

ENGL 2329 – SPRING 2013

MWF 8:00AM - 8:50

9:00AM - 9:50

Sections 01/02

LS 424

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NOTE: Changes to the syllabus will be communicated in writing.

"Read, read, read. Read everything, and see how they do it.
Just like a carpenter who works as an apprentice and studies the
master. Read! You'll absorb it. Then write."
—William Faulkner, novelist

ENGL 2329 American Literature: (3-0) Consideration of significant American works with a focus on ideas and the ways in which they reflect cultural and aesthetic values; emphasis on critical methods of reading, writing, and thinking; at least three genres and six authors considered.

"The essential American soul is hard, isolate, stoic, and a killer. It has never yet melted."
D.H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature*

A SEARCH FOR IDENTITY AMIDST VIOLENCE: This course is not an introduction to or survey of American Literature. Instead it introduces students to a selection of significant American works that contribute to the on-going defining of American identities (i.e., the characteristics by/with which a person or group defines him/her/them self(ves) and or is recognized) through violence. 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, geographical areas, and perspectives shaped by different gender, class, and ethnic backgrounds.

OBJECTIVES

- By engaging in a variety of reading, discussion and writing assignments, students will:
- ❖ become familiar with a culturally diverse range of American literary genres, works, and authors;
 - ❖ become familiar with the conventions of fiction and literary criticism;
 - ❖ learn how to analyze literary texts in order to become more adept critical readers, thinkers, and writers;
 - ❖ examine connections among the literary texts, as well as between literature and the world;
 - ❖ interrogate the fictional characters' experiences and their interpretations of American values and cultural norms, and discuss the implications of their motives and actions, within and outside of the framework of the text; and
 - ❖ develop academic writing skills by presenting analyses and syntheses of our readings, discussions and class activities in essay form.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Snow White, Donald Barthelme

The Sunset Limited, Cormac McCarthy

The House on Mango Street, Sandra Cisneros

War Dances, Sherman Alexie

* Supplemental readings from Online Journals and via Blackboard

WARNING: This course will include violence, cursing, and sex. In discussing these issues we will maintain a respectful decorum, though students who object to this content and discussion might consider a different course.

The point of reading is living. Reading helps you love with greater appreciation, keener insight, and heightened emotional awareness Reading and action reinforce each other in an ever-escalating manner.

Steve Leveen *The Little Guide to Your Well Read Life*

COURSE GRADE MATRIX

Assignments	Weight	Draft	Total
Exam 1	10%		100
Exam 2	15%		150
Reading Journal	10%		100
T-Chart Analysis	2.5%		25
Literary Analysis Essay	17.5%	50	125
Identity Essay	10%	25	75
APQs = Assignments, Presentations, and Quizzes	15%		150
Final Exam	20%		200
Total	100%		1000
A = 900 to 1000 Points B = 800 - 899 Points C = 700 - 799 Points D = 649 - 699 F = 648 or fewer			

GRADES

Keep all handouts, journals, and essays until after completing the final exam. Students fulfill a contract to earn an A by completing six Reading Journal entries and writing longer essays.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS: Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date specified. Each class day an essay is late results in an additional ten percent deduction. Work is not accepted after three late days. If you must be absent, your work is still due as assigned.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Regular attendance is thus necessary for success in ENGL 2329. Students are expected to attend class regularly and to arrive on time. 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.

Arriving late 3 times equals 1 absence. *See Preparation.* Yes, you missed something important while you were out, but I do not repeat the class, including reviewing what you missed by email. Exchange contact information with members of the class and arrange for notes ahead of time. Students accruing six absences or more will be penalized 5% off their final grade for each additional absence.

Beautiful Woman

A. R. Ammons

The spring
in

her step
has

turned to
fall

PREPARATION AND PARTICIPATION: This is a class based on collaborative discourse. As such, being prepared to participate in discussions is a course requirement. This entails having read and thought about the complete assignment carefully before class starts. Furthermore, you must bring your copy of the text to class every day. Since we will be engaged in closely examining the texts we read and the language that they use, if you don't have your text then you aren't prepared for class, even if you have read the assignment. Naturally, this admonition also applies to the texts that you will find online. If you do not have a copy of the text that we are discussing, you cannot participate effectively in our discussion, and I will mark you absent.

