ENGL 3006W: Survey of American Literatures and Cultures II

Sara Berrey

Syllabus, Assignments, and Reading Schedule

Course Description:

English 3006 surveys American literature from 1850 to 1950. Beginning with rapid industrialization, bubbling over with social and economic upheavals (including minority and women’s rights), and encompassing three major wars (the Civil War and the two World Wars), this time period is especially exciting for American literary production. This class will engage questions of national literature as expressed, developed, and critiqued in the literature’s contemporary and today’s current debates. The work required for this class will center your attention on developing reading and writing skills, especially useful in the humanities. As an upper-level Writing-Intensive course, textual analysis will be paired with secondary research with continued attention on writing skills. This class will be challenging not only in its required workload, but in the issues of identity, representation, culture, politics, and art that literature dictates that we discuss.

Course Objectives:

- explore our national culture(s) as represented in literature
- situate literature historically, culturally, and aesthetically
- learn the basics of literary analysis: aspects of narrative, style, genre, etc.
- explore diverse methodologies and perspectives, including research, for the analysis of literary sources
- develop writing skills especially as appropriate for the English studies discipline
- nurture a curiosity for reading and interpretation

Required Texts:

- *101 Great American Poems*, Dover, isbn: 0486401588
- Walt Whitman. “Song of Myself.” from *Leaves of Grass*. Dover, isbn: 0486414108
- *Short Stories by American Women*. Dover, isbn: 0486287769
- Zora Neale Hurston. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. isbn: 0060916508
- Ernest Hemingway. *A Farwell to Arms*. Scribner, isbn: 0684801469
- F. Scott Fitzgerald. *Tender is the Night*. Scribner, isbn: 068480154x
Assignments:

Readings:
You are responsible for all the readings on the syllabus. You should complete each reading before class. I advise you to read ahead.

Paper 1: “Definition Essay: OED Assignment” (2-page essay)
Choose a “heavy word” from Whitman or Dickinson. Look it up in the Oxford English Dictionary. Write a 2-page, double-spaced essay that shows how the definition helps bring meaning to the poem. For example, examine the various entries carefully and use the information found in the OED that gives the history of the word and its meaning(s). When did it first enter the language? In what citation does it first appear? What are the various meanings? Which meanings are now obsolete? Then, write your essay addressing the most important question: How does the OED information help you better understand the poem? Condense the information down into a concise report, quoting verbatim from the OED and your chosen poem.

Paper 2: “Informed Opinion Essay: Article Review and Critique” (2- to 3-page essay)
Choose one of the following books: Moby Dick, Pudd’nhead Wilson, or The Turn of the Screw. Choose one of the critical essays in your edition. Formulate a thesis (a debatable position) that responds to and presents a critique of the scholar’s ideas. Present the main points of the scholar’s argument. Challenge some aspect of the scholar’s argument by offering alternative readings of the text, recounting possible gaps in the scholar’s ideas, etc. Consider this an intellectual debate rather than an adversarial one. You should quote from both your chosen essay and novel.

Paper 3: “Precision Essay: Close Analysis” (2-page essay)
Choose one or two poems and/or short stories. Write a thesis-oriented essay that develops your interpretation of the text, or an aspect of the text. Be sure build your argument using claims, evidence, and analysis. A close analysis must be grounded in the text but relies on your informed opinions to make meaning. Do not use any research for this essay. Quote sparingly from your text.

Choose one of the following books: Their Eyes Were Watching God, A Farwell to Arms, or Tender is the Night. Choose at least one critical essay that you deem scholarly and appropriate. Essays may be culled from books or journals. Some search engines that may help you locate journal articles are MLA, J-Store, and ERIC. Write a thesis-oriented (debatable) essay that develops your interpretation of the text, or an aspect of the text while using your essay(s) to help
you. Essays may be used in a variety of ways; they may be used to bolster your opinion, shed light on a particularly issue within your interpretation, operate as a foil that you contrast with your own analysis, introduce your interpretation as a germ from which you continue that trajectory or stray, etc. You may use your essay a lot, or you may only mention it once. How, and to what extent, you include the essay is up to you. You will probably need to read a number of essays before you choose yours.

