American Literature: Celebrating Identity Formations (Fall 2014)

English 2329-014 Office Hrs: Roemer: 1:30-3 T/TH + by appt. 405 Carlisle Mccown: 1-2 Monday; 9-10 T/TH 412 Carlisle

Instructor: Dr. Kenneth Roemer Hicks: 12-1 Wed.; 12:30—1:30 T/TH 607 Carlisle

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T/TH 11-12:20; Location: Nedderman 106 Hicks: [chicks@uta.edu](mailto:brittain@uta.edu)

Note: This syllabus is your roadmap. Bring a copy of it to class with you. *Your @mavs.uta.edu email will be the primary means of out-of-class communication. Be sure to check your @mav.uta.edu account regularly.*

NATURE OF THE COURSE

This course is not an "introduction" to or "survey" of American Literature. (English 3340 is the survey.) Instead it introduces students to a chronological selection of significant American works that contributed to an on-going dialogue about defining American identities (i.e., the characteristics by/with which a person or group defines him/her/them self(ves) and or is recognized). This dialogue is often a fascinating index to important American cultural and aesthetic values. Despite the selectivity of the readings, the course examines a broad range of time periods, genres (oral literature, exploration accounts, letters, essays, autobiographies, poetry, and fiction), geographical areas, and perspectives shaped by different life stage, gender, class, and ethnic backgrounds.

GOALS, MEANS, ASSESSMENT, AND CORE REQUIREMENTS

By the end of the semester, students who have successfully completed the assignments should: (1) have a basic knowledge of twenty significant American texts, and (2) have the ability to consider how various historical periods, literary forms, concepts of audience, environments, and personal, economic, and cultural backgrounds have influenced how Americans imagine and communicate concepts of who they are. Lectures, class discussion, small group discussions and the brief short-answer tests and essay exams will be the primary means of achieving these goals. The identity experiment, papers support the goals, especially goal two. But they also offer opportunities to help students to (3) examine how they form their identities from stories, “facts,” and personal memories (identity experiment and first paper) and (4) examine how personal experiences, values, and ideas shape their reading identities. See also the *criteria* statements related to each of the in-class and out-of-class assignments and the *approximate grade weights statement*.

This course satisfies the University of Texas at Arlington core curriculum requirements in Language, Philosophy, and Culture. The required objectives of these courses are the development of students’ critical thinking, communication skills, personal responsibility, and social responsibility. Many elements of this course foster development of these objectives, which are explicitly addressed in the “Signature Assignment” (see below). The Departmental guidelines for sophomore literature can be found by typing “sophomore literature” in the “Search UT Arlington” box on the University website: http://www.uta.edu/uta.

REQUIRED READINGS

Pace yourself. Read ahead of schedule. **The two longest assignments come after mid- semester.**

-- Selected Readings (SR) from the Course Packet available at the Bookstore

**Note: The packet includes groups discussion questions and blank pages for note taking before and during class.**

-- Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

-- Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (selections)

-- Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

-- Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima*

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, READINGS, EXAMS, PAPERS

**Note: There will be a very short and simple quiz at the beginning of almost every Thursday class (i.e., 10-12 tests). It will typically cover the previous Tuesday class and reading and the assignment for that Thursday. So, be on time.**

Introduction to the course & An Identity Experiment 8/21

**Identity Experiment Exercise Due 8/28**

A Tribal, Multi-Cultural, Multi-Century Identity: Momaday's *WTRM* 8/26, 28; 9/2

18th - 19th Century Identities in Exploration Tracts, Letters, Lists, Autobiography, Fiction, and Poems

Godly Identities: By Extreme Chance, During Suffering, and By Resolution

Readings: de Vaca (exploration/survival narrative, SR),

Bradstreet (letter SR), Edwards (resolutions SR) 9/4, 9

**1st Paper Due (*WTRM* Inventive Modeling) 9/9**

A Planned (sort of) Perfect American Identity

Reading: Franklin (autobiography SR) 9/11

What Is an American?

Reading: Crèvecoeur (SR) 9/16 Return / Discuss Papers 9/16

An Intellectual Declaration of American Independence

Reading: Emerson (speech SR) 9/18

1nd Exam study Sheet Posted on e-mail 9/18

**1nd Exam 9/23**

Return / Discuss Exams 9/30

To What Degree Is Identity a Matter of Choice?