METHOD OF INSTRUCTION:

Liberal education is not a body of knowledge that can be imparted to the student; it is the examination of the issues raised in various sources--an examination of texts that engages the student's thinking about these matters but does not merely implant the "answers" to the questions. These texts are not "taught"; they are read, and reading is dialectical. That is, the sources are *taken seriously*, as when one listens to a person who may know something. In this personal dialogue the reader and the text address each other's questions.

-- Edward Tingley

With these objectives in mind, learning takes place through lecture, discussion, online and library research, and testing. Learning is not just a passive intake of knowledge; instead, it requires active engagement. Engaging literature means that we do more than simply impart a supposedly received body of knowledge; instead, we question and perhaps even enhance a response.

Assignments

APQs = Assignments, Presentations, & Quizzes

*Because preparedness and engagement in the discussion factors heavily in each student's success in the course, expect a weekly APQ to reward prepared students. Together these are worth 150 (15 points each) for the semester. **Students who do not attend class on the day of the assignment will not earn points for the assignment.** Attendance counts.*

APQ # 9 Group Research & Writing Assignment over the Sherman Alexie poem "Giving Blood"

APQ #10 5 Minute Group Presentation Highlighting the Author and the Essence of an Assigned Reading

Reading Journal

Write five journal responses to assigned class readings – six for students on the A track. Each entry provides a miniature literary analysis of the text, not a summary of the plot. Each entry must include proper citation for the text, biographical information about the author, the historical setting of the text, your favorite passage, an abstract of the text, and your take or analysis to one element of the text. Simple research will be required for the biographical information and historic scope of the work, but not for your response or analysis of the text. Entries, which provide a simple means to prepare for exams, should be maintained in a folder or blog and submitted throughout the semester.

Literary Analysis Essay

Length: Five full pages (not including Works Cited) in MLA format, 12-point font, double-spaced
Source Requirement: Four scholarly sources. **Seven full pages for students on track to earn an A.**

Write a detailed analysis of one of the assigned readings in which you prove a claim that asserts something unique or insightful from the text. Use outside sources to provide insight and bearing; however, the analysis must represent your own interpretation. Do not assume your reader has read the story, at the same time don't summarize the text, but provide the reader plot details on a needs to know basis.

Identity Essay

Length: Four to five full pages (not including Works Cited) 12-point font, double-spaced
Source Requirement: Two+ scholarly sources. Five to six pages for students on track to earn an A.

Define identity in general and establish concepts of American identity in particular, then develop a detailed meta-commentary about the role of identity in the texts used for the class. Finally place yourself within this(ese) framework(s) of identity.

Exams

The exams will test your knowledge of the material from assigned readings, class discussions, and handouts. In addition, essay questions will require you to apply your knowledge to literary texts and concepts. At least half the each exam consists of essay questions, the other half consists of short answers, fill in the blanks, and matching questions.

THE ABILITY TO LAUGH AT VIOLENCE PROVIDES A TYPE OF "ANESTHESIA TO UNDERMINE
ANY MORAL REVULSION WE MIGHT FEEL ABOUT VIOLENCE"
(RICHARD CORLISS "A BLAST TO THE HEART" *TIME* 14 OCT. 1994: 76).

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS: Spring 2013 Class Calendar

Readings and Excerpts

Week 1 – Introduction & War



Mon 14 Jan: "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner" by Randall Jarrell

Wed 16 Jan: Poetry of Phillis Wheatley & "Sand Creek"

Fri 18 Jan: "An Episode of War" by Stephen Crane
www.Americanliterature.com/Crane/SS/AnEpisodeofWar.html

In Edgar Allen Poe's "William Wilson" the narrator must violently battle his alter ego in order to reclaim his identity. In much the same manner has the American identity been forged.

Week 2 – Early America

Wed 23 Jan: Poem: Gaspar Pérez de Villagrà – The History of New Mexico, Canto I & xxx

Due at beginning of class: APQ1: In 200 words define violence within the American context: Include some combination of slavery, human trafficking, rape, domestic violence, verbal abuse, racial discrimination, economic oppression, suicide, murder, war, capital punishment.

Fri 25 Jan: "Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Surprising Deliverance of Briton Hammon"
"On the Domestic Education of Children" *Massachusetts Magazine* 1790.

