ENGL 2329-015: American Literature

**Instructor:** Connor Stratman

**Day/Time/Room:** T-TR 12:30 – 1:50 PM, TH 20

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**Office:** Carlisle Hall 607

**Office Hours:** Tuesday 10:30am-12:00pm, or by appointment

**Course Description:**

If America is currently in crisis mode, it is largely a crisis of relationships. Whether it is race, class, gender, sexuality, national origin, species, or something simply personal and intimate, American culture, it is increasingly apparent, is full of barriers and boundaries. And yet, ironically, these barriers and boundaries are *porous*, full of holes and cracks. It is in these holes that both conflict and (non)resolution occur, because it is in these cracks and barriers that people and the world come into contact. One of these cracks is literature. Literature, particularly American literature, explores and sometimes shrinks the boundaries between people and places. I want us to examine through literary texts how multiple forms of identity clash and coalesce, form and reform, forcing us to reexamine the relationships we have with each other, our environment, and ourselves. Throughout the semester we will be exploring literature that spans the early twentieth century to today. By doing so, we can think through questions of how it is that humans relate to each other, perhaps leading to some ideas of how we can do so better in this time of crisis.

**This course satisfies the University of Texas at Arlington core curriculum requirements in Language, Philosophy, and Culture. The required objectives of these core courses are the development of students’ critical thinking, communication skills, personal responsibility, and social responsibility.**

# Core Objectives:

Critical Thinking Skills: To include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.

Communication Skills: To include effective development and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.

Teamwork: To include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.

Personal Responsibility: To include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.

# Course Goals:

* To encourage students to see that literary studies matter and to foster enjoyment of literature, as students engage with ideas and beliefs in ways that extend beyond English classes.
* To help students recognize that literature does not occur as isolated literary events, but as complex dialogue within cultural and historical contexts.
* To develop students' ability to read critically by studying a variety of literary elements.

# Student Learning Outcomes:

* Students should be able to demonstrate their understanding of and their ability to analyze literary texts both in writing and in online written discussion.
* Students should be able to demonstrate their knowledge of a variety of literary terms and elements.
* Students should be able to identify a variety of literary elements within literary texts.
* Students should be able to conduct research using the Internet and UTA Library resources.
* Students should be able to demonstrate ability to utilize technology in a variety of forms.

**Required Texts:**

Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* ISBN: 0-06-091650-8

Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead* ISBN: 0-312-42440-X

Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* ISBN: 978-1594483295

Additional readings available on Blackboard (BB)

**Description of Major Assignments**

**Readings:** Complete all reading selections by the discussion date and come to class prepared to say something about the text. Keep in mind that we will be reading a few novels, a couple of which are rather lengthy, so it is advisable to read ahead.

**Quizzes:** In order to ensure that class discussions are productive and that everyone is keeping up with the reading, we will have occasional quizzes. These quizzes will remain occasional unless it becomes abundantly clear to me that people aren’t keeping up with the reading. If such an unfortunate circumstance occurs, quizzes will become a daily occurrence.

**Daily Work:** This category includes any in-class activities, including in-class writings, discussions, group work, and presentations.

*Presentations:* As a way to foster discussion and dialogue, two students per class meeting will prepare 3-5 minutes worth of commentary on the reading(s) for that meeting.

**Essays:** There will be two (2) major essay assignments. The first essay will be a short (4-5) page analysis essay that compares and/or contrasts two of the texts we will have read up to that point based on a particular theme. The second major essay (6-7 pages) will be the Signature Assignment, which can be found in the Appendix to this syllabus.

**Exams:** There will be two exams during the semester. The first (the midterm) will cover only the first half of the course and the other is a final exam, which may include questions about the second half of the course and will certainly include some more comprehensive questions addressing issues of the class as a whole and asking you to make connections across the different sections of the class. For these exams you will be responsible for the texts, class discussions, and any lectures I give. You are responsible for bringing blue/green books and pencils/pens to take the exams.

**Grading:**

The course grade will be determined as follows:

Daily Work 10%

Quizzes 10%

Essay #1 20%

Essay #2 (Signature Assignment) 20%

Midterm 20%

Final Exam 20%

**All papers and exams** must be completed to receive credit for the course.

In accordance with the UTA undergraduate catalogue, final grades are as follows:

90-100%: A

80-89%: B

70-79%: C

60-69%: D

Below 60%: F

**Turning in Assignments to Blackboard:** All major essay assignments in this course will be submitted to Blackboard. I will not accept any assignments via e-mail. All assignments submitted to Blackboard must be saved as a .doc or .docx file to ensure that I am able to open them on my computer. It is your responsibility to ensure that all of your work is saved in this way and submitted in the correct format. If you submit work in the wrong format, then you will receive a zero for the assignment.