Readings:

Douglass (male slave narrative; focus chs. 1, 5, 10, 11) 9/25, 30

Jacobs (female slave narrative SR) 10/2

Thoreau (philosophical essay/autobiography SR) 10/7, 9

Melville (fiction, short story + “All Astir” SR) 10/14, 16

Whitman (poem SR) 10/21

2rd Exam Study Sheet Posted on e-mail 10/21

**2rd Exam 10/23**

Return / Discuss Exams 10/30

20th-Century Identities in Shaped by Genre, Generation, Gender, Region, and Race

Two Souths: Town & Country . . . Black & White/Black/Indian

Readings:

Hurston (novel) 10/28, 30, [11/4] Faulkner (short story/novel SR) 11/4. 6

A Young Girl’s Identity Via a Lost Chinese Aunt

Reading: Kingston (autobiography/imagined biography) 11/11

A Mexican American Boy Child’s Magical Dilemma in an

In-between World of Mixed Families, Landscapes, and Religions

Reading: Anaya (novel by a shaman) 11/13, 18, 20

**2nd Paper Due 11/25**

Thanksgiving Holiday 11/27

Native Identities in “Fact” and and “Myth”

Reading: Hogan (poem) Silko (short story SR) 11/25, [12/2]

Papers Returned / Discussed 12/2

3th Exam Study Sheet Posted on E-mail 12/2

**3th Exam 12/9 [11-1:30]**

Note: for all the exams and papers: 90-100 = A; 80-89 = B; 70-79 = C; 60-69 = D; and below 60 = F. Unfortunately, UTA does not indicate pluses and minuses for the final semester grades, grades on all the essay exams and paper assignments will include pluses and/ or minuses. Under normal circumstances, no make-up exams will be given and no late papers or e-mailed papers will be accepted. To be approved, the exceptions must be supported with appropriate documentation.

IDENTITY EXPERIMENT (Due 8/28)

I will describe the nature of this out-of-class writing assignment and provide an example the first day of class.

*Grading Criteria*

A = two sets of contrasting columns with excellent detail that invites readers to imagine different identities for you

B = two contrasting sets with sufficient detail

C = two sets, contrasts unclear, some detail

D = two sets, contrasts unclear, vague language

F = one set, contrasts unclear, vague language

0 = not turned in on time.

SHORT-ANSWER TESTS AT THE VERY BEGINNING OF CLASS

Except for the first week and when we have essay exams, there will be a brief short-answer exam almost every Thursday (i.e., 10-12 exams). The exams will consist of five simple questions: typically two or three from the previous Tuesday class’s discussion and reading assignment and two or three from that Thursday’s reading assignment: for example, We might ask students to identify a character name, ask for a brief comment on a concept we discussed, or ask a question about an important event in the text. The answers might be as short as one word or as long as a sentence. **Buy one Blue Book for all these exams.** The exams will be graded 0-5. At the end of the semester the scores will be averaged ( 5=A (100); 4=B (85); 3=C (75); 2=D (65); 1=F (55); 0 for not taking the exam) and the average of the 0 - 5 numbers will be converted into standard grades (e.g., a 4 average will be an 85). *Grading criteria*: either you know it or you don’t!

ESSAY EXAMS (See dates above.)

Each exam will cover the previous untested material; the third exam will not be comprehensive. The class before each exam, a detailed study sheet for the exam will be distributed via students’ @mavs.uta.edu e-mail accounts. The other exams will also be applications of our discussions to the reading assignments with a focus limited to separate discussions of individual texts or a focus that requires comparisons of texts.

*Grading criteria*

Demonstrated the ability to (1) focus arguments on the exam questions; (2) construct logical arguments; and (3) support claims with relevant examples. Although your "mechanical/editorial" writing skills will be taken into account, they will be examined more closely on the two papers than on the in-class essays.

FIRST PAPER (Due:9/9)

You will use *WTRM* as a model for your own autobiographical writing (one three-“voice” section). Examples of length and quality from previous classes will be distributed.

