

AML 2070: Survey of American Literature
American Historical Narratives

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Section: 1234
MWF 8
MAT 005

Online Syllabus: Canvas

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In an interview with *Time Magazine*, Toni Morrison discusses her career as an author of historical novels, saying: "I'm interested in the way in which the past affects the present and I think that if we understand a good deal more about history, we automatically understand a great deal more about contemporary life." Following Morrison, this class seeks to look at the relationship between the historical and the contemporary. How does our knowledge of history affect our relationship to the present, and similarly, how do contemporary politics limit our access to multiple histories? How do we talk about the historical present (i.e. the making of history)?

In this course, we will read, interpret, and discuss texts from the American literary canon throughout the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. We will pay close attention to the way American authors have frequently reflected on not only the nation's short history, but also the history of American literature itself. Additionally, we will discuss the ways in which the texts contradict or reinforce our own contemporary understandings of American history by considering them in multiple lights: the conversations of the present moment, the historical contexts of each text's publication, and, in some cases, the text's act of *looking back* at an earlier America.

The primary aims of this course are to 1) expose students to the writings of both canonical and non-canonical American authors 2) to engage with the cultural, political, and personal histories of these texts in order to more fully analyze the circumstances of the period in American history 3) to closely read each text (which we will do daily), and 4) to better understand how to write about texts critically.

OUTCOMES

By the end of AML2070, students will be able to:

- Read, write and think critically about American Literature
- Discuss the historical and critical context of various texts
- Use evidence to effectively support argumentative claims or theses
- Develop well-supported, persuasive, polished academic essays
- Establish and support significant historical, literary, and critical or theoretical claims
- Conduct formal research on literature and use secondary sources to support their argument

REQUIRED TEXTS

West, Nathanael. *The Day of the Locust* (ISBN 1604443561)
Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye* (ISBN 0307278441)
Alexie, Sherman. *Flight* (ISBN 0802170374)
Otsuka, Julie. *When the Emperor Was Divine* (ISBN 0385721811)
Plath, Sylvia. *The Bell Jar* (ISBN 0060837020)

Note: You will be assigned various literary readings from online sources. These readings will be posted to the Canvas course page. For any short readings (i.e. poems or excerpts under 10 pages), please print the online material and bring it to class on the day indicated on the course schedule. For longer works, or electronic copies of novels, laptops will be acceptable.

GRADING AND COURSE CREDIT POLICIES

Grading for this course will be rigorous. If an assignment illustrates disregard for spelling, grammar, citation guidelines, or a general carelessness in the writing, the assignment will be failed. Do not rely on your instructor for copyediting, even on drafts.

The writing assignments for this course are designed to meet the minimum requirements of the University Writing Requirement credit. To satisfy this requirement, every assignment must meet the assigned word count. Submitted assignments short of the minimum word count will receive a major point deduction.

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	GPA	Percentage (Point %)
A	4.0	93–100 (98)
A-	3.67	90–92 (91)
B+	3.33	87–89 (88)
B	3.0	83–86 (85)
B-	2.67	80–82 (81)
C+	2.33	77–79 (78)
C	2.0	73–76 (75)
C-	1.67	70–72 (71)
D+	1.33	67–69 (68)
D	1.0	63–66 (65)
D-	0.67	60–62 (61)
E	0.00	0–59 (0)

Grade Meanings

- A Student did what the assignment asked at a high quality level, meeting all of the composition objectives required of the assignment. Additionally, his or her work shows originality, creativity, and demonstrates that the student took extra steps to be original or creative in developing content, solving a problem, or developing a style. Since careful editing and proofreading are essential in writing, papers in the A range must be free of typos and grammatical or mechanical errors.

- B Student did what the assignment asked at a quality level, meeting most of the composition objectives required of the assignment. Work in this range needs revision; however, it is complete in content, is organized well, and shows special attention to style.
- C Student did what the assignment asked, but overlooked some of the composition objectives. Work in this range needs significant revision, but it is complete in content and the organization is logical. The style is straightforward but unremarkable.
- D Student neglected some basic requirements of the assignment, and completed it at a poor quality level. Work in this range needs significant revision. The content is often incomplete and the organization is hard to discern. Attention to style is often nonexistent or chaotic.
- E An E is usually reserved for students who do not do the work or do not come to class. However, if work is shoddy, shows little understanding of the needs of the assignment, and/or an inability to meet the composition objectives, he or she will receive a failing grade

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS (Total Points Possible: 1200)

Participation 50 pts

Homework and Reading Quizzes 85 pts

One of the best ways to become a better writer is to become a more critical reader. To this end, there will be weekly quizzes in order to ensure out-of-class reading. Quizzes will take place during the first ten minutes of class, and will be on the reading assigned for that day. They can be both open and closed book, and they can be both announced and unannounced. There are no make-ups quizzes.

