

American Literature

Fall 2024

Instructor: Dr. Sarah Bertekap	Classroom: Burris 115
Email: sarah.bertekap@bsu.edu	Class meeting time: Section 1-2 M/W/F 8am-9am Section 3-4 M/W/F 9am-10am
Office: Elliott B027A	Office hours: M: 2pm-4pm Tu: 8am-11am W: 2pm-4pm Th: 1pm-3pm F: 10am-11am *if these times don't work for you, send me an email so we can find a time to meet.*

Our course will examine the ways that representations of North American identity develop over time. What does literature tell us about how expectations and norms surrounding the performances of identity evolve and contradict themselves as time passes? How do writers represent the ways that power ebbs and flows amongst specific identity groups? Through occasionally including later adaptations of earlier texts in our effort to explore these questions, we will also consider how our attitudes toward and judgements of specific texts and ideas can shift.

Learning Objectives

By the conclusion of this course, you should be able to:

- Demonstrate familiarity with American literary works from a range of genres (short story, novel, folktale, poetry, film/television, etc.) that date from indigenous creation stories all the way to the 21st century.
- Understand both America's evolving historical context and the changing relationships between the various identity groups that gain and lose power throughout American history. This course does not provide an exhaustive history of America, but you will have the opportunity to dig deeper into the historical context of the works we read.
- Recognize and articulate when you see writers contesting or challenging the traditions, norms, and expectations policing the performance of various identities through your own carefully written and argued analysis.
- Empathetically engage with ideas that may counter your own conception of "American literature."
- Substantiate your own critical readings of literary texts with well-organized, evidence-based close readings.
- Gain comfort in participating in critical discussion and creating a classroom community.
- Use creative methods of composition to represent and highlight the knowledge you have gained in the course while also generating something new (and, hopefully, a little bit fun).

Required Readings

All readings will be in volumes A-E of the *Norton Anthology of American Literature* unless otherwise specified. Other readings will be posted on Canva or printed for you, depending on length. We will conclude the semester with *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* (2012) by Benjamin Alire Sáenz.

I will post the official reading schedule *after* you collaboratively choose the readings for each volume of the *Norton Anthology*. For each volume, you will have the opportunity to vote for which readings you want to cover. Below is a bird's eye view of the reading schedule:

- Aug. 12 – Aug. 30: Volume A
- Sept. 2 – Sept 20: Volume B
- Sept. 23 – Oct. 11: Volume C
- Oct. 14 – Nov. 1: Volume D
- Nov. 4 – Nov. 22: Volume E
- Dec. 2 – Dec. 9: *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*

Course Components & Assignments

The due dates for your writing projects are below. I will always update you of any schedule changes with plenty of notice.

Class participation	20%	Includes reflective writing, reading quizzes, and class citizenship	
Short close reading discussion board post + replies #1	15%	Sept. 6th	
Midterm concept map	20%	First draft	Sept. 25th
		Final draft	Sept. 30th
Short close reading discussion board post + replies #2	15%	Nov. 18th	
Final adaptation project	30% (15% for project and 15% for process note)	First draft	Dec. 11th
		Final draft	TBD (finals week)

Grading Scale & Policies

A: 94-100%	C+: 77-79%
A-: 90-93%	C: 74-76%
B+: 87-89%	C-: 70-73%
B: 84-86%	D*: 69% or below
B-: 80-83%	

Grading of Class Participation

Engagement in our course means being a good citizen to our classroom. You prepare for class by reading thoroughly, you respectfully participate in small group activities and conversation, and you make a solid effort to have your voice heard in full-group discussions. To make the labor of being well-prepared for class more legible to me as your instructor, we will also have weekly reading quizzes starting week 2. These are not meant to trick or confuse you, but rather give you real, tangible credit for the hard work that you are putting into preparing for class. Some weeks, I may opt for an “exit ticket” instead of a quiz for you to hand in. Quizzes and exit tickets are meant to help measure your personal class participation in a clear and equitable way.

There are no make-ups for these short reading quizzes, except for excused absences.