Week 3: Assassinations and Executions

Mon 28 Jan: Poems: "The Names" by Billy Collins and "Capital Punishment" by Sherman Alexie

APQ2: Reading Quiz

Wed 30 Jan: Song: "Green, Green Grass of Home" – Charlie Pride

Poem: "When Lilacs Last In the Door-yard Bloo'd" Elegy to Abraham Lincoln" by Whitman

Check Reading Journal

"My concern is not whether you have failed, but whether you are content with your failure." Abraham Lincoln

Fri 1 Feb: Short Story: Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"

APQ#10: Essence: _____

Week 4: Ethnic Cleansing

Mon 4 Feb: Essay: William Apress, "An Indian's Looking Glass for the White Men"

Draft of Identity Essay Due with Peer Review (APQ3)

Wed 6 Feb: Essay: Elias Boudinot "An Address to Whites"

APQ#10: Essence: _____

Fri 8 Feb: Poems: Lydia Howard Huntley Sigourney, "Indian Names" AND "Elegy" by Derek Walcott

APQ4: Reading Quiz

Week 5 Violence and Women

Mon 11 Feb: Essay: Terry Tempest Williams, "The Clan of One-Breasted Women"

Identity Essay Due Online

Wed 13 Feb: Poem: "Daddy" by Sylvia Plath. Begin *Mango Street*



APQ#10: Essence: _____

Fri 15 Feb: *House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros

APQ5: Active Reading Sheet Due at Beginning of Session

"The death of a beautiful woman [is] unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world"
– Edgar Allen Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition" from 1846

Week 6: Abuse



Figure 1: The Scream
by Edward Munch

Mon 18 Feb: Gloria Naylor – "The Meanings of a Word"

APQ#10: Essence: _____

Wed 20 Feb: "Harlem" by Langston Hughes -- Review

Fri 22 Feb: Exam #1

Week 7: Racial Oppression

Mon 25 Feb: "Black and Blue" Louis Armstrong & "Let America be America Again" Langston Hughes

APQ#10: Essence: _____

Wed 27 Feb: Novel: *Native Son* by Richard Wright, audio excerpts

Review Reading Journals in class -- In class consultation for T-Chart

Fri 1 March: Novel: *Native Son* by Richard Wright, audio excerpts [Online Session]

APQ#6 – Identifying with the Other and the Violence of *Native Son*

T-Chart Due to Generate a Claim State for Literary Analysis Due

I
define
writing
as
an
act
of
courage

Cynthia
Ozick

Week 8 Racial Oppression Continued

Mon 4 March: Short Story: "Battle Royal" by Ralph Ellison

APQ#10: Essence: _____

Wed 6 March: Commentary - Thomas Sowell on Progressive Racism [Youtube.com/watch?v=QvC12foKLEk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvC12foKLEk)
Excerpt from *Intellectuals and Society*, Expanded Edition by Thomas Sowell

Fri 8 March: *Native Son* by Richard Wright, audio excerpts conclusion

Draft of Literary Analysis Due with Peer Review



Week 9 Pulp Fiction

Mon 18 March: Poem: "Howl" by Allen Ginsberg

Wed 20 March: Short Story: "A Good Man is Hard to Find" by Flannery O'Connor

APQ#10: Essence of Fight Club: _____

Fight Club presents the viewer with a postmodern reinterpretation of the myth of the hunter. Gone is the natural wilderness that Slotkin's mythical hunter fought so ardently to win from the savage "Indians." In its place is the unbridled wilderness of the high-tech Internet generation with its skyscrapers, strip malls, new model Volkswagen Beetles, and Wal-Mart Supercenters. Furthermore, in Fight Club the Daniel Boone figure is no longer the hero; instead he has morphed into the anti-hero. In the film, the anonymous narrator (Edward Norton) is portrayed as the victim of postmodern society; he has the "right"

