

English 407
Spring 2015
2-4:50 M
206 Friendly

Prof. William Rossi
363 PLC; 346-3955
Hrs: M 11:30-1;W 1:30-3
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Senses of Place in American Literature

In this course we will explore the many ways American writers have represented senses of place--and senses of being displaced--in poetry, fiction, and non-fiction from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Within the limitations of a ten-week quarter, we will examine these varying of senses of place in relation to key literary historical movements, particular geographical regions, and ethnicities.

Required Texts

Wendell Berry, *That Distant Land* (Counterpoint).
Tim Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction*, 2nd Ed (Wiley).
William Faulkner, *Go Down, Moses* (Random House).
Bobbie Ann Mason, *Shiloh and Other Stories* (Random House).
Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (Penguin).
Karen Tei Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange* (Coffee House Press).

Course Learning Outcomes

In this upper-division English course, students can expect to learn how to do the following:

- read nineteenth- and twentieth-century American literary texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions;
- draw on theories of humanistic and critical geographical theories of place to situate these texts within their cultural and historical contexts, particularly regarding ideologies of modernity and “modernization”;
- perform critical, formal analyses of the works we study;
- write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose;
- employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments in papers and in seminar presentations;
- and employ primary and secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, as they contribute to the final critical essay’s thesis.

Attendance

Since we only meet once per week, one unexcused absence is permitted; thereafter final grades will be lowered one-half letter grade for each absence.

Readings Schedule (BB= available on Blackboard)

3/30 Introductions and course overview

- 4/1 (2-4 in 248 PLC) Cresswell, *Place*, chap 1-2; on BB: **William Wordsworth**, “Lines Composed . . . Above Tintern Abbey” (1798); **Henry Thoreau**, selections from *Walden* (1854) and **Walt Whitman**, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” (1855)
- 4/6 *Place*, chap 3 and 6; Paul C. Adams, “Peripatetic Imagery and Peripatetic Sense of Place” (2001) [BB]
Sarah Orne Jewett, “A White Heron” (1886) [BB]
Zitkala-Ša, “Impressions of an Indian Childhood” and “School Days of an Indian Girl” (1900) [BB]
Senses of Place paper due
- 4/13 PRESENTATIONS
Willa Cather, “Paul’s Case” (1905) [BB]
James Baldwin, “Sonny’s Blues” (1965) [BB]
Senses of Place paper due
- 4/20 PRESENTATIONS
Wendell Berry, essays: “Higher Education and Home Defense” (1987), “The Prejudice Against Country People” (2003) [BB]; stories in *That Distant Land*, “Thicker Than Liquor,” “It Wasn’t Me,” “The Boundary,” “The Wild Birds,” and “Fidelity” (1986-2005). NB: see inside front and back endpapers for story locations and character genealogies.
Bobbie Ann Mason, *Shiloh and Other Stories*, “Shiloh,” “Old Things,” “Residents and Transients,” “Nancy Culpepper,” and “A New-Wave Format” (1982-85)
- 4/27 PRESENTATIONS
William Faulkner, *Go Down, Moses*, “The Old People,” “The Bear” and “Delta Autumn” (1942)
- 5/4-11 *Place*, chap 4; Doreen Massey, “Imagining Globalisation: Power-Geometries of Time-Space” [BB]
Leslie Marmon Silko, “Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective” and *Ceremony* (1977)
- 5/18 **Karen Tei Yamashita**, *Tropic of Orange* (1997)
- 5/25 MEMORIAL DAY
- 6/1 Final Projects, conferences
- 6/8 Final Projects due by 5pm Monday, June 8, in 363 PLC
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Graded Work

The graded work for the class will consist of a short paper on place in our assigned readings, due either Week 2 or 3, depending on the presentations schedule (15%); three article summaries (10% each) and two sets of readings questions (10% each) in connection with presentations; regular participation (10%); and a final project (25%). For the latter, students will elect one of three kinds of papers (each 6-7 pp total): a creative personal place essay and reflective analysis of it; a place paper on a literary work not assigned in seminar; or two take-home final essays set by me. Descriptions and guidelines for these assignments and all other written work will be distributed separately.

Please note that all written assignments are due in hardcopy on dates listed in the separate assignment sheets and no late work can be accepted.