Reading Responses (500 words, 5 entries) 35 pts each

Reading responses should be focused and organized, showing critical thinking and an attempt to integrate ideas into course topics and objectives. Each student is responsible for writing a response to five total readings, and can choose which days to respond; however, responses are due on the day of the reading you are responding to (if you haven't written all of your responses and we no longer have readings, you cannot submit a response). Reading responses will be due at the beginning of class. No late responses will be accepted. Further instructions and sample reading responses will be provided in class.

Essay One: Close Reading (750 words) 100 pts

Choose a passage from a novel or short story we have read in class, or a poem (or section of a poem) to closely read. You will analyze the passage by paying close attention to its composition (diction, syntax, rhyme, rhythm, meter) and will make an argument about the way in which the author's composition influences your thematic reading. This assignment is particularly useful when analyzing poetry. Please contact the instructor before beginning your analysis. More detailed instructions will be provided when the assignment is introduced.

Essay Two: Midterm Paper (1200 words) 200 pts

This assignment will be a thematic analysis of one of the texts we are reading for class. Your essay should incorporate the use of at least two critical sources which speak to similar issues and themes you are exploring in your texts. Consider the ways in which criticism can help you to build your own original arguments on the text. As always, I encourage you to consult with me before you begin the writing process. More detailed instructions will be provided when the assignment is introduced.

Essay Three: Final Paper (1800-2200 words) 300 pts

In this essay, you will use the skills we have built throughout the course and in our previous essays. Your paper should have a strong, clear, and creative argument about a text of your choosing, and should consult both primary and critical sources. This should not be a regurgitation of the issues, ideas, and themes we have discussed in class, but should instead be a result of your own critical thinking on the text.

Three Revisions 100 pts each

Students will all revise three earlier papers based on comments from the instructor and knowledge gained from in-class discussion. Revisions must include a one page memo clearly and effectively outlining the changes you have made to strengthen your new draft. Additionally, students must include their original essay with instructor's comments and should highlight each change made. Where students disagree with comments, please circle the original comment and explain why you are not following it. Revisions should be significantly improved from the original essay, and all changes should be made critically and with clear explanation.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

Attendance and Tardiness

Attendance is required. Each student is allowed three absence with no penalty. 50 points will be deducted from a student's final grade for each subsequent absence. If a student misses more than six periods during a semester, he or she will fail the entire course. For classes in which there is a double block, attendance will be taken twice. Only those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays will be exempt from this policy. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with the instructor prior to the date that will be missed. Students are responsible for keeping track of their own attendance record. The instructor is not responsible for informing students of their attendance record; however, students are encouraged to ask the student for the number of absences they have accrued should they have any concerns.

Note: If students are absent, it is their responsibility to make themselves aware of all due dates. If absent due to a university-sponsored event, students are still responsible for turning assignments in on time.

Tardiness: Students who enter class after the start of class are late and are marked as tardy. Three instances of tardiness count as one absence. Additionally, if you arrive more than 15 minutes late to class, you will be counted as absent for that period. Tardiness disrupts the class and shows a disregard for your instructors and your classmates, so make it a habit to be in your seat when class begins.

Late Work

Students should turn in a copy of his or her essay on the day that it is due, even if he or she cannot make it to class. The mailbox location is listed above; the mailroom is open during regular business hours. A student may e-mail his or her essay for the purpose of avoiding lateness but is still required to turn in a copy for grading. Computer or email problems are not valid excuses for late work; save documents frequently and on multiple disks.

Late work will not be accepted. Any other work that is not turned in by class time on the due date will not be accepted and will automatically count as a zero. Exceptional circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Essay Submission

Students will submit essays BOTH as a hardcopy in class and through Canvas.

- Because I use the reviewing feature in Microsoft Word, papers must be saved in a Word-compatible format, generally .doc or .docx, or .rtf.
- Students should save your papers using your last name and the assignment name as the filename. For example: hunzikerexplication.doc
- Submit through the assignment tab by attaching the document to the assignment page.
- If you are experiencing technical difficulty with the website, print a hard copy of the paper and bring to class and/or email me your assignment. However, you will still need to attach the assignment once the website is running again.

Participation

Everyone is expected to participate in class. Be prepared to discuss the readings, answer questions about them, and ask questions about parts you did not understand. On these occasions, any disruptive or unconstructive behavior will be dealt with strictly. In any case, if students come to class unprepared (e.g., without the required materials) and unable to participate, his or her participation grade will be penalized and he or she may be dismissed from class for the day.