Grading of Short Paper Discussion Board Posts + Replies

The purpose of our short papers is not to turn in a perfect, polished, and revised piece of work. These paper prompts are designed to help you develop understanding of the texts we encounter in class and support you in building toward your ideas for larger projects. For that reason, I grade these assignments *on completion*. I will not take off points for sentence-level mistakes, but I’ll still give you feedback on those moments so that you can keep them in mind in the future. *If you turn in your short paper and it sufficiently addresses the prompt and rubric requirements, you’ll automatically get full credit (A).* These short papers are the place for you to practice the skills necessary for succeeding in your major projects and try out new ideas, so do not be afraid to extend yourself and experiment in new ways of writing and thinking. I reward risk-taking even if it doesn’t always go the best in your execution. Short paper discussion board posts + replies that are not turned in at all will earn a zero. See “late policy” below.

Late Work

If something affects your ability to complete work on time, please let me know so we can talk through our options. Persistently late work means you penalize yourself by losing out on the opportunity to gather feedback on your ideas from peers.

Late Final Drafts

If you anticipate handing in your final draft late, you are **required to email me at least 24 hours in advance of the submission date** so that I am informed of the situation and can help you figure out a plan for getting the work done without penalty to your grade. **Failure to email me about late final drafts will result in me deducting 1 step of a letter grade each day it is past due (so, an A paper would automatically become an A minus, then a B plus, etc.).**

Late First Drafts

Deadlines for first drafts are tricky since your lack of a draft will impact your ability to benefit from peer reviews in class. **Because of this, late first drafts will reduce your grade on the final draft by 1 step of a letter grade (so, an A paper would automatically become an A minus). If you fail to submit a first draft, your grade on the final draft will be dropped two steps of a letter grade (so, an A paper would become a B+).**

If you are going to be late on submitting a first draft (which you should avoid as much as you can!), **email me at least 24 hours before class** so I can instruct you on how to proceed with participating with peer review. Just because you don’t have a draft to share in peer review does not mean that you can’t help others with their work and learn from the workshopping experience itself. **You can still**

get participation credit for doing peer review even if you are missing your own draft or only have an incomplete draft to be reviewed.

Academic Dishonesty

You are responsible for the integrity of your work, and you must produce work that is academically honest. This means that all your coursework must be your own and must be created specifically for this course. Failing to maintain the integrity of your work can have serious consequences. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, the following: submitting someone else's paper, including papers you obtain online, as your own writing; and, attempting to take credit for someone else's (or an AI's) words or ideas without properly citing them. If you are even remotely uncertain about whether or not any part of your work is academically honest, please contact me for assistance. Also, please refer to the student handbook for additional information, especially the quoted portions below:

- *Plagiarism: representing as one's own work any material obtained on the Internet (such as term papers, articles, etc.). When Internet sources are used in student work, the author, publisher and website must be identified. (See policy on Academic Dishonesty in the student handbook.)*
- *Students are prohibited from using any electronic device to capture, record, and/or transmit test, quiz, exam, or other class information or any other information in a manner constituting fraud, theft, cheating, or academic dishonesty and students are prohibited from using electronic devices to receive such information.*
- *Plagiarism or violations of procedures prescribed to protect the integrity of an assignment, such as: a. Submitting an assignment purporting to be one's original work, which has been wholly or partially created by another person; b. Presenting as one's own work ideas, representations, or words of another person without customary and proper acknowledgment of sources; c. Submitting as new work, without the faculty member's prior consent or knowledge, one's own work which has been previously presented for another class elsewhere; d. Knowingly permitting one's work to be submitted by another person as if it were the submitter's original work; e. Cooperation with another person in academic dishonesty, either directly or indirectly, as an intermediary agent or broker; f. Knowingly destroying or altering another's work, whether in written or digital form, computer files, artwork, or other format; g. Aiding, abetting, or attempting to commit an act or action that constitutes academic dishonesty.*

Use of AI and LLM Technology

Humanities Division Statement

The Humanities Division recognizes that artificial intelligence (AI) provides some exciting new tools for academic work. However, AI also poses significant dangers for academic integrity. Passing off as your own any research, words, or ideas which you did not create is plagiarism. That is always the case whether the source is print, internet content, or generated by AI. It is vital to read the policies your individual humanities instructors have regarding AI, and ask them any questions you may have about the use of AI in their course.

Instructor Statement

The purpose of this course is to deepen the skills, habits, and knowledge that AI chatbots offer convenient shortcuts through. In the process of generating writing for you, AI typically erases character and identity from the voice of your writing and pulls from uncredited, uncompensated sources of information. Under no circumstances should you use AI this semester to create writing that you claim as your own. If you have any questions about this, I am happy to chat with you about what I mean and what my expectations are.