*Grading criteria*

Demonstration of your ability to: (1) **utilize Momaday’s three “voice” form** (cultural, community, or family storytelling; historical or descriptive “factual”; personal memory): [Ask yourself does the *first voice* have a narrative (a beginning, middle, and end?) Is there something wonderful, strange, unusual or exciting about the story? Did you use an opening convention?] Does the *second voice* describe a particular place, time, fact, or object that will help a reader understand the origins or contexts of the story? Does the third voice present a personal experience that suggests how the story in voice one and the “facts” in voice two are part of your life in significant ways? Finally, do the three voices relate to each other in (a) significant way[s)?] (2) use **relevant and sufficient details** that invite the reader to become engaged with each voice: [Ask yourself does your writing help the reader to imagine the events, people, and objects of the story, history, and memory]; and (3) **use acceptable** sentence and paragraph structure, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

SECOND PAPER: THE SIGNATURE ASSIGNMENT (Due: 11/25)

Overview

The signature assignment addresses all four of the course University prescribed objectives. **Personal responsibility**: This essay includes the integration of outside sources; it, therefore, requires students to demonstrate personal responsibility as they use the words and ideas of other writers in an accurate and ethical manner. Citing sources properly isn’t just a matter of mechanics. It’s a question of personal responsibility (with real consequences for students) that overlaps with students’ responsibility to the academic community of which they are a part. The construction of a clearly articulated thesis statement supported by a careful analysis of textual evidence demonstrates **critical thinking** and **communication skills**. The development of a well-organized essay that demonstrates the correct use of grammar and other writing mechanics and demonstrates an awareness of the how to appeal convincingly to an audience further addresses the communication objective. The critical analysis of the way the selected text engages a significant issue of social responsibility related to identity formation addresses the **social responsibility** outcome.

Specific Requirements

Write a well-organized, effectively developed 4-5 page (approximately 1000 – 1250 words) analysis of one of the texts, other than *The Way to Rainy Mountain,* assigned in this course. (There will be an additional MLA style formatted Works Cited page.)

*Grading Criteria and Instructions*

The paper requires students to demonstrate three types of *communication skills* related to social and personal responsibility: description, critical thinking, and application. (1) *Description*: Describe, within your chosen text, (a) one or two variables that limited and/or promoted the ability of an individual (or groups of individuals) to develop their identities and (b) how those variables affected (positively or negatively) the individual(s) position in society. Possible variables relating to identity formation and *social responsibility* may include (but are not limited to) religion, physical environment, family background, culture, race, gender, age, and socio-economic status. (2) *Critical Thinking/Analysis*: How effective are the author’s use of examples, claims, and/or arguments in defining the impact of the variable(s) to shape an individual’s (or groups of individuals’) identity and position in society. (3) *Application*: To what degree has/have the variable(s) you described and analyzed promoted or limited your ability to shape your identity and establish your position in society.

In a brief introductory paragraph, you should anchor your paper’s argument about the variable(s) and the limitation/promotion of identity with a clearly articulated thesis statement (which can be more than one sentence) that incorporates all three elements of the paper. Whether you devote one or more paragraphs to each of the three elements in the body of the paper (description, analysis, application) will depend on the nature and number of variables you select. The application element should be featured in the concluding paragraph. *Support your descriptive and analytical claims with appropriate examples from the text you selected and with appropriate information or quotations from the required two secondary sources*. *Support the application section with appropriate examples from your experience.* We will expect the use of coherent sentences and paragraphs, and grammar, spelling, and punctuation appropriate for a sophomore English curse

Responsible Integration of Sources (personal responsibility)

Students must properly integrate material from two secondary sources into their analysis in a way that gives credit to the authors whose ideas and language they are incorporating. This is not a research paper or a summary of the work of literature, but a paper in which students draw on the selected text and secondary sources to communicate an interpretive argument about their chosen text through the lens of social responsibility. The Library offers a quick, on-line plagiarism tutorial: <http://library.uta.edu/plagiarism/> **Take the tutorial; print out the “Results” page, and attach it to your Works Cited page.**

Appropriate Secondary Sources**:**

* National newspapers (e.g., *New York Times, Washington Post, USA Today, Dallas Morning News, Fort Worth Star Telegram*)
* Print magazines (e.g., *The Atlantic, Harper’s, New Yorker, Time, Newsweek*)
* Online magazines (e.g., *Slate, Salon*)
* Scholarly articles (e.g., academic articles published in peer-reviewed journals; you can find citations for these articles by using the MLA International Bibliography database, JSTOR, or Project Muse—all of which UTA’s library gives you access to online)
* Scholarly books or book chapters (it’s a good bet a book is scholarly if it’s published by an academic press, such as Duke University Press; if you’re not sure, ask your instructor)
* Historical documents (e.g., old newspaper articles, letters, speeches, journal entries) from academic databases (see the History subject guide on the library website for ideas)

Students interested in using a source that isn’t listed here, should check with the instructors.

