

American Literature

(Eng. 3101)

Fall 2021

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Office Hours: MW 11am-12pm Tue/Thu 11-12, 1-3 (and by appt. and Zoom, as needed)

Course Description

Our goal in this course is to engage thoughtfully and rigorously with selected texts in American Literature. We will discuss and analyze texts in which influential American writers have explored themes of identity / selfhood, freedom, and the American dream. We will approach the literature as participants **in an on-going conversation about America**: its diversity of people, culture, and ideas, and its conflicts between people, cultures, and ideas.

Each text in this course, whether a story, poem, or novel, represents a significant contribution to American literature. Each text, in turn, challenges us **to interact with its ideas as intelligent participants in a larger American story**. To that end, we will engage in discussions, formal and informal writings, group work, and creative projects.

Course Objectives

Our primary objective in this course is to progress significantly as writers and thinkers. We will:

- ***Engage critically** with stories and poems.
- *Generate **critical questions** about texts and use them as touchstones to thoughtful discussions.
- *Write sophisticated **formal thesis-based essays** using textual evidence and MLA standards.
- *Maintain an **on-going conversation with the texts and one another** through informal (but critically cogent) response papers.
- *Develop as communicators in an academic setting through **in-class discussions**.
- *Develop academically sound papers with **good grammar, sentence structure, spelling, syntax, diction**, etc.
- *Participate in **formal and informal discussions** with **civility and thoughtfulness**, listening to one another's points-of-view and responding critically and intelligently – and always kindly.

Texts *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, Vols. A-E, Ed. Nina Baym, 2007.
The Great Gatsby, by F. Scott Fitzgerald
Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, by Harriet Jacobs
Writing Analytically, 6th Edition, by David Rosenwasser and Jill Stephen, 2012

***Assignments**

Grading

Essays 40%
 Midterm Exam 15%
 Class Writings/Projects 25%
 Participation 10%
 **Final Exam 10%

A 94-100
 A- 90-93
 B+ 88-89
 B 84-87
 B- 80-83
 C+ 78-79
 C 74-77
 C- 70-73
 D* 0-69

*All assignments and percentages are subject to change, depending upon class needs and the decision of the instructor. You can always talk to me about your individual work and progress throughout the semester.

**Take-home exam – not a comprehensive test, but an exercise following a major paper to cap off the end of the semester.

Grading

Assignments will come with point values or grades or check marks (to indicate credit). Smaller assignments will be almost daily. You will write both in class and outside of class. Some assignments will include written feedback from me, while some will simply receive the points your work has earned or a letter grade or check mark.

Assignments Note

All assignments are to be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due. Work that is turned in late will be penalized. The only exceptions to this rule are if you have a legitimate emergency and/or an excused absence (see below) and you and I have had an in-person discussion about a short extension. Technological problems (a broken printer, for example) are not acceptable excuses for late work. **You should always back up your work and have contingency plans for logistical problems.** This is a significant part of being academically responsible. Everything you do for this class, in and out of the classroom, can and will contribute positively or negatively to your overall course grade. I reserve the right, throughout the course, to make any adjustments I deem necessary based upon your on-going performance.

Excused Absences: In the event that you have an excused absence and cannot turn an assignment in on time, we will arrange for you to complete the assignment with a new due date, which is likely to be the next class.

Participation

Our classroom conversations are dependent upon your participation. While you are expected to have your readings and assignments done on time, you are also expected to be prepared to share your observations, questions, and ideas with the class. You will be evaluated on the **overall effort and value of your daily engagement with our material**. This includes in-class writing and workshops. Failure to be prepared or to contribute reduces your participation percentage.

Attendance

You are expected to be in class and on time daily. Failure to do so will hurt your overall grade. Sleeping in class constitutes an unexcused absence. If you have an emergency and cannot make it to class, I ask you that you contact me in person or through my office phone number.

Tardiness: If you arrive in class 5 minutes after the appointed time, you will be considered tardy. If you are more than 10 minutes tardy, you will earn an unexcused absence, but you will still be expected to attend class.

Academic Honesty

You are required to produce work that is academically honest. Direct and indirect plagiarism, both of which we will discuss in class, are unacceptable and have serious academic consequences. **If you are even remotely uncertain about whether or not any part of your work is academically honest, then you are to contact me and we can discuss the situation.** Please refer to the student handbook for additional information, including information that is new this year.

Accommodations

If you require any special accommodations due to a documented disability, let me know as soon as possible and I will make whatever adjustments are necessary for your comfort in my class.

Laptops

Laptops are to be closed and off your desks during class time unless I have specified otherwise (we will occasionally write in class) This class requires an intense engagement in literature and writing and the distraction of computers on any level in the classroom is unacceptable.

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 his/her 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.

BSU Diversity Statement

“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 and through university resources found at <http://cms.bsu.edu/campuslife/multiculturalcenter>.”

Indiana Academy Mask Policy

The Indiana Academy will follow [Ball State University's mask policy](#) (see Section IV). Based on current CDC guidance recommending the wearing of face masks for all people—regardless of vaccination status—in public indoor settings in communities where the rate of coronavirus transmission is high or substantial, all employees, students, and campus visitors are required to wear a mask while inside any University building. This requirement is effective on August 9, 2021. Fully vaccinated people are not required to wear masks outdoors.

Individuals who are not fully vaccinated for COVID-19 are required to wear face masks while inside campus buildings and outside when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

If a student declines to wear a face mask as required, the student will be referred to the Director of Academic Affairs or the Director of Residential Affairs. If the situation occurs in a classroom or other academic setting, it is considered a classroom management issue, and the teacher will remind the student of the requirement and give the student a chance to comply with it prior to referring the matter to the Director of Academic Affairs or the Director of Residential Affairs. Wearing masks is crucial to preventing the spread of COVID-19 to others.