**Grade Grievances:** The English Department has a set of procedures that students must follow in order to contest a final grade. First, the student must communicate with the instructor in an attempt to resolve any matter in question. Any appeal of a grade in this course must follow the procedures and deadlines for grade-­‐related grievances as published in the current undergraduate / graduate catalog. For these procedures, please see [http://wweb.uta.edu/catalog/content/general/academic\_regulations.aspx#10.](http://wweb.uta.edu/catalog/content/general/academic_regulations.aspx#10)

**Late Enrollment Policy:** Though I realize that at times enrolling in a course after the start date is unavoidable, please be advised that you will be held responsible for the class periods that you have missed even if you were not enrolled in the course. I will not allow you to make up missed opportunities for participation points or any other assignments that occurred before you enrolled. If you enroll in class after the start date it is your responsibility to contact your peers in order to get caught up on the schedule and any announcements that might have been delivered in your absence. This policy also applies to students who drop and add.

**Late Assignments.** All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date specified. Late assignments will not be accepted.

**Paper Reuse Policy** – You are not allowed, under any circumstances, to reuse papers from prior classes in this course or any other course that you have taken at any institution. Reusing papers does not demonstrate any advance in knowledge or skill, and so would not be helpful for you either in terms of your learning this semester, or for me in terms of assessing this learning. If you feel your situation constitutes a clear or significant exception to this rule, you must discuss this with me prior to the due date of the first draft.

**Participation Policy.** Improvement in writing is a complex process that requires a great deal of practice. Successful college students come to class and participate regularly. Excused absences include official university activities, military service, and/or religious holidays. Students must inform the instructor in writing at least one week in advance of an excused absence. I will not supply what you miss by email or phone. It is your responsibility to conference with a peer to get this material or make an appointment to see me in person.

**Attendance:** At The University of Texas at Arlington, taking attendance is not required but attendance is a critical indicator in student success. Each faculty member is free to develop his or her own methods of evaluating students’ academic performance, which includes establishing course-specific policies on attendance. As the instructor of this section, I will not be grading for attendance. Keep in mind, however, that by missing class, you miss are missing out on not only quizzes and daily work points, but also the opportunity to connect with your peers over literature and life, etc. Also, while UT Arlington does not require instructors to take attendance in their courses, the U.S. Department of Education requires that the University have a mechanism in place to mark when Federal Student Aid recipients “begin attendance in a course.” UT Arlington instructors will report when students begin attendance in a course as part of the final grading process. Specifically, when assigning a student a grade of F, faculty report the last date a student attended their class based on evidence such as a test, participation in a class project or presentation, or an engagement online via Blackboard. This date is reported to the Department of Education for federal financial aid recipients.

**Classroom Behavior.** Class sessions are short and require your full attention. All cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices should be **turned off and put away when entering the classroom**; all earpieces should be removed. Store materials from other classes, reading not related to this class, bulky bags, and other distractions so that you can concentrate on the readings and discussions each day. Bring book(s) and e-reserve readings (heavily annotated and carefully read) to every class. Students are expected to participate respectfully in class, to listen to other class members, and to comment appropriately. I also expect consideration and courtesy from students. Professors are to be addressed appropriately and communicated with professionally.

According to *Student Conduct and Discipline*, "students are prohibited from engaging in or attempting to engage in conduct, either alone or in concert with others, that is intended to obstruct, disrupt, or interfere with, or that in fact obstructs, disrupts, or interferes with any instructional, educational, research, administrative, or public performance or other activity authorized to be conducted in or on a University facility. Obstruction or disruption includes, but is not limited to, any act that interrupts, modifies, or damages utility service or equipment, communication service or equipment, or computer equipment, software, or networks” (UTA Handbook or Operating Procedures, Ch. 2, Sec. 2-202). Students who do not respect the guidelines listed above or who disrupt other students’ learning may be asked to leave class and/or referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

**Classroom Visitors:** Only students officially enrolled in this section are allowed to attend class meetings. Students may not bring guests (children, spouses, friends, family) to class unless an academic request has been submitted and approved by the instructor well in advance of the proposed class visit. Children are not allowed in class as visitors at any time.

