	2.0	73-76	730-769
A-	3.67	90-92	900-929	C-	1.67	70-72	700-729
B+	3.33	87-89	870-899	D+	1.33	67-69	670-699
B	3.0	83-86	830-869	D	1.0	63-66	630-669
B-	2.67	80-82	800-829	D-	0.67	60-62	600-629
C+	2.33	77-79	770-799	E	0.00	0-59	0-599

Grading Rubric:

A brief overview of how I arrive at the grades for all major assignments is below. We will discuss each assignment in more detail as they arrive.

In each paper, I will evaluate:

- 1) content, including argument, development, and support
- 2) organization, including paragraph structure, overall flow of ideas, transitions
- 3) mechanics, including grammar and style.

You should strive to excel in all three areas; more specific grade breakdowns are as follows:

The A-range essay has strong content, strong organization, AND strong mechanics.

The B-range essay has one key area (content, organization, mechanics) notably in need of revision.

The C-range essay has two key areas (content, organization, mechanics) notably in need of significant revision.

A D-range essay has two or more key areas in need of substantial revision.

An “E” is usually reserved for students who do not do the assignment or fail to attend class. However, an “E” may also be given if an essay blatantly ignores all three areas of evaluation.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory for this course. Consequently, if you miss more than **three** classes during the semester, your grade will drop considerably. Each absence beyond three will lower your overall grade by **50 points**. However, if you miss more than **six** classes, you will **fail** the course. Exempt from this policy are **only** those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays, for which you must provide appropriate documentation in advance of the absence. All other absences are considered equally “excused”; as such, I suggest that you save your absences for when you are truly ill. If you anticipate having a prolonged absence for any reason, please speak with me in advance to make appropriate arrangements.

If you are absent, it is still **your responsibility** to make yourself aware of all class discussions and activities as well as any new developments, such as assignments and due dates. You are still responsible for turning assignments in **on time**. You will not, however, be able to make up any in-class assignments. I will not approach you regarding absences and missing or late assignments; it is your responsibility to speak to me and keep track of your own attendance and assignments.

Late Arrival: Our class is discussion-based, and as such late arrival is both late and disruptive. Class starts **sharply at 11:45 on Tuesday and 12:50 on Thursday**, and anyone not in the room at that time will be counted as tardy. You are allowed two tardies without penalty; any tardy past two will lower your overall grade by **25 points**.

Participation: Participation is a necessary component of your time in this class, and as such will factor into your grade. You are expected to arrive to class prepared, with homework done, articles/books read, and paper and writing utensils at hand. You will work individually, in small groups and in class-wide discussion. I will expect each of you to **actively participate** each day.

Class Discussion: You are expected to add constructively to the conversation we have each day. You will treat the instructor and your fellow classmates with **respect at all times**, especially when you disagree with them. Anyone who breaks that rule will be asked to leave the classroom.

Technology: E-readers will be allowed; this does not include cell phones, which must be put away and on silent during class. Other devices, such as laptops and tablets, will be allowed on a provisional basis. I reserve the right to ban them from the classroom at any time.

Paper Submissions: In order to receive credit for an assignment, you must **follow all guidelines** set out for paper submission. All assignments should be done on a computer and have a professional appearance. (No stains, wrinkles, etc.) This includes proper **MLA formatting**, ranging from font and font size to the heading and margins. Any multi-page assignment turned in via hard copy that is not **stapled** together will lose one letter grade. Any digital papers should be **submitted in PDF format** unless otherwise instructed. Please include your **last name** in the document title for electronic submissions.

Papers due via hard copy will be turned in at the **start of the class** period on the due date. Papers due electronically should be turned in via Sakai by the time that class begins on the due date. **No late assignments will be accepted**, unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Failure of technology (hard drive crashes, printer out of ink, etc.) is not an excuse.

Email Correspondence: This is an English class, so I expect your emails to me to be **professional** and follow rules of grammar and etiquette. Please include proper salutations and a signature that includes your name.

Final Grade Appeals: Concerns about grading on individual assignments **should be addressed to the instructor**. A student who is sure his or her final grade is inaccurate or undeserved may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower grade; the decision is final.