The criteria indicated above were designed for this course. The general criteria to receive a passing grade are the following for all the sophomore English courses except Englsh 2350: Your essay should be a Word document that is double spaced, with 1-inch margins, in 12-pt., Times New Roman (or some other easily readable) font. Follow the MLA’s recommendations for formatting, citation, and style. **Here is a direct link to the Library’s excellent guide to MLA format**: [http://www.uta.edu/library/help/files/cite-mla.pdf](https://owa.uta.edu/owa/roemer@exchange.uta.edu/redir.aspx?C=uzj-1XqtIUCJWWyKmGp-4nnySVV2gNFI5HMGjTbLoEtPG0eO0z5j_nK53W9YZ1WJyZcDO0cj5z4.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.uta.edu%2flibrary%2fhelp%2ffiles%2fcite-mla.pdf)

In order to receive a passing grade on the signature assignment, students *must*

1. write an essay that is at least 4 pages long, but no more than 5
2. integrate two appropriate sources
3. have a thesis
4. have a title
5. incorporate evidence (i.e., quotations) from the literary text
6. have a Works Cited page using MLA form

GRADING WEIGHTS & KEEPING TRACK OF YOUR GRADES

*Assignment % Your Grades*

Identity Experiment 5% ( )

Short-answer exams 15% ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

1st Exam 10% ( ) [Important general advice:

2nd Exam 15% ( ) **Be sure to retain copies of all your work**.]

3rd Exam 20% ( )

1st Paper 10% ( )

2nd Paper 25% ( )

IMPORTANT CLASS AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES

***Constructive Warnings****:* (1) **Plagiarism** will be handled according to University disciplinary procedures. Consult the UTA Library’s plagiarism tutorial available at: <http://library.uta.edu/plagiarism/>. (2) **If you plan to withdraw**, you must follow University procedures. Professors cannot drop students; if they disappear without dropping, they receive F semester grades. (3) As noted above, under normal circumstances, **I do not prepare make-up exams or accept late or e-mailed work**. To be approved, the exceptions must be supported with appropriate documentation. (4) The use of laptops and other electronic devices will not be allowed in class; they are often used for non-class related activities and distract other students. Exceptions to this rule will be approved with documentation related to disabilities. (5) Because the classes involve small-group and class discussions, **attendance is important**. Some of the quiz questions and essay test questions will be taken from these discussions. (6) Leaving before the end of class can insult the instructors and disturb the students; however, brief visits to restrooms are permissible (we don’t want to damage anyone’s kidneys).

***Encouragement****:*(1) Class participation and improvement can be important factors in elevating the semester grade. (2) I am very willing to accommodate students with disabilities. These students should identify themselves at the beginning of the semester and provide me with authorized documentation from the appropriate University office (e.g., the Office for Students with Disabilities, 817-272-3364). (3) UTA follows Federal non-discrimination guidelines, including Title IX, which prohibits gender discrimination. (4) Students needing academic counseling should consult their Undergraduate Advisor; for other types of counseling, contact the Office of University College Hotline (817-272-6107). To prepare for emergencies, be aware of classroom exits. For on campus problems requiring police assistance, dial 817-272-3003

INFORMATION ABOUT THE FOUR GUEST LECTURERS

1 2 3 4

*Mother* From wealthy family Worked as a maid, Prolific artist, Very poor speller

(chauffer, maids, her At one time so poor Author of several books, Never passed an

mother’s parents rented she had to dig clams Received numerous entrance test

Carnegie Hall for her to feed her children awards Disliked oil

mother to perform) painting

*Father* His father owned the So desperate for a job Published author, Research

Packard that carried that he was willing to lover of German engineer (worked

Charles Lindberg in teach 7 courses and literature, on secret anti-

his ticker-tape parade. drive the school’s bus talented comic gravity project

He graduated from for $25 a week. Illustrator during WW II)

Harvard. Rarely read long

books

*Lecturer* Harvard graduate, Worked for $10 Writer who was Very poor speller

Graduate of other Ivy a week, in Gallup, NM Nominated for a Slow reader,

League programs, Farmhand on a hay Pulitzer, Avoided Has traveled to Vienna, and sod farm. His books include “outside of class”

Lisbon, Tokyo, and First car cost $1 one that offers reading and

many other inter- (it was a stolen poetry and favored short

national cities, car). photography, illustrated books

During the 90’s Spouse was a Won two “Writer Football captain, spent more than minimum wage of the Year” awards, 4.0 average in

$200,000 on his cashier at a Composes songs science courses children’s college discount store in college

education,

Spouse has given

billions of dollars