## English 2329: American Literature:

The Price(s) of (American) Success

Robert LaRue

English 2329: Section 001 (Mondays-Thursdays 8am-10:30am, Room 330 Science Hall)

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**Course Outline.**

This course concentrates on works of American literature with focus on how cultural, geographic, and political issues shape and reflect literature in a particular culture. Our focus will center on notions of “success” and how these notions play out in society. With an emphasis on critical thinking, reading, and writing, we will examine the poetry, short stories, and drama of about fifteen or so “Amerian” authors. Emphasis on critical thinking, reading, and writing.

**Course Objectives.**

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.

**Course Texts.**

**Purchase:**

Jonze, Spike. *Her* (2013)

Lord, Phil. *The LEGO Movie* (2014)

McQueen, Steve. *12 Years a Slave* (2014)

Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark* (1992)

Vallée, Jean-Marc. *Dallas Buyers Club* (2013)

**PDFs (on Blackboard):**

Anzaldúa, Gloria. “Entering into the Serpent” (1987)

Armijo, Isidoro. “Sixty Minutes in Hell” (1911)

Baldwin, James. “Sonny’s Blues” (1957)

Chacón, Eusebio. “The Calm after the Storm” (1892)

DuBois, W.E.B. (William Edward Burghardt). “The Comet” (1926)

Dunbar, Paul Laurence. “We Wear the Mask” (1896), “The Poet and His Song” (1896), “Frederick

Douglass” (1896), “Why Fades a Dream” (1896), “Prometheus” (1899), “Harriet Beecher Stowe”

(1899), “Vagrants” (1899)

Eliot, T.S. (Thomas Stearns). “The Wasteland” (1922); “The Hollow Men” (1925)

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. “The American Scholar” (1837)

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. (Francis Scott). “Babylon Revisited” (1931)

Ginsberg, Alan. “Howl” (1956); “Monologue without Images or Music” (1944), “Epitaph for Roosevelt”

(1945), “America” (1956)

Gonzáles, Rodolfo “Corky”. “I Am Joaquín” (1967)

Hopkins, Pauline E. “Talma Gordon” (1900)

Johnson, James Weldon. “Sence You Went Away” (1900); “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing” (1900); “O Black and

Unknown Bards” (1908); “Fifty Years” (1913)

Moraga, Cherríe. “Epilogue: La Mujer Saliendo de la Boca” (1983)

Nugent, Bruce. “Smoke, Lilies, and Jade” (1926)

Whitman, Walt. “I Sing the Body Electric” (1855); “Spontaneous Me” (1856); “To a Stranger” (1867);

“This Moment Yearning and Thoughtful” (1881); “Sometimes with the One I Love” (1867); “To a

Western Boy” (1881); “Among the Multitude” (1881)

Williams, William Carlos. “Libertad! Igualidad! Fraternidad!” (1917); “Apology” (1917); “Sub Terra”

(1917)

**Major Assignments.**

Presentation 5 pts. (points)

Critical Analysis Papers (CAPs) 75 pts.

Discussion Board Posts 10 pts.

Class Participation 10 pts.

TOTAL POINTS 100 pts. (A=90-100, B=80-89, C=70-79, D=69-65, F=64 and below

Note: In order to calculate your grade, as the semester progresses, add all of your points together. Grades are accumulative, not weighed.

**Grades.** Grades are A, B, C, and F. **All major essay projects must be completed in order to pass the course.** If you fail to complete a project, you will fail the course, regardless of your average. All projects must be submitted to Blackboard before the project’s stated deadline. **Keep all papers** until you receive your final grade from the university (this is also how you will keep track of your grade throughout the course). You cannot challenge a grade without evidence.

**Descriptions of Major Assignments:**

**Presentation: Due by the day of your presentation.**

Each of you will sign up to present on one of the course texts. For your presentation, you will be responsible for conducting a search of at least five (5) historical “events” (e.g. newspaper articles, photographs, videos, advertisements, songs, ect.) that were contemporary to the time and/or place of the text for which you are presenting over. Your presentation will consist: 1.) of you orally explaining how you see these events relating to, or influencing the text; and then 2.) of you contributing to the course blog by writing descriptions of your found “events,” uploading relevant images for your selected events, and writing at least 100 words (each) about how the event connects/relates to the text over which you’re presenting. (Your total blog contribution should be no less than 500 words, and should cover at least 5 sources.)