Paper 5: “Conference Paper: Revision and Addendum” (revised 5-page Paper 4 essay and 2- to 3-page addendum essay)
For the “Revision” part of this paper, revise your Paper 4. Most cases of revision involve tightening the interpretation, addressing additional issues (especially those that may seem contrary to the interpretation), re-working the integration of evidence, and tightening prose. For the “Addendum” part of your paper, choose one of the following: the film, *The Street*, or *Catcher in the Rye*. Write a separate “Addendum” essay explaining how your Paper 4 would be altered by considering your newly chosen text. For example, how does your chosen text reinforce, challenge, or reverse the arguments made in Paper 4? This Addendum may engage the overarching interpretation of your Paper 4 or address one aspect of it.

Literary Expert Presentation (5-10 minutes, 1-page reference sheet)
You are responsible for a giving a short talk about a literary aspect of one text. You may choose to focus on a character, setting, narrative strategy, symbol(s), imagery, theme, etc. You should be able to explain your topic, cite examples from the text, and show its significance to the text at large. Type a 1-page reference sheet to help you keep track of your ideas; this handout can be informal, a bulleted list, or whatever style you prefer. You will hand in this sheet, which will be returned with your presentation grade. You will sign up for your text on the second day of class.

Extra Credit Secondary Research Presentation (5-10 minutes, 1-page reference sheet):
For extra credit you may find a scholarly article on the text we are reading and summarize the essay for the class. You are responsible for finding the essay, outlining its main points, and stating your opinion regarding its possible successes and failures.

Note on Papers: Turn in all papers with all pre-writing activities and drafts; these all count toward your paper grade. Staple your paper together with these documents or use a folder to contain them. All papers should be typed, double-spaced, and with reasonable margins and fonts. Title your papers. Follow MLA guidelines.

Late Work: Late assignments will not be accepted unless you have permission from me in advance, in person, and in writing. A late paper will be penalized one letter step for every day it is late. Since we have assignments due over email, every hour late will be penalized one percentage point (up to three) until it is a day late; then, the above rules apply. No assignments, including formal papers, will be accepted after one week—no exceptions. If you know you are going to miss a class in which an assignment is due, turn in the assignment early.
There are no tests in this course.

Grading:

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<tr>
<td>Paper 1</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
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<td>Paper 2, 3, 4, 5</td>
<td>200 pts each</td>
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<td>Required Presentation</td>
<td>50 pts</td>
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<td>Extra Credit Presentation</td>
<td>25 pts</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
<td>50 pts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Participation includes in-class discussion, pre-class preparation, and any impromptu assignments. Regular participation will typically earn you a C. Students who are prepared with speaking points, questions, quotes ready to discuss, etc. will boost their participation grade.</td>
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<td>Attendance</td>
<td>Attendance is not part of your grade. You are expected to be in class. You may miss one class without penalty. For every class that you miss after that, you will lose 3 percentage points off your course grade; this amounts to approximately a letter step (dropping a plus, straight letter, or minus) every week of absence. In accordance with CLA policy, missing three weeks of class result in failure and you will be advised to withdraw. Medical or family emergencies must be accompanied with a doctor’s note upon return to class. Tardiness or unpreparedness may constitute an absence. Generally two tardy days equal one day absent.</td>
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Reading Schedule:

T, Jan 17  
Introduction to Survey of American Literature II  
Dickinson & Whitman

T, Jan 24  
Dickinson: read poems in *101 American Poems* and handout  
Whitman: read “Song of Myself”

T, Jan 31  
Melville’s *Moby Dick* (up to Chapter 55, pg. 214)

T, Feb 7  
Melville’s *Moby Dick* (finished)

T, Feb 14  
Twain’s *Pudd’nhead Wilson*
T, Feb 21    James’s *The Turn of the Screw*

Paper 2: Outline with phrases indicating claims, evidence, analysis due in class for Peer Review

T, Feb 28    American Women’s Short Stories: TBA

Paper 2: Article Review and Critique due in class

T, March 7   American Modern Poetry: TBA
T, March 14  SPRING BREAK

T, March 21  Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

T, March 28  Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms*

T, April 4   Fitzgerald’s *Tender is the Night*

TUESDAY by noon: Proposal (including topic and possible thesis) for Paper 4 due in email body to <sberrey@umn.edu>

T, April 11  Film: TBA

TUESDAY, April 11, in class: Draft of Paper 4 due for Peer Review and

FRIDAY, April 14, noon: Paper 4: Critical Essay with Research due, hard-copy delivered to 330b Lind mailbox or 110 Lind office

T, April 18  Petry’s *The Street*

T, April 25  Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*

T, May 2     CONFERENCE

T, May 9     Paper 5: Revision and Addendum due, hard-copy delivered to 330b Lind mailbox or 110 Lind office by noon.