

**English 392**  
**20<sup>th</sup> Century American Novel**  
**Summer 2014**

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Office: 263 PLC  
Office Hours: Monday 10:00 – 12:00  
By appointment  
Class Time: M-Th 12:00 – 1:50 pm, Library 100

**Course Description:**

To paraphrase historian Ronald Takaki, this course will hold up a “different mirror” for understanding American stories and literary history. As such, we will read a variety of novels that document various experiences that question what it means to be “American.” Our readings will include canonical and non-canonical novels that also seek to trouble the question of what constitutes a novel.

**Course Goals:**

In this course you’ll be required to perform lots of analysis and close reading. In other words, you’ll be doing more than simply restating “WHAT” the text says. Rather, you’ll be attempting to unpack the text by examining specific words, phrases, images, symbols, characters, etc. Your analysis and close readings will help you to understand and explain the more complicated interwoven meanings that lie beneath the surface. You’ll also be required to place texts into dialog with one another, and to begin to make connections between abstract ideas and their literary representation.

**Required Texts (Available at the Duckstore)**

Baldwin, James, *Giovanni’s Room*  
Morrison, Toni, *Beloved*  
Tobar, Hector, *The Tattooed Soldier*  
Wharton, Edith, *The Age of Innocence*

**Requirements**

1. Read, Read, Read! My main requirement is that you read. The reading for this course is engaging and intensive. However, falling behind in the reading will put you at a disadvantage during class discussions. If I feel that people are falling behind in the reading, I reserve the right to give reading quizzes. I would prefer to spend our time in class discussing these interesting and provocative texts. However, I will not hesitate to give reading quizzes.
2. One final exam: The final for the course is cumulative. The final date is the last day of class. I’ll provide details on the exam as the summer progresses.
3. Papers: Each Thursday students will turn in a paper that provides a critical summary of the novel for the week. Papers should be 1 1/2 to 2 pages in length. Your task in the paper will be to summarize the action and themes in the novel and provide a brief critical analysis. I will provide more details on this assignment during week one.
4. Discussion Questions: All students will sign up for a discussion question for the term. Students will introduce their discussion questions with a brief presentation. Discussion questions must be posted to the discussion forum on Blackboard 24 hours **prior** to the next class meeting. Please plan your reading accordingly. Those students who do not present a discussion question during a given class period will be responsible to read questions posted by others **prior** to attending class. In other words, you should read the discussion question forum before coming to class each day.

## Grading

Final: 40 points

Papers: 40 points (10 points each)

Participation: 10 points

Discussion question: 10 points

Participation consists of **all** of the following: reading the assigned texts on time, participating in in-class discussions, and attendance. Discussion questions will be graded based on timeliness of submission to Blackboard, thoroughness of question/engagement, in-class presentation of question.

## Policies

- Attendance and Participation: In order to receive full credit for participation, you must come to class prepared. This means **ALWAYS** bring the text(s) with which we are currently working, always bring any other necessary writing materials, always bring your questions about the reading, and always bring a respectful and positive attitude. **Participation includes oral participation**, completing in-class assignments, coming to class prepared (and on time), AND presenting your discussion question.
- Tardiness: It is imperative that you get to class on time. I will also respect this aspect of our time together. We all have tight schedules. Please respect me, your classmates, and yourself by getting to class on time.
- All written work must be typed, stapled, and double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides. Fonts should be no larger than 12 points and no smaller than 10 points. All written work must include your name, the course, the instructor's name, and the name of the assignment in the upper left corner. Handwritten work will not be accepted. Make sure to number your pages. Please document citations using the MLA format. You can get the MLA style guidelines online at <http://www.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/Library/workshop/citmla.htm> or you can check the reference desk at the library.
- You are responsible for keeping a backup copy of all of your work. Backups may take the form of computer copies, hard copies, or both. In any event, make sure that you have a readily accessible copy of ALL of your work. Your computer crashing is not a valid excuse for missing an assignment.
- **Please turn your off your cell phone.**
- **No laptops, tablets, smart phones, or other electronic devices will be allowed.** The only exception to this rule will be in the case of a documented accommodation.
- Bring the assigned text to class.
- Since we meet during the noon hour, please feel free to bring any food or other nourishment that you need. However, make sure to clean up after yourself.
- How to address me: Please feel free to call me Professor Vázquez or Dr. Vázquez. Calling me by my first name is not acceptable. I don't care for Mr. Vázquez (Mr. Vázquez is my father). My preference is for Professor Vázquez.

## About Making Life Easier for Each Other

This course is not designed to be competitive. In fact, a competitive atmosphere will work against the activities of the class. Many of the activities are interactive, and each individual deserves the full cooperation of everyone else. **The one rule that is sacred in this classroom is to respect everyone**—each other, me, and the authors. Disagreements will happen and ideas will be challenged, but they must be controlled and expressed *academically*—which means in a civil, well-considered, and intelligent manner. Please note that we **WILL** be discussing the political ramifications of these texts. These may include discussions that may at first *seem* unrelated to the material at hand. My hope is that you will begin to understand that **NO** text emerges in a political or aesthetic vacuum. In fact, as we will see, these texts have important political and social implications for our everyday lives. For this reason, please bring an open mind and a patient attitude. It is much easier to learn from each other, about each other, and about ourselves when we are listening.

## Timeline

*This syllabus is primarily a reading guide. As such, it may be subject to revision.*

### Week 1: Introduction/ Wharton.

Monday 6/23

Tuesday 6/24

Wednesday 6/25

Thursday 6/26

### Read by This Date:

Introduction/.Wharton Ch. 1-13

Wharton Ch. 14-28

Wharton Ch. 28-32

Wharton Ch. 32-end, **Paper One Due**

### Week 2: Hemingway

Monday 6/30

Tuesday 7/1

Wednesday 7/2

Thursday 7/3

Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* Part 1 Ch 1-2

Baldwin, Part 1 Ch. 3

Baldwin, Part 2 Ch. 1-3

Baldwin, Part 2 Ch. 3-end **Paper Two Due**

### Week 3: Baldwin

Monday 7/7

Tuesday 7/8

Wednesday 7/9

Thursday 7/10

Toni Morrison, *Beloved* pp. 1-105

Morrison, 106-147

Morrison, pp. 148-199

Morrison 200-end, **Paper Three Due**

### Week 4: Tobar

Monday 7/14

Tuesday 7/15

Wednesday 7/16

Thursday 7/17

Tobar, *The Tattooed Soldier*, pp. 1-120

Tobar, pp. 121--226

Tobar, pp. 227-end

**Final exam, Paper Four Due**