Classroom Policies

Attendance

It is the policy of the Indiana Academy that any absence from class is unexcused, except for illness, death in the family, college or school-related activities, and extenuating circumstances. When a student is absent from a class, the instructor reports the student absence to the Faculty Attendance Coordinator in the Office of Academic Affairs. Unless the absence is excused by a school official, it is considered unexcused. The decision as to whether an absence is excused is not determined by the instructor. Four or more unexcused absences in any particular class a student takes will lead to academic and residential consequences to be determined by the Office of Academic Affairs and the Office of Residential Life that may include detention, residential groundings, parent/principal conference, among others.

Wireless Device Policy

We will often do in-class writing as well as participation in collaborative documents, slides, and Padlet posts. Because of this, I encourage you to bring a laptop or tablet daily along with a notebook and pen/pencil. **Your phone should remain silenced and out of sight throughout class.** Part of our course will be helping you realize what study habits work best for you, so use this as an opportunity to try out different methods. If I see too many tech distractions during class, I will not hesitate to revoke laptop/tablet privileges. Our course requires *responsible* use of technology. All students are subject to the Academy's policy below:

Pursuant to Indiana Code 20-26-5-40.7, The Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics and Humanities prohibits student use of wireless communication devices for non- instructional purposes in the classroom. As such, any and all portable wireless devices, that have the capability to provide voice, messaging, or other data communication between two or more parties, must only be used for academic purposes directly tied to the classroom activity or related educational task. Exceptions to this wireless device policy are eligible through academic accommodations, individualized education programs, or with instructor approval permitting the use of a wireless device for justification related to health, safety, and/or well-being.

The improper use of a wireless device in an active classroom setting is subject to disciplinary action including but not limited to; a verbal warning, temporary seizure of said device by a school official, an unexcused absence for the class in question, written communication to parent/guardian, among other elevated consequences for repeated improper use.

Multilingual Scholarship

This classroom is a multilingual and translingual space, and we speak and write across languages. I encourage you to speak to me about any concerns you have with language use (reading, speaking, and/or writing) in this course, and I ask that you be respectful of your peers and their ways of communicating in this multilingual space.

Mutual Respect & Classroom Environment

Throughout the semester, we will read texts and engage with media that introduce complex, diverse, and sometimes controversial subjects. I want this class to be a space in which we all feel safe and comfortable to share our thoughts, ideas, and opinions. Each of you should regularly remind yourself that your thoughts and ideas are important and valuable. We must consider that each one of us comes into the classroom with our own histories, experiences, identities, values, etc. and each one of us deserves respect, care, and thoughtfulness in listening and communicating our ideas in a shared space. I will never ask you to change your mind, but I will expect your mind to remain open in this course. That being said, I will not tolerate disrespectful or inappropriate comments in this classroom, and those students found to be making such remarks will be asked to leave immediately and will forego participation for that day. I will also issue warnings before we discuss sensitive topics. If you need to leave the room during an upsetting conversation, please let me know so I can help connect you with the support you need.

Inclusive Excellence

Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains a diverse faculty, staff and student body. We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse as expressed in our Beneficence Pledge. As a reflection of Ball State's commitment to respect, civil discourse, and the Beneficence Pledge, Inclusive Excellence at the Indiana Academy emerges as one of the priorities of our living and learning community. We strive to exist together respectfully and compassionately, creating an environment where every member can thrive. Unfortunately, there might be occasions when something occurs that disrupts our progress toward meeting these objectives. In this case, we encourage any member of the Academy community to file a Campus Climate Report (CCR) https://bsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6mbRbL5acAntUTI. All reports will be taken seriously, and appropriate responses will be carried out by Academy administration.

Literature Note

Important literature is often about the deepest and most difficult struggles of humans to live authentically in a complex world. Through the thoughts and experiences of literary characters, we can examine and evaluate our personal responses to life's mysteries, complexities, disappointments, and joys. In addition, we begin to understand how a writer, in his or her own struggle to experience creatively, has responded to the social, political, and artistic environment of their times. The English Department at the Academy selects reading material that reflects these human struggles, has endured the test of time, and has earned a respected place in the universe of letters. The instructors will often include recently published poems, stories, and articles that reflect the diversity of contemporary cultures and experiences. **If, because of the powerful nature of the reading experience, you are unable to read and study a specific text with reasonable analytic objectivity, please confer with your instructor.** Alternative texts are available.