

Mon-Wed, 8:30-9:50, 214 McKenzie Hall

Mark Whalan office hours: Wed 11-1, Thu 9:15-10:15

**Course description:** This course presents a survey of American novels in the twentieth and twentieth centuries. It will cover a variety of styles and subgenres of the novel—including the modernist and postmodernist novel, the bildungsroman, the passing novel, and the short story cycle. It covers texts that consider the explosive changes in American society during these years—including the “nationalization” of American life and the rapid growth of American cities; African American life and identity in the Jim Crow Era; the nature of American regionality in the twentieth century; the experience of World War; and America’s role as a military and economic superpower. A discussion-based classroom and a range of assignments will facilitate our encounters with a wide-ranging and exciting set of texts.

**Learning Outcomes:** The class will help you work toward the six learning outcomes informing the English Major. By the end of the class, you should have improved your ability to:

- 1) read literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions;
- 2) draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts;
- 3) perform critical, formal analyses of literary, cinematic, and other cultural texts;
- 4) write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose;
- 5) employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments;
- 6) employ primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay’s thesis.

In addition to developing your abilities in these core skills, this class has the following, more specific, desired learning outcomes. By the end of the class, you should:

- 1) understand some of the formal and thematic developments of the twentieth-century American novel tradition
- 2) know more about some of the major cultural and historical contexts informing this tradition
- 3) improve your ability to perform critical analysis, both orally and in writing, of novels, novellas, and short fiction
- 4) understand some of the trends in literary scholarship on the American novel

**Course reading:** You must complete all the essential reading listed for each class, and come prepared to discuss it. This is a discussion-based classroom, and I expect everyone to have something to contribute in **every** session.

**Attendance:** At the beginning of each class you should sign the attendance register. You are allowed two unexcused absences. Missing classes beyond this without adequate excuse and documentation (such as a doctor’s note) will result in your overall grade being lowered by 1/3 of a letter grade for each absence. **Five such absences results in a failing grade.**

**Classroom Electronic Communications Policy:** In this class, cell phone use and the use of tablet devices is prohibited. All such devices should be stored in your bags or left at home. Laptop computers are permitted but only for activities related to the content of the class.

**Plagiarism:** All written work should be either your own or contain clear references to your sources; one of the hallmarks of good scholarship is being able to use the insights of others while keeping your ideas distinct from theirs. I expect you to abide by university regulations on the proper acknowledgement of source material, and to follow accepted conventions for how to reference scholarship. I advise you to check on the university's student conduct code

(<http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/StudentConductCode/tabid/69/Default.aspx>), especially section II.25, for information about this; I recommend MLA style for the presentation of your research papers. Information about how to prepare bibliographies and citations in MLA style can be found at the Purdue Online Writing Lab (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>), and at the Knightcite MLA citation application (<http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/>).

**Late papers:** Papers should be submitted on the day of the deadline listed. I will deduct 1/3 of a letter grade for each day a paper is late. I will not accept any paper that is more than a week late. Any request for extensions will be carefully considered, but should be made as far in advance of the due date as possible.

**Disability:** If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to discuss this with me as soon as possible. Also please request that an AEC Advisor send a letter outlining your approved accommodations. [Accessible Education Center: [uoac@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoac@uoregon.edu), 346-1155; <http://aec.uoregon.edu/>].

## **GRADED WORK**

### **Participation 10%**

I will reward students who approach discussion in an enthusiastic, informed, and collegial way. Both I and your fellow students will appreciate informed opinions, critical insight, a willingness to take a few risks, and respect for others. I will occasionally set small in-class activities and presentations which will also count towards this grade.

### **Group artefact presentation, 10%**

Here, you will work in small groups. Please work together to identify an artefact connected to your novel—an initial review, a piece of critical scholarship, a public controversy about the author or text, an online forum devoted to it. You should present this to the class, identifying some of the issues it raises and framing these to the class in order to initiate a discussion.

