

ENGLISH 214: AMERICAN LITERATURE II: JAMES TO THE PRESENT

Fall 2020

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Rebecca Stephens
OFFICE: 486 CCC
OFFICE HOURS: Via Zoom M 2-3:00, T 2-3:00 and
by appt.

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“In the United States there is more space where nobody is than where anybody is.
This is what makes America what it is.
Does it make human nature in America what it is?
If not does it make the human mind in America what it is?”

—Gertrude Stein



COURSE PURPOSE: As the quote above from an American writer illustrates, determining what is American, who is American, and how one thinks as an American are questions that have continually pre-occupied writers, critics, and students (along with teachers) of American literature. Our goal in this class is not necessarily to solve this problem, but rather to explore the various answers we see when we read different voices in American literature and examine the literary history of the United States. With this in mind, we will be reading a variety of literary genres to develop multiple strategies for analyzing, discussing, and viewing written pieces to understand both their content and how their ideas fit in with social, political, and literary constructs. These activities will help us achieve the GEP Humanities Learning Outcomes:

- Read closely, think critically, and write effectively about texts or cultural artifacts that reflect on perennial questions concerning the human condition (such as the search for truth and meaning, the confrontation with suffering and mortality, or the struggle for justice, equality, and human dignity).
- Investigate and thoughtfully respond to a variety of ideas, beliefs, or values held by persons in situations other than one's own.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: This course is designed to help you

1. Understand and analyze texts and cultural contexts of American literature since the late nineteenth century.
2. Examine, discuss, and apply a variety of critical approaches useful for interpreting literature.
3. Explore the various genres of American literature, including poetry, short fiction, drama, novels and non-fiction.
4. Enhance understanding of the formation of individual and national identity through literature.
5. Question mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in American literature and, thus, historic constructions of power.
6. Use writing to increase your understanding of literary works and their context and to think critically about your own and others' written work.
7. Enjoy some works of literature that may be new to you.

COURSE TEXTS:

Rental

- *The Heath Anthology of American Literature, Volumes C, D, and E*, 5th Edition, Paul Lauter, ed., Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

Purchase/Other

- *The Street*, Ann Petry. Houghton Mifflin: Mariner Books, 1946, rpt.1974.
- One additional novel which you will select from a list provided.

COURSE WORK:

I. Reading Responses (50% of final grade):

To help you read closely, think critically, and write effectively, you will respond to the class readings in a variety of ways. These responses will take three forms: postings to an on-line discussion forum in Canvas, discussion during weekly class meetings in Zoom, and “wildcard” responses that you prepare for the weekly Zoom meetings. These responses will help you keep up with the reading for the class and encourage you to pose questions and formulate your responses to the readings before participating so that we can have effective group discussions.

◆ Canvas Discussion Postings (40% of final grade)

Each week you will be writing and posting to Canvas short journal-entry type responses to the reading and to others' ideas about what we've read. By using the format below, I hope that we will be able to hear as many ideas from everyone as possible. The process for the postings will be the following:

- For half of each week's reading assignment (identified by an asterisk on the course calendar) you will need to post **by midnight (11:59 p.m.) on Sunday** a short (about 200 words minimum) response to what you've read. Some questions on the reading each week to help you get started on your response.
- **By noon (12:00 p.m.) on Friday**, you will need to complete a second posting of at least the same length that expresses your reflection on the week's coursework. This posting should bring together all the various readings and activities we've done for week. After you post your reflection, please respond to at least 1 of your classmate's posts.

These responses should include your thoughts and reactions to the reading and/or discussions and may include questions that the reading raised for you; these can be quite informal, but they should be spellchecked and otherwise made readable and should demonstrate clearly that you've read and reflected thoughtfully about the readings and our work in the class. I will grade these posts using a Canvas rubric.

◆ Wildcard Reading Responses (10% of final grade)

For the reading assignments for which you have not completed a Canvas posting, you will be given a specific activity to prepare for the weekly Zoom meetings on Wednesdays; these activities will involve a variety of strategies designed to help stimulate discussion in class. The activities may include preparing discussion questions, writing a short analysis, directed note-taking, quizzes, or some type of creative approach to the readings. I will post a description of the week's Wildcard response requirements to Canvas. If you need to miss the weekly Zoom meeting, you will need to post your Wildcard to Canvas by the start of class time.

The Canvas postings and the wildcard activities will be graded on a point system. The total points allocated to this component will be divided by the total number of responses we complete during the semester to determine the final points each post/task is worth.

II. Collaborative Book Group Presentation (20%)

You will be required to prepare one synchronous or recorded Zoom presentation for the entire class with three other classmates. The presentation will be on a contemporary novel selected from a list by your group; your presentation will include background on the author and context of the novel, along with explaining what you think is the key purpose and value of the novel. A more detailed description of this assignment and its requirements, along with the list of books, will be posted later in the semester.

COURSEWORK (continued)**III. Final Essay (20% of final grade)**

The objective of this project is to help you make a connection between the many readings and ideas that we will cover in this class. For this paper, you will be writing a reflective essay that synthesizes your thoughts and those of your classmates with those of the writers we'll read over the semester. You will have the two options for formatting the paper, both of which will allow for some creativity: a reflective literary essay or a multigenre essay.