So, once again: 1.) sign up for one of the course texts; 2.) find at least five (5) events that are contemporary to your text, and that you feel, in some way relates to that text; 3.) explain (both orally to the class, and in paragraph form on the course blog): a.) what the event is; and b.) how you see the event connecting to your text.

(Remember, the most important part of your write up and presentation is the explanation of the connection, not the summary of the event. Overly relying on the latter [summary] will result in a lower grade.)

**Critical Analysis Papers [CAPs] (5 total; 2-3 double-spaced pages for each submission): Due each Friday.**

Each week you will be required to submit a 2-3 page (double-spaced, MLA-formatted) paper. Each paper should use the theories with which we frame the class to seriously interrogate/analyze/discuss: one or two of the texts from the week; a theme covered by several of the texts for the week; questions of the course in general; or questions posed by members of the class. These papers should not be summaries of the texts (in fact, summary of the material you’re using is not required), but should, instead incorporate substantive quotes from the texts as a way to illustrate, and further clarify the points you are attempting to make.

In short, each paper is a way for you to express, in a clear manner, your own ideas and understandings of what is going on in class. Minimum requirements for a passing grade:

* They should be no fewer than 2 pages, and no more than 3 pages, and submitted in proper MLA format
* They should sustain and adequately support a single argument
* They should present a clearly articulated, and identifiable claim statement
* They should use the source texts (the texts that inform the argument being made) as a way to illustrate the argument they are making (quotes, etc.—all in proper MLA format)

Your grade for each of these papers will be based not only on the argument you make, but also: on how well you articulate your argument; on the originality and/or complexity of your argument; on the level of control you display in writing your argument (how well you can integrate and distinguish the source texts, the theoretical discussions, and your own voice); how persuasively you can support your intended argument.

**Discussion Board posts (15 posts).** Each week, along with your CAP, you will need to post an abridged (yet clear and thoughtfully composed) version of your argument on the “Discussion Board” for your fellow classmates to read and respond to. In addition to posting your own posts, you will also need to respond to your peers’ posts. Because everyone will be posting, you need only respond to those posts that “interest” you.

Or to break this down a bit: You will need to post at least five (5) original posts to the discussion board (the synopses of your CAPs); and you will need to respond to, in a thorough and critically-engaging manner, at least 10 (10) posts made by others. (While I expect you to answer questions posed by others to your own “original” posts, these responses will only count for partial credit. In other words, you must post outside of your own thread as well.) In short, apart from posting your own material, I want you to enter into and maintain conversations with others in the class. (And feel free to bring up “Discussion Board” conversations in class.)

Grading breakdown: Original post = 1 pt.; comment post = 0.5 pt. (So, 5 original posts [5 pts.] + 10 comment posts [5 pts.] = 10 pts.)

**Class Participation (and In-Class Assignments, Quizzes, and Homework).**

For the most part, this portion of your grade will be based off of your (or more accurately, my perception of your) role in class discussion. The more you actively participate—in meaningful ways, through meaningful discussion—in the class discussions, the higher your grade will be. And while this does not make up for a lack of in-class participation, creating discussions on Blackboard can help offset this lack of vocal contribution. (But keep in mind, Blackboard posts do not make up for class attendance, nor do they count the same as in-class discussion, and will therefore carry less weight than the other forms; however, it will at least show that you are making some attempt at participating in the class’ discussions.)

In-class assignments, reading quizzes, and homework may be assigned impromptu, or as needed. In any event, all grades for this section will contribute to the total grade points (10 pts.) allotted for this unit. In other words, each assignment will comprise a portion of these total points. The number of points for each assignment will be relative to the number of assignments given. Missed in-class assignments, quizzes, or homework cannot be made-up and are not accepted late.

**Late Assignments.** Unless previous arrangements have been made (at least a day before the deadline), NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED. Papers must be submitted on BlackBoard on the specified due date and by the specified time. Assignments that are not submitted on BlackBoard (i.e. work emailed to me without my prior consent) will be considered late and will, therefore, not be accepted. **Absences do not excuse a paper from its due date**, especially since all work is due either before or after class. If special arrangements are neeed, please discuss this with me before the due date.