Statement of Composition (C) and Humanities (H) credit: This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition or Humanities. For more information, see:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx>

Statement of Writing requirement (WR): This course can provide 6000 words toward fulfillment of the UF requirement for writing. For more information, see:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/gordon.aspx>

Statement of student disability services: The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Statement on harassment: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/>

Statement on academic honesty: All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

COURSE SCHEDULE

The following schedule is tentative and subject to change throughout the semester. All assignments and readings are due the day they are listed. Check the class blog (linked on Sakai) daily for announcements and updates.

Week One:

8/22/13: Course introduction

Suggested: Begin Reading Octavian Nothing

Week Two:

8/27/13: Founding Father myths

Read: Declaration of Independence; Selections from Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*

Assign: Extended Close Reading

8/29/13: Close reading; Discuss *Octavian Nothing*

Read: *Octavian Nothing*, Parts I and II

Week Three:

9/3/13: Organizational techniques; Example presentation – “Patriotic Heroes”

Read: “American Adam, American Cain: Johnny Tremain, Octavian Nothing, and the Fantasy of American Exceptionalism” by Anastasia Ulanowicz

9/5/13: Continue discussing *Octavian Nothing*

Read: *Octavian Nothing*, Parts III and IV

Week Four:

9/10/13: Paper workshop

Due: Group One Presentation

9/12/13: Discuss papers

Due: Extended Close Reading

Assign: Critical Article Analysis

Week Five:

9/17/13: Begin discussing *Incidents*

Read: *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Chapters 1-20

Due: Group Two Presentation

9/19/13: Introductions

Week Six:

9/24/13: Continue discussing *Incidents*

Read: Finish *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Due: Group Three Presentation

9/26/13: Continue discussing *Incidents*

Read: “Harriet Jacobs’ Narrative Strategies: ‘Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl’” by Thomas Doherty

Week Seven:

10/1/13: How to read poems/short stories

Read: “Two Kinds” and “Mother Tongue” by Amy Tan; “Saying Yes”, “A Visit to the Xi’An Exhibition”, and “We are the Giants” by Diana Chang

Due: Group Four Presentation

10/3/13: **Mid-Term Exam**

Week Eight:

10/8/13: The Jazz Age; Discuss *The Great Gatsby*

Read: *The Great Gatsby*, Chapters I-V

Due: Group Five Presentation

10/10/13: Summary and analysis practice

Week Nine:

10/15/13: Continue discussing *The Great Gatsby*

Read: Finish *The Great Gatsby*

Due: Group Six Presentation

10/17/13: Conclusions

Week Ten:

10/22/13: More on poems/short stories

Read: “What You Pawn I Will Redeem”, “How to Write the Great American Indian Novel”, “On the Amtrak from Boston to New York City”, “The Powwow at the End of the World”, and “Crow Testament” by Sherman Alexie

Due: Group Seven Presentation

10/24/13: Discuss papers

Due: Critical Article Analysis

Assign: Final Papers

Week Eleven:

10/29/13: American horror

Read: “The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe, “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” by Washington Irving, “A Good Man is Hard to Find” by Flannery O’Connor

Due: Group Eight Presentation

10/31/13: Halloween!

Read: “Trick or Treat? Halloween Lore, Passive Consumerism, and the Candy Industry” by Susan Honeyman; “Jack O’Lantern” by Katrina Vandenberg

Week Twelve:

11/5/13: Discuss paper proposals; Research techniques

Due: Group Nine Presentation

Due: Paper Proposals

11/7/13: Discuss *Rapunzel’s Revenge*

Read: *Rapunzel’s Revenge*

Week Thirteen:

11/12/13: The Birth of the Teenager

Read: *The Outsiders*, Chapters 1-5; selection from *Teenagers* by Grace Palladino

11/14/13: Incorporating sources; Review citations

Week Fourteen:

11/19/13: Discuss *The Outsiders*

Read: Finish *The Outsiders*

11/21/13: Paper Conferences

Week Fifteen:

11/26/13: Performing America

Read: “The First Thanksgiving” by Andrew Smith; *Wedding Band* by Alice Childress

11/28/13: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING

Week Sixteen:

12/3/13: Final thoughts

Read: “Politics, Passion, Prejudice: Alice Childress’s *Wedding Band*: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White” by Nicky Cashman

Final Papers Due Monday, December 9 at Noon