

**ENGL 2329-002 American Literature:  
In Search for American Identity  
SYLLABUS**

Fall 2015  
MWF 9-9:50AM  
TBA

**Contact Information:**

<p>Dr. Terje Saar-Hambazaza Email: <a href="mailto:terjes@uta.edu">terjes@uta.edu</a> (Please note: the best way to contact me is through email!) Web: <a href="http://www.terjehambazaza.com">www.terjehambazaza.com</a> Office: Carlisle Hall 407 Office hours: Mondays 10-11am &amp; by appointment</p>
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**Course Description:**

This course explores the diverse forms of American identity from local and global perspectives. We will examine the formation of American identity and trace various portrayals of class, gender, racial, and ethnic identities as they relate to identity performances in a number of American literary texts. Students will learn to recognize identity performances in literary texts, but also in their own and others' lives. How do we invent our own identities? How do we understand American and/or non-American identities? How does performance affect the way in which we construct identity in the US? How does it connect to the notion of power? How do social and historical events shape and influence these performances? We will investigate various representations of identity performances in American literature as well as culture in order to acquire skills necessary to better understand multiplicity of American identity and intercultural relations. We will read and analyze texts across various genres, including fiction, poetry, drama, and non-fiction.

**Catalogue Description:**

**ENGL 2329 AMERICAN LITERATURE (3-0).** Concentration on works of American literature with focus on how cultural, geographic, and political issues shape and reflect literature in a particular culture. Issues for American literature might include the struggle to discover a national identity, the transition from war to postwar periods, or the tensions of a multicultural society. Examines at least three genres and six 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 general 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 Outcomes:

1. Students will acquire, practice, and demonstrate the critical thinking skills of creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.
2. Students will acquire, practice, and demonstrate the communication skills of effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas in written, oral and visual communication.
3. Students will acquire, practice, and demonstrate personal responsibility in their ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.
4. Students will acquire, practice, and demonstrate social responsibility in their intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

### Required Texts:

- James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* (Oxford), ISBN: 978-0199538195
- Henry James, *Washington Square*
- Willa Cather, *My Ántonia* (Dover), ISBN: 978-0486282404
- Nella Larsen, *Passing* (Penguin Classics), ISBN: 978-0142437278
- Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon* (Vintage), ISBN: 978-0679722649
- Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (ISBN: 9780679755333)
- Frank Miller, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (DC Comics), ISBN: 978-1563893421
- Additional readings provided by the professor as PDF files on Blackboard

### Course Assignments (max. 100 points):

- ✧ Three tests (60 points)
- ✧ Signature Writing Assignment (20 points): see below
- ✧ Five in-class quizzes (eight quizzes given, five counted) (10 points)
- ✧ Attendance and participation (10 points)

### Grading Scale:

A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	0-59

### Course Requirements and Policies

#### *Attendance & Participation Policy*

Attendance is absolutely crucial to your success in this course. Attendance will be taken during every class meeting and it is your responsibility to make sure that you have signed the attendance sheet. You are not permitted to sign the name of another student. Falsifying student identities is considered a crime and will be dealt with according to the university’s policies.

Each student is allowed three (3) excused absences, no questions asked (emergencies will be considered on a case by case basis). Save them for when you really need them; these absences

are designed to accommodate such things as family emergencies, illnesses, car troubles, etc. Unexcused absences beyond the first three excused absences will adversely affect your grade. Your success in this course is a function of your level of engagement. I am interested in the quality of your remarks rather than the quantity. Hence, your thoughtful, attentive, and active participation is essential. If you sleep, engage in non-class-related activities, or interfere with your classmates' ability to learn you will be counted absent for that day. Be on time – class will start promptly. Leaving early will count as an absence. Participation in this course does not include doing work unrelated to this course during class, sleeping in class, or using computers or other personal electronic devices for personal messaging, research, or entertainment.

#### *Late Work and Makeup Exams*

I do not accept late work. I will not allow makeup exams except for official UTA-excused absences.

#### *Personal Communication Devices*

Electronic devices, such as computers and cell phones, are NOT ALLOWED in class. I will make an exception for e-readers if you have purchased your books in an electronic format. Turn off all cell phones and other personal communication devices before the start of class and do not use them during class.

#### *Classroom Protocol, Citizenship, Decorum, etc.*

Please arrive to class on time. Arriving late to class disrupts the flow of the lecture and is distracting to the professor and to your fellow students. Your attendance grade will be affected if late arrivals become a pattern (determined by the professor).

All written work and class discussion for this course must employ gender-neutral, nonsexist language, and rhetorical constructions. Such practice is part of a classroom environment according full respect and opportunity to all participants by all others.

#### *Email use*

Please use your UT Arlington email account when contacting the professor.

#### *Academic Integrity*

The faculty expects from its students a high level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic degree depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student for that degree, it is imperative that students demonstrate a high standard of individual honor in their scholastic work.

As a general rule, scholastic dishonesty involves one of the following acts: cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or falsifying academic records. Students suspected of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary proceedings. Plagiarism, especially from the web, from portions of papers for other classes, and from any other source is unacceptable and will be dealt with under the university's policy on plagiarism (see general catalogue for details).

