

ENGL 2329-001 American Literature:
In Search for American Identity
SYLLABUS
Spring 2016
MWF 9-9:50am
COBA253

Contact Information:

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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 in a number of American literary texts. We will explore the multiple meanings of identity and learn to recognize how identities are constructed in American culture. 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 the construction of identity? We will investigate various representations of identity construction and performances in American literature as well as culture in order to acquire skills necessary to better understand multiplicity of American identity and intercultural relations. The course includes reading and analyzing 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>.

Student Learning 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 Textbooks and Other Course Materials:

- Henry James, *Washington Square*, ISBN: 978-0141441368
- Willa Cather, *My Ántonia* (Dover), ISBN: 978-0486282404
- Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon* (Vintage), ISBN: 978-0679722649
- Nella Larsen, *Passing* (Penguin Classics), ISBN: 9780142437278
- Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (ISBN: 9780679755333)
- Wendy Wasserstein, *The Heidi Chronicles: Uncommon Women and Others & Isn't It Romantic*; Vintage, ISBN: 9780679734994
- Frank Miller, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (DC Comics), ISBN: 9781563893421
- Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*, Book 1 (ISBN: 9788184771695)
- Additional required 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.

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.

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. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

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)**. 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 or calling 817-272-3364.
Counseling and Psychological Services, (CAPS) www.uta.edu/caps/ or calling 817-272-3671.

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 or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

Title IX: 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. For information regarding Title IX, visit www.uta.edu/titleIX.

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.

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

Electronic Communication: UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this

account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

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.

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.

Students enrolled all UT Arlington courses 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.

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).

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents' Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

Student Feedback Survey: At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as "lecture," "seminar," or "laboratory" shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student's feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

Final Review Week: A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

Emergency Exit Procedures: Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities.

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, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. 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, or view the information at <http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/index.php>

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 construction; 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

Wednesday, 1/20: Introduction to the course, syllabus

Friday, 1/22: Harold Bloom, "Why Read?" (PDF), Crèvecoeur, Excerpts from the *Letters* (PDF);

Week 2

Monday, 1/25: Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher" (PDF)

Wednesday, 1/27: Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance" (PDF)

Friday, 1/29: Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (excerpts) (PDF)

Week 3

Monday, 2/1: Henry James, *Washington Square*, chapters 1-16

Wednesday, 2/3: *Washington Square*, chapters 17-26

Friday, 2/5: *Washington Square*, chapters 27-end

Week 4

Monday, 2/8: Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour" (PDF)

Wednesday, 2/10: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (PDF)

Friday, 2/12: Poetry of T. S. Eliot (PDF) and William Carlos Williams (PDF)

Week 5

Monday, 2/15: Willa Cather, *My Antonia*

Wednesday, 2/17: *My Antonia*, cont.

Friday, 2/19: *My Antonia*, cont.

Week 6

Monday, 2/22: Test #1

Wednesday, 2/24: Poetry of Robert Frost (PDF) and Langston Hughes (PDF)

Friday, 2/26: William Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily" (PDF)

Week 7

Monday, 2/29: Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon*, chapters 1-10

Wednesday, 3/2: *The Maltese Falcon*, chapters 11-16

Friday, 3/4: *The Maltese Falcon*, chapters 17-end

Week 8

Monday, 3/7: Nella Larsen, *Passing*, Part 1

Wednesday, 3/9: *Passing*, Part 2

Friday, 3/11: *Passing*, Part 3

Week 9

3/14-3/18: NO CLASSES: Spring Break

Week 10

Monday, 3/21: Film screening: *Rebel Without a Cause*

Wednesday, 3/23: Film screening, cont.

Friday, 3/25: Film screening, cont.

Week 11

Monday, 3/28: Film discussion

Wednesday, 3/30: Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*

Friday, 4/1: *A Raisin in the Sun*, cont.

Week 12

Monday, 4/4: Test #2

Wednesday, 4/6: Louise Erdrich, “The Red Convertible” (PDF)

Friday, 4/8: Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (excerpts) (PDF)

Week 13

Monday, 4/11: Wendy Wasserstein, *The Heidi Chronicles*

Wednesday, 4/13: *The Heidi Chronicles*, cont.

Friday, 4/15: Writing workshop

Week 14

Monday, 4/18: Frank Miller, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, Books 1-2

Wednesday, 4/20: *Batman*, Book 3

Friday, 4/22: *Batman*, Book 4

Week 15

Monday, 4/25: Shirley Jackson, “The Lottery” (PDF)

Wednesday, 4/27: Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*;

Friday, 4/29: *The Hunger Games*, cont.; Research paper DUE;

Week 16

Monday, 5/2: *The Hunger Games*, cont.

Wednesday, 5/4: Review, conclusion to the course

Friday, 5/6: Test #3