Classroom Disruptions

Common courtesy is mandatory in our classroom. Silence all cell phones, pagers, alarms, and so on when you enter the classroom; noise distractions are rude and interrupt everyone's learning. If students are found text messaging in class, he or she will be asked to leave and will receive an absence for the day. Sleeping, talking in private conversations, and reading other material are also inappropriate behaviors during class time. Students will not need to use a laptop for this class, so please put it away before class begins. Disciplinary action (dismissal from the classroom, grade deduction, and beyond) will be taken if a student disrupts the learning environment in any way.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits plagiarism and defines it as follows:

"Plagiarism. A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Quoting oral or written materials including but not limited to those found on the Internet, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
2. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student."

(University of Florida, Student Honor Code, 8 July 2011)

University of Florida students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire Student Honor Code.

Important Tip: You should never copy and paste something from the Internet without providing the exact location from which it came.

Classroom Behavior

Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about may engage controversial topics and opinions.

Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from the class.

Students with Disabilities

The University of Florida complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students requesting accommodation should contact the Students with Disabilities Office in Peabody 202. That office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

TENTATIVE READING SCHEDULE (Readings are due on the day that they appear)

Week 1:

- 8.24 Course Introduction; Syllabus Overview
- 8.26 Diagnostic Essay
- 8.28 Syllabus Quiz; Defining the beginnings of American Literature and Settler Colonialism; “Iroquois Creation Story” (translated 1816); Phillis Wheatley “on Being Brought from Africa to America” (1773), “To His Excellency General Washington” (1776) (Canvas)

Week 2:

- 8.31 Native American autobiography; William Apess, “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man” (1833); Andrew Jackson, “Message of the President of the United States to Both Houses of Congress at the Commencement of the Second Session of the Twenty-First Congress, December 7, 1830” (1830)
- 9.2 Black Hawk, “Life of Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak, or Black Hawk” (1882) (excerpt on Canvas)
- 9.4 Lydia Huntley Sigourney, “Indian Names” (1841); Lydia Maria Child, *Hobomok: A Tale of Early Times* (1824) (excerpt on Canvas)

Week 3:

- 9.7 NO CLASS-Holiday
- 9.9 Introduction to Slave Narratives; Harriet Jacobs, “Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl” (1861) (excerpt on Canvas)

9.11 Harriet Jacobs, "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl" (1861)

Week 4:

9.14 Discuss E1: Writing and Organization Strategies

9.16 Walt Whitman, "Preface" to *Leaves of Grass* (1855) (Canvas)

9.18 Discuss E1: Summary/Analysis

Week 5:

9.21 E1 DRAFT DUE; Peer Review

9.23 E1 DUE; Emily Dickinson, "Success is counted sweetest," (1859) "A narrow Fellow in the Grass"// "Texts from Emily Dickinson"

9.25 Washington Irving, "Rip Van Winkle" (1819) (Canvas)

Week 6:

9.28 Stephen Crane, "War is Kind" (1899), "The Two Wars as Historical Markers" (Canvas) T.S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men" (1925)

9.30 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Babylon Revisited" (1931)

10.2 Nathanael West, *The Day of the Locust* (1939)

Week 7:

10.5 Nathanael West, *The Day of the Locust* (1939)

10.7 Bienvenido N. Santos, "Scent of Apples" (1955) (Canvas)

10.9 James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues" (1957); Langston Hughes "Social Poet" (1947) (on Canvas)

Week 8:

10.12 R1 DUE; Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963)

10.14 Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963)

10.16 Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963)

Week 9:

10.19 Discuss E2; Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963)

10.21 Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963)

10.23 Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (1970)

Week 10:

10.26 E2 DRAFT DUE; Peer Review; Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (1970)

10.28 E2 DUE; Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (1970)

10.30 Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (1970)

Week 11:

11.2 Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (1970)

11.4 Leslie Marmon Silko, "Lullaby" (1981), *Storyteller* (1981) (excerpt on Canvas)

11.6 NO CLASS; Homecoming

Week 12:

11.9 Julie Otsuka, *When the Emperor Was Divine* (2002)

11.11 NO CLASS; Holiday

11.13 Julie Otsuka, *When the Emperor Was Divine* (2002)

Week 13:

11.16 R2 DUE; Julie Otsuka, *When the Emperor Was Divine* (2002)

11.18 Sherman Alexie, "What You Pawn I Shall Redeem"

11.20 E3 DRAFT DUE; Peer Review; Sherman Alexie, *Flight* (2008)

Week 14:

11.23 E3 DUE; Sherman Alexie, *Flight* (2008)

11.25 NO CLASS; Thanksgiving

11.27 NO CLASS; Thanksgiving

Week 15:

11.30 Sherman Alexie, *Flight* (2008)

12.2 Sherman Alexie, *Flight* (2008)

12.4 Sherman Alexie, *Flight* (2008)

Week 16: Final Papers Due

12.7 R3 DRAFT DUE; Peer Review

12.9 R3 DUE