#### **NOTE:**

This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

## SIGNATURE WRITING 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, 3-5-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. You should anchor the paper's argument with a clearly articulated thesis statement and use careful analysis of textual evidence to support your claims.

### Possible Areas of Focus:

Cultural difference and/or cultural discrimination; national identity controversies; class and/or economic oppression; colonialism and/or empire; postcolonialism; 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.

### Secondary Sources:

You should use your secondary sources to supply historical context, support your arguments or to show the text's relevance to the present day.

Here is a list of credible sources:

- Scholarly articles published in peer-reviewed journals that are accessible through UTA library's databases, such as JSTOR, Project Muse, the MLA International Bibliography database.
- Scholarly books or book chapters (if a book is published by an academic press, such as Duke University Press, it is often scholarly; if you are 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)
- 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*)

If you are interested in using a source that is not listed here, check with your instructor.

#### Minimum Requirements:

Your essay should be a Word document that is double spaced, with 1-inch margins, in 12-pt., Times New Roman font. Follow the MLA's recommendations for formatting, citation, and style.

To be eligible to receive a passing grade on this assignment, you are expected to:

1. write an essay that is at least 3 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.

You must demonstrate:

- ✓ critical thinking skills: provide a clearly articulated, coherent, and well-organized argument, include a contestable, specific, detailed thesis that supports the argument, answer the "so what" and "who cares" questions by explaining why the argument is significant and to whom;
- ✓ communication skills: include a creative title that forecasts the content of the paper, show awareness of the audience and come across as a credible writer, appeal to the values and emotions of the audience, provide an effective interpretation of the text(s) with lively, engaging, and relatively error free sentences, using correct grammar and mechanics;
- ✓ personal responsibility: incorporate evidences (quotations) from the literary text and from the outside sources, correctly cite outside sources according to MLA formatting, demonstrate an understanding of ethical decision-making, include a works cited page, correctly formatted in MLA style;
- ✓ social responsibility: responsibly incorporate evidence from outside sources related to social issues, communicate a knowledge of civic responsibilities, engage with regional, national or global communities in the paper.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

[All reading and writing assignments are due on the days listed]

### Week 1

Friday, 8/28: Introduction to the course, syllabus

### Week 2

Monday, 8/31: Crevecoeur, Letter III, "What is an American?" (PDF)

Wednesday, 9/2: James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*, chapters 1-4

Friday, 9/4: *The Last of the Mohicans*, chapters 5-16

### Week 3

Monday, 9/7: NO CLASS – Labor Day

Wednesday, 9/9: *The Last of the Mohicans*, chapters 17-21

Friday, 9/11: *The Last of the Mohicans*, chapters 22-end

### Week 4

Monday, 9/14: Mark Twain, "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses" (PDF); Cooper, cont.

Wednesday, 9/16: Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance" (PDF)

Friday, 9/18: Walt Whitman, selections from *Leaves of Grass* 1855 (PDF)

### Week 5

Monday, 9/21: Henry James, *Washington Square*, chapters 1-16

Wednesday, 9/23: *Washington Square*, chapters 17-26

Friday, 9/25: *Washington Square*, chapters 27-end

### Week 6

Monday, 9/28: Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour" (PDF)

Wednesday, 9/30: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (PDF)

Friday, 10/2: NO CLASS – Research/writing day;

### Week 7

Monday, 10/5: Test #1

Wednesday, 10/7: T. S. Eliot, "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (PDF)

Friday, 10/9: Poetry of William Carlos Williams (PDF)

### Week 8

Monday, 10/12: Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon*, chapters 1-6

Wednesday, 10/14: *The Maltese Falcon*, chapters 7-11

Friday, 10/16: *The Maltese Falcon*, chapters 12-end

### Week 9

Monday, 10/19: Nella Larsen, *Passing*, Part 1

Wednesday, 10/21: *Passing*, Part 2

Friday, 10/23: *Passing*, Part 3

**Week 10**

Monday, 10/26: Poetry of Langston Hughes (PDF)  
Wednesday, 10/28: William Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily" (PDF)  
Friday, 10/30: Shirley Jackson, "Lottery" (PDF)

**Week 11**

Monday, 11/2: Test #2  
Wednesday, 11/4: Film screening: *Rebel Without a Cause*  
Friday, 11/6: Film screening: *Rebel Without a Cause*

**Week 12**

Monday, 11/9: Film discussion: *Rebel Without a Cause*  
Wednesday, 11/11: Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*  
Friday, 11/13: *A Raisin in the Sun*, cont.

**Week 13**

Monday, 11/16: Louise Erdrich, "The Red Convertible" (PDF)  
Wednesday, 11/18: Toni Morrison, "Recitatif" (PDF)  
Friday, 11/20: Sandra Cisneros, "The House on Mango Street" (PDF)

**Week 14**

Monday, 11/23: Writing workshop  
Wednesday, 11/25: NO CLASS – Writing day  
Friday, 11/27: NO CLASS – Thanksgiving

**Week 15**

Monday, 11/30: Frank Miller, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, Books 1-2  
Wednesday, 12/2: *Batman*, Book 3; Research paper DUE;  
Friday, 12/4: *Batman*, Book 4

**Week 16**

Monday, 12/7: Review of the course; conclusion  
Wednesday, 12/9: Test #3