**Attendance Policy.** Regular attendance is necessary for full comprehension of what is going on. While you are allowed three (3) absences, you are expected to attend class regularly and to arrive on time. **(Note: You will be considered tardy if you arrive 5 minutes or more after the official start of class. Arriving late 2 times constitute 1 unexcused absence, and will go towards your total accumulated absences.)** Excused absences include official university activities, military service, and/or religious holidays. You must inform the instructor in writing at least one week in advance of an excused absence.

On your fourth unexcused absences (any absence not listed above as excused), there will be an automatic 5 percent deduction from the final course grade, and you will forfit any bonus points you may have accumulated. So, absences hurt your grade in more ways than one.) Also, and in keeping with this, in the event of an absence, it becomes your responsibility to obtain any missed information, handouts, and, or, assignments. (You may use BlackBoard to email your fellow classmates, requesting notes or any other information. However, your clssmates are not responsible if all information is not correctly—or completely—relayed to you.) **In short, absences do not excuse you from work, deadlines, or any other information disseminated to the class; in addition, habitual or excessive tardiness or absentieism will cause you to lose any bonus points accumulated as well as prevent your final grade from being rounded up in the event that it falls within a decimal point of the next grade (e.g. 89.5 will remain an 89.9). (This of course is in addition to any penalties you incur due to your absences.)**

**Classroom behavior.** Class sessions are short and require your full attention. The use of laptops or other technical devices will be requested at certain times. However, unless otherwise requested by me, all cell phones, pagers, iPods, MP3 players, laptops, and other electronic devices should be **turned off and put away when entering the classroom**; all earpieces should be removed. Store newspapers, crosswords, magazines, 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.

**Academic Integrity.** Your work is to be your own, and it is to be prepared originally for this course and section. It is considered Academic Dishonesty to present any portion of work prepared by someone else and to claim it as your own. It is also unacceptable to submit work or portions of work you have written for another class or section. This includes work prepared for high school and college courses you have taken or in which you are currently enrolled and any previous sections of this course.

You can get in trouble for plagiarism by failing to correctly indicate places where you are making use of the work of another. 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.

**Americans with Disabilities Act.** The University of Texas at 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)*. 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 that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. 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) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Drop Policy.** You 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.

Important drop dates:

Census Date: July 14, 2014

Last Day to Drop: July 29, 2014

**Writing Center.** The Writing Center, Room 411 in the Central Library, offers tutoring for any writing you are assigned while a student at UT-Arlington. You may register and schedule appointments online at uta.mywconline.com or by visiting the Writing Center. If you need assistance with registration, please call 817-272-2601. If you come to the Writing Center without an appointment, you will be helped on a first-come, first-served basis as consultants become available. Writing Center consultants are carefully chosen and trained, and they can assist you with any aspect of your writing, from understanding an assignment to revising an early draft to polishing a final draft. However, the Writing Center is not an editing service; consultants will not correct your grammar or rewrite your assignment for you, but they will help you become a better editor of your own writing. I encourage each of you to use the Writing Center.

**Additional Academic Resources.** The University of Texas at 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. These resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals to resources for any reason, students may contact the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107 or visit [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources) 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 **MyMav**. 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 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 regularly scheduled office hours each week, which are reserved for you to drop by or to make an appointment to discuss course assignments, grades, or other concerns (class-related or otherwise). 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 or quiz 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.

**Syllabus and Schedule Changes.** I try to make the syllabus as complete as possible; however, during the course of the semester I may be required to alter, add, or abandon certain policies/assignments. Therefore, I reserve the right to make such changes as they become necessary. In the event that something is changed, you will be notified.