**Academic Integrity.** All students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington’s tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University. "Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts" (Regents’ Rules and Regulations, Series 50101, Section 2.2)

You can get in trouble for plagiarism by failing to correctly indicate places where you are making use of the work of another or colluding with another to prepare assignments. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the conventions of citation by which you indicate which ideas are not your own and how your reader can find those sources. Read your textbook and/or handbook for more information on quoting and citing properly to avoid plagiarism. If you still do not understand, ask your instructor. All students caught plagiarizing or cheating will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

**Disability Accommodations:** UT Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including *The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA),* and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.* All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide “reasonable accommodations” to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of a letter certified by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting:

**The Office for Students with Disabilities, (OSD**) [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or calling 817-272-3364. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability).

**Counseling and Psychological Services, (CAPS**) [www.uta.edu/caps/](http://www.uta.edu/caps/) or calling 817-272-3671 is also available to all students to help increase their understanding of personal issues, address mental and behavioral health problems and make positive changes in their lives.

**Non-Discrimination Policy:** *The University of Texas at Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit*[*uta.edu/eos*](http://www.uta.edu/hr/eos/index.php)*.*

**Title IX Policy:** The University of Texas at Arlington is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination based on sex in accordance with Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs or activities; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), which prohibits sex discrimination in employment; and the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE Act). Sexual misconduct is a form of sex discrimination and will not be tolerated. *For information regarding Title IX, visit* [www.uta.edu/titleIX](http://www.uta.edu/titleIX) or contact Ms. Jean Hood, Vice President and Title IX Coordinator at (817) 272-7091 or [jmhood@uta.edu](file:///C:\Users\rowntreem\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.IE5\IGVYXPA0\jmhood@uta.edu).

### Drop Policy. Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance**. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. Contact the Financial Aid Office for more information.

**Electronic Communication Policy.** All students must have access to a computer with Internet capabilities. Students should check email daily for course information and updates. I will send group emails through Blackboard. I am happy to communicate with students through email. However, I ask that you be wise in your use of this tool. Make sure you have consulted the syllabus for answers before you send me an email. Remember, I do not monitor my email 24 hours a day. I check it periodically during the school week and only occasionally on the weekend.

The University of Texas at Arlington has adopted the University “MavMail” address as the sole official means of communication with students. MavMail is used to remind students of important deadlines, advertise events and activities, and permit the University to conduct official transactions exclusively by electronic means. For example, important information concerning registration, financial aid, payment of bills, and graduation are now sent to students through the MavMail system. All students are assigned a MavMail account. ***Students are responsible for checking their MavMail regularly.*** Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/email/>. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, and it remains active even after they graduate from UT Arlington.

**Conferences and Questions:** I have one and a half regularly scheduled office hours each week. These times are reserved for students to drop by or to make an appointment to discuss course assignments, grades, or other class-related concerns. I will be happy to make other appointment times for you if your class schedule conflicts with regular conference times or if I am not available on certain days. If you receive a grade on an assignment about which you have questions, please wait twenty-four hours before discussing it with me. This gives you time to process the assignment comments and to think about how your course work meets the requirements set forth for each assignment. I do not discuss individual student issues in the classroom before, during or after class.

**Student Support Services**:UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include [tutoring](http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/current/academic-support/learning-center/tutoring/index.php), [major-based learning centers](http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/college-based-clinics-labs.php), developmental education, [advising and mentoring](http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/advising.php), personal counseling, and [federally funded programs](http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/current/academic-support/mcnair/index.php). For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at <http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/index.php>.

**The IDEAS Center (**2nd Floor of Central Library) offers **free** tutoring to all students with a focus on transfer students, sophomores, veterans and others undergoing a transition to UT Arlington. To schedule an appointment with a peer tutor or mentor email [IDEAS@uta.edu](mailto:IDEAS@uta.edu) or call (817) 272-6593.

**The English Writing Center (411LIBR)**: The Writing Center Offers free tutoring in 20-, 40-, or 60-minute face-to-face and online sessions to all UTA students on any phase of their UTA coursework. Our hours are 9 am to 8 pm Mon.-Thurs., 9 am-3 pm Fri. and Noon-6 pm Sat. and Sun. Register and make appointments online at http://uta.mywconline.com. Classroom Visits, workshops, and specialized services for graduate students are also available. Please see [www.uta.edu/owl](http://www.uta.edu/owl) for detailed information on all our programs and services.