In each case, the paper will be approximately 4-5 pages long, plus a works cited page. A description that discusses the methods, frames the assignment, and covers all of the specific details will be posted to Canvas and discussed later in the semester.

IV. Participation (10%)

We will be using our scheduled class time to meet in Zoom each week for a variety of discussion activities related to the readings for the week. This will be an opportunity to interact, often in small groups with others to try to build greater understanding together of the course materials, so that I hope that you find participating in these sessions useful. There will be points associated with participating in each Zoom session; if you cannot participate in a Zoom session in a given week because of illness or care-giving duties, there will be an asynchronous option for participating to earn these points.

Video/Audio Recording: Out of respect for students' privacy and the intellectual ownership of the professor, your video or audio recording of the class are prohibited without the written consent of the instructor. Some discussion may be recorded by the instructor for posting to Canvas for class purposes, but I will be careful to respect your privacy in any recordings I make.

COURSE CALENDAR

Note: Page numbers refer to your Heath Anthology text, unless otherwise specified

Week	Reading Assignment		
1 9/2-9/4	V O L U M E C V O L U M E D	Introductions Syllabus	
		For 9/2 Class Discussion	“Aunt Chloe’s Politics,” “The Man With the Hoe,” and “The Preacher and the Slave” (pdf file emailed and posted in Canvas)
2 9/7-9/11		For 9/7 Post Readings	Alcott “My Contraband” p. 652 Twain “The War Prayer” p. 104
		For 9/9 Class Discussion	Harris “Free Joe and the Rest of the World” p. 111 Chesnutt “The Passing of Grandison” p. 135 Oskison “The Problem of Old Harjo” p. 224 Wildcard 1
3 9/13-9/18		For 9/13 Post Readings	James “Daisy Miller: A Study” p. 281
		For 9/16 Class Discussion	Freeman “The Revolt of ‘Mother’” p. 723 Wildcard 2
4 9/20-9/25		For 9/20 Post Readings	Gilman <i>The Yellow Wall-Paper</i> p. 578
		For 9/23 Class Discussion	Antin from <i>The Promised Land</i> p. 823 Bonnin from <i>Days of an Indian School Girl</i> Ch. I-VII p. 811 Eaton “Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of a Eurasian” p. 777 Wildcard 3
5 9/27-10/2		For 9/27 Post Readings	Toward the Modern Age p. 867 Wharton “Roman Fever” p. 1019
		For 9/30 Class Discussion	Masters from <i>Spoon River Anthology</i> and <i>New Spoon River</i> pp 1029-1032 Anderson “Hands” p. 1073 Wildcard 4
6 10/4-10/9	For 10/4 Post Readings	Lowell “The Sisters” p. 1141 Cummings “[pity this busy monster humanunkind]” p. 1277 Stein “Geographical History of America” p. 1153 Eliot “The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock” p. 1280	
	For 10/7 Class Discussion	Faulkner “Barn Burning” p. 1464 Porter “The Jilting of Granny Weatherall” p. 1388 Wildcard 5	
7 10/11-10/16	For 10/11 Post Readings	Hughes “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” p. 1521, “I, Too” p. 1525 Larsen from <i>Passing</i> , One and Two p. 1605	
	For 10/14 Class Discussion	Whitecloud “Blue Winds Dancing” p. 1752 Gold from <i>Jews Without Money</i> p. 1658 LeSueur “Women on the Breadlines” p. 1728 Wildcard 6	
8 10/18-10/23	For 10/18 Post Readings	Petry, <i>The Street</i> Ch. 1-4	
	For 10/21 Class Discussion	Petry, <i>The Street</i> Ch. 5-9 Wildcard 7	
9 10/25-10/30	For 10/25 Post Readings	Petry, <i>The Street</i> Ch. 10-14	
	For 10/28 Class Discussion	Petry, <i>The Street</i> Ch. 15-18 (end) Wildcard 8	
10 11/1-11/6	For 11/1 Post Readings	Hellman from <i>Scoundrel Time</i> (Canvas e-reading) Miller <i>The Crucible</i> p. 2053	
	For 11/4 Class Discussion	Book Groups Research Wildcard 9	
11 11/8-11/13	For 11/8 Post Readings	Ferlinghetti “I am Waiting” p. 2252 Ginsberg “America” p. 2240 Yamamoto “Seventeen Syllables” p. 2164	

	E	For 11/11 Class Discussion	Group Meetings
12 11/15- 11/20	E	For 11/15 Post Readings	Mohr From <i>Rituals of Survival</i> “A Thanksgiving Celebration (Amy) p. 2578 Mukherjee “Orbiting” (Canvas e-reading)
		For 11/18 Class	Group Conferences
13 11/25		No Zoom class meeting Presentation Preparation Time	
14 12/2		Collaborative Book Group Presentations 1-5	
15 12/9		Collaborative Book Group Presentations 6-10	
Finals Week 12/14- 12/18		Final Essays Due by the end of the scheduled final exam time 12/15/20, Tuesday 7:00 PM	