**Course Schedule.** All homework is due the following class period.

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| Week 1 |  |  |  |
|  | Tuesday, July 8, 2014 |  | Syllabus; Ice Breaker; Course Introduction |
|  |  |  | HW: Read: Morrison, Playing in the Dark (1992), Chs 1 & 2 |
|  | Wednesday, July 9, 2014 |  | Discussion: Morrison; Writing about Literature |
|  |  |  | HW: Read: Morrison, Playing in the Dark, Ch 3; Moraga, "Epilogue: La Mujer Saliendo de la Boca" (1983) |
|  | Thursday, July 10, 2014 |  | Discussion: Important terms for the class |
|  |  |  | HW: Read: Emerson, “The American Scholar” (1837); and Anzaldúa, “Entering into the Serpent” (1987) |
|  | Friday, July 11, 2014 |  | **Due: CAP #1 (10pm on Blackboard)** |
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| Week 2 |  |  |  |
|  | Monday, July 14, 2014 |  | Discussion: Emerson and Anzaldúa |
|  |  |  | HW: Read: Whitman: “I Sing the Body Electric” (1855), “Spontaneous Me” (1856), "I Dream'd in a Dream (1860), "O Captain! My Captain!" (1865-66), “To a Stranger” (1867), "Sometimes with the One I Love" (1867), 7. “We Two Boys Together Clinging” (1867), “This Moment Yearning and Thoughtful” (1881), “To a Western Boy” (1881), “Among the Multitude” (1881) |
|  | Tuesday, July 15, 2014 |  | Discussion: Early America: Whitman |
|  |  |  | HW: Read: Dunbar, “We Wear the Mask” (1896), “The Poet and His Song” (1896), “Frederick Douglass” (1896), “Why Fades a Dream” (1896), “Prometheus” (1899), “Harriet Beecher Stowe” (1899), “Vagrants” (1899) |
|  | Wednesday, July 16, 2014 |  | Discussion: Dunbar |
|  |  |  | HW: Read: Chacón, "The Calm after the Storm" (1892) |
|  | Thursday, July 17, 2014 |  | Discussion: Chacón |
|  |  |  | HW: Read: Eliot, "The Wasteland" (1922) and "The Hollow Men" (1925) |
|  | Friday, July 18, 2014 |  | **Due: CAP #2 (10pm on Blackboard)** |
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| Week 3 |  |  |  |
|  | Monday, July 21, 2014 |  | Discussion: A New Century: Eliot |
|  |  |  | HW: Read: Johnson, "Sence you Went Away" (1900), "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing" (1900), "O Black and Unknown Bards" (1908), "Fifty Years" (1913); and Williams, "Libertad! Igualidad! Fraternidad!" (1917), "Apology" (1917), "Sub Terra" (1917) |
|  | Tuesday, July 22, 2014 |  | Discussion: Johnson and Williams |
|  |  |  | HW: Read: Armijo, "Sixty Minutes in Hell" (1911); and Hopkins, “Talma Gordon” (1900)  |
|  | Wednesday, July 23, 2014 |  | Discussion: Armijo and Hopkins |
|  |  |  | HW: Read: DuBois, "The Comet" (1926) |
|  | Thursday, July 24, 2014 |  | Discussion: DuBois |
|  |  |  | HW: Fitzgerald, "Babylon Revisited" (1931) |
|  | Friday, July 25, 2014 |  | **Due: CAP #3 (10pm on Blackboard)** |
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| Week 4 |  |  |  |
|  | Monday, July 28, 2014 |  | Discussion: Fitzgerald |
|  |  |  | HW: Read: Ginsberg, "Howl" (1936), "Monologue without Images or Music" (1944), “Epitaph for Roosevelt” (1945), “America” (1956) |
|  | Tuesday, July 29, 2014 |  | Discussion: Post WW II: Ginsberg |
|  |  |  | HW: Read: Baldwin, “Sonny’s Blues” (1957) |
|  | Wednesday, July 30, 2014 |  | Discussion: Baldwin |
|  |  |  | HW: Read: Gonzáles, “I Am Joaquín” (1967 |
|  | Thursday, July 31, 2014 |  | Discussion: González |
|  |  |  | HW: Watch: Jonze, *Her* (2013) |
|  | Friday, August 1, 2014 |  | **Due: CAP #4 (10pm on Blackboard)** |
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| Week 5 |  |  |  |
|  | Monday, August 4, 2014 |  | Discussion: Jonze |
|  |  |  | HW: Watch: McQueen, *12 Years a Slave* (2013) |
|  | Tuesday, August 5, 2014 |  | Discussion: McQueen |
|  |  |  | HW: Watch: Vallée, *Dallas Buyers Club* (2013) |
|  | Wednesday, August 6, 2014 |  | Discussion: Valléee |
|  |  |  | HW: Watch: Lord, *The LEGO Movie* (2014) |
|  | Thursday, August 7, 2014 |  | Discussion: Lord |
|  | Friday, August 8, 2014 |  | **Due: CAP #5 (10pm on Blackboard)** |