The Library’s 2nd floor Academic Plaza offers students a central hub of support services, including IDEAS Center, University Advising Services, Transfer UTA and various college/school advising hours. Services are available during the library’s hours of operation. <http://library.uta.edu/academic-plaza>

**Librarian to Contact:** Marquel Anteola [manteola@uta.edu](mailto:manteola@uta.edu) 817-272-7426

**Syllabus and Schedule Changes.** Instructors try to make their syllabuses as complete as possible; however, during the course of the semester I may be required to alter, add, or abandon certain policies/assignments. *Instructors reserve the right to make such changes as they become necessary.* Students will be informed of any major changes in writing.

**Course Schedule.** Assignments are due on the day they are listed.

**Emergency Phone Numbers**: In case of an on-campus emergency, call the UT Arlington Police Department at **817-272-3003** (non-campus phone), **2-3003** (campus phone). You may also dial 911.

**Course Schedule**

1/16 Syllabus Day; Introductions; “What is Literature For?”

1/18 Jonathan Edwards, “Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God” (BB)

1/23 Sherwood Anderson, “Hands” and T.S. Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (BB)

1/25 William Faulkner, “A Rose for Emily” (BB)

1/30 Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* chs 1-6

2/1 Hurston chs 7-14

2/6 Hurston chs 15-end

2/8 John Cheever, “The Swimmer” (BB)

2/13 Ursula Le Guin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” (BB)

2/15 Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead* pgs 3-43

2/20 Robinson pgs 44-86

2/22 Robinson pgs 86-131

2/27 Robinson pgs 132-173

3/1 Robinson pgs 173-215

3/6 Robinson pgs 217-end

3/8 Donald Barthelme, “Chablis” (BB), Alice Walker, “Everyday Use” (BB); midterm review

3/13 **Spring Break**

3/15 **Spring Break**

3/20 Midterm Exam

3/22 Denis Johnson, “Emergency” (BB), Cynthia Ozick, “The Shawl” (BB)

3/27 Sherman Alexie, “The Toughest Indian in the World” (BB

3/29 In-class film, *Grizzly Man*; **Last Day to Drop 3/30**

4/3 continue *Grizzly Man*

4/5 Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* Intro-ch 1

4/10 Diaz pgs 51-99

4/12 Diaz pgs 99-149

4/17 Diaz pgs 149-201

4/19 Diaz pt. II intro and chapter 5

4/24 Diaz ch 6

4/26 finish Diaz

5/1 In-class essay workshop

5/3 Final thoughts; Final exam review **Final Essay due**

**FINAL EXAM: Thursday, May 10, 11am-1:30pm**

***Appendix***

**Signature Assignment**

**Overview**

The signature assignment addresses all four of the course 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 addresses the **social responsibility** outcome.

**Specific Requirements**

Write a well organized, effectively developed, 6-7 page analysis of at least one of the course texts. The paper should critically analyze the way the text engages a significant issue of social responsibility. Students should anchor the paper’s argument with a clearly articulated thesis statement and use careful analysis of textual evidence to support their claims.

**Possible Areas of Focus:**

You have a lot of freedom with this essay. The only requirement is that you pick a theme that has social implications from one of the major texts. Here are just a few possibilities:

Race and/or slavery; class and/or economic oppression; colonialism and/or empire; cultural difference and/or cultural discrimination; human mastery of nature and/or the environment and/or animals; national identity controversies; the social implications of a change in literary movements (e.g., from romanticism to realism); sexual orientation; disability; globalization and/or neo-colonialism; the way the work of literature itself can be seen as a rhetorical attempt to engage effectively in significant regional, national, or global issues.

**Responsible Integration of Sources:**

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 you draw on secondary sources to communicate an interpretive argument about your chosen text through the lens of social responsibility. Instructors may wish to require their students to take the UTA Library’s plagiarism tutorial available at <library.uta.edu/plagiarism/index.php>. This would be a separate assignment, not part of the signature assignment.

**Secondary Sources:**

Students should use their secondary sources to:

* Support the argument (thesis) of the paper
* Identify interlocutors to refute
* Illustrate current relevance of the argument (thesis)
* Provide historical or scholarly context

Here is a list of credible 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 their instructor.

**Minimum Requirements:**

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.

In order to receive a passing grade on the signature assignment, students are expected to:

1. write an essay that is at least 6 pages long, but no more than 8.
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.