clothes, he has acquired the "right" furniture, he appears successful yet he is trapped in the confines of the capitalistic system because these material items have come to define him and his existence. The narrator creates Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt), a charismatic, self-professed nihilist, to help him escape from this banality. Like the contemporary hero who spends most of his time: "avoiding the bureaucracy, cutting red tape, deliberately trying to foul up the operations of the organizations employing them" (Sally Robertson *Marked Men: White Masculinity in Crisis* 211), the narrator and his alter ego develop a "fight club" in response to the mundane consumer-driven society in which they live. In the fight club, men engage in bare-knuckled fighting in an attempt to have a "real" experience. Self-elected violence becomes the postmodern panacea to soothe the men's feelings of inadequacy and alienation, both classic symptoms of the postmodern individual. Similar to Robert DeNiro's anti-hero character in the 1976 film *Taxi Driver*, the narrator in *Fight Club* is a "composite male ego derived from American history, fiction, and folklore, a postmodern pastiche whose extremely fragile self can only be sustained through various forms of sacrificial, propitiatory violence such as that 'last stand' so sacred to the American self-concept" (Christopher Sharrett *Mythologies of Violence in Postmodern Media* 8). As will be revealed in my analysis of specific scenes from *Fight Club*, the film takes Robertson's description and injects it with a high-dose of steroids that results in a "roid" rage. <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA02/freed/fightclub/violence.html>

Fri 22 March: Short Story "Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

APQ7: Comprehensive Reading Quiz & Exam Review Since March 6th

Critical Thinking

Reflection on arguments and propositions, "analyzing them for gaps and errors, exposing their unstated assumptions, and evaluating their evidence" (*Norton Anthology World Lit Volume D101*). Critical thinking functions as a catalytic and habitual exercise in living above the level of mediocrity.

Week 10 – Discrimination

Mon 25 March: Excerpts from Gloria Anzaldúa

APQ#10: Essence: _____

Wed 27 March & Fri 29 March: Novel: *Snow White* by Donald Barthelme

APQ8: Active Reading Sheet Due at Beginning of Wednesday's Session

Week 11 – Aging & Medicine

Literary Analysis Due—April 1st

Mon 1 April: Poems: "Beautiful Woman" by A.R. Ammons

Emily Dickinson, "Because I Could Not Stop for Death"

Wed 3 April: Short Story: "Indian Camp" by Ernest Hemingway

APQ#10: Essence: _____

Short Story: Edgar Allan Poe "The Masque of the Red Death"

APQ#10: Essence: _____

Fri 5 April: Exam #2

Week 12 – Disorientation of the Outsider

Mon 8 April: Autobiography: "Why I am a Pagan" by Zitkala-Sa, *Atlantic Monthly* #90 1902

Wed 10 April: Essay: "A place called Shit" from *Wisdom Sits in Places* by Keith Basso

Fri 12 April: Short Story: "Soul Catcher" by Louis Owens

Reading Journal Due: Final Version

Week 13: The Native Other: Sherman Alexie

Mon 15 April: Poem: "Giving Blood"

APQ9: Evaluative Group Analysis of "Giving Blood" – 250 Words

Wed 17 April: Interview with Sherman Alexie -- www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/a_f/alexie/fraser.htm
Novel: *War Dances*

Fri 19 April: See the online handout "War Dances Study Guide." *War Dances*

Week 14: Other Continued

Mon 22 April: Complete *War Dances* and Short Short Story: "Good Brother" by Peter Markus

Wed 24 April: Short Story: D'Arcy McNuckles – "Riding the Badlands"

Fri 26 April: Poems: "Remember" by Joy Harjo and "The Writer" by Richard Wilbur

"Set the statuesque figures and their piled trophies in motion through space and time, and a more familiar landscape emerges...the land and its people, its 'dark' people especially, economically exploited and wasted; the warfare between man and nature, between race and race, exalted as a kind of heroic ideal; the piles of wrecked and rusted cars, heaped like Tartar pyramids of death-cracked, weather-browned, rain-rotted skulls, to signify our passage through the land" (Richard Slotkin 565).

Week 15: Self Violence

Mon 29 April: Life Narrative: "Talking a Stranger through the Night" by Sherry Amatenstein

Poem: "Summer Solstice, New York City" by Sharon Olds

APQ#10: Essence: _____

Wed, 1 May: Play: *Sunset Limited* by Cormac McCarthy

Fri, 3 May: *Sunset Limited* by Cormac McCarthy

Poem: "The Hollow Men" I and IV by T.S. Eliot

Week 16:

Mon, 6 May: Poems: "Still I Rise" and "Caged Bird" by Maya Angelou

Final Exam

If poetry comes not naturally as the leaves of a tree, it had better not come at all.

— John Keats