### **Close reading exercise I (3-4 pages) 15%, due 10/14**

This will give you several short sections of writing to analyze. You will choose one and write a short response which carefully considers the style of the piece and the ideas it presents, using a “tool kit” for analyzing prose. More details will be given in advance of the due date.

### **Keyword assignment (3-4 pages) 15%, due 11/2**

This will give you a series of keywords which are important in thinking about one or more of the texts on the course. Choosing one, you will write a short paper about its relevance to one of our novels or stories. More details will be given in advance of the due date.

### **Critical paper (7 pages) 30%, due 11/18**

This will allow you to write a more complex and lengthy response to one or more texts which you have found particularly interesting. You can choose one prompt from several that will be provided two weeks before the due date.

### **Final 20%**

This will give you a series of take-home exam questions to choose from. Sample exam questions will be distributed two weeks ahead of the exam. You will have 72 hours to write your 3-4 page response.

### **REQUIRED BOOKS**, in order of schedule

Willa Cather, *My Antonia*. Norton Critical ed., Sharon O'Brien, 2015. ISBN 978-0393967906  
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*. Broadview Critical ed., 2012. ISBN 978-1551119878  
Nella Larsen, *Passing*. Norton Critical Edition, ed. Carla Kaplan., 2008. ISBN 978-0393979169  
William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying: The Corrected Text*. Vintage Edition, 978-0679732259  
J.D. Salinger, *Nine Stories*. Back Bay Books, ISBN 978-0316767729  
Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Harvest Books, ISBN 978-0156034029

### **CLASS SCHEDULE**

#### **Wk 1:**

Mon 9/28: Introductions

Wed 9/30: Henry James, "The Middle Years," "The Art of Fiction." On Canvas.

ADDITIONAL READING: Wayne Booth, "On Discriminating Between Realisms." "When and Why: The Rise of the Modern Novel," Jesse Matz. Both on Canvas.

#### **Wk 2:**

Mon 10/5: Willa Cather, *My Antonia*, book one, *The Shimerdas*.

Wed 10/7: Willa Cather, *My Antonia*, book two, *The Hired Girls*.

ADDITIONAL READING: Richard King, "The Regions and Regionalism." On Canvas.

#### **Wk 3:**

Mon 10/12: Willa Cather, *My Antonia*: books three and four, *Lena Lingard* and *The Pioneer Woman's Story*.

Wed 10/14: Willa Cather, *My Antonia*, book five, *Cuzak's Boys*. **CLOSE READING ASSIGNMENT DUE**

ADDITIONAL READING: "The Novel D meubl ," "Miss Jewett," both from Willa Cather's essay collection *Not Under Forty*. On Canvas.

#### **Wk 4:**

Mon 10/19: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*, chapters 1-8.

Wed 10/21: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*, chapters 9-12.

ADDITIONAL READING: "Utopia and its Discontents." Edward Rothstein. In *Visions of Utopia*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003: 1-28. On Canvas.

#### **Wk 5:**

Mon 10/26: Nella Larsen, *Passing*, parts one and two: "Encounter" and "Re-Encounter."

Wed 10/28: Nella Larsen, *Passing*, part three: "Finale."

ADDITIONAL READING: Introduction to Norton edition of *Passing*, by Calra Kaplan; "The Novel as a Function of American Democracy," Ralph Ellison, on Canvas; reportage from the Rhineland Case, Norton edition of *Passing*.

**Wk 6:**

Mon 11/2: William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, to p.76. **KEYWORD ASSIGNMENT DUE**

Wed 11/4: William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, pp.77-123.

ADDITIONAL READING: Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction" and "Ms. Bennet and Mrs. Brown," Michael Whitworth, introduction, "Modernism." All on Canvas.

**Wk 7:**

Mon 11/9: William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, pp.124-199.

Wed 11/11: William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, pp.200-248.

**Wk 8:**

Mon 11/16: J.D. Salinger, *Nine Stories*. "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut," "Just Before the War with the Eskimos."

Wed 11/18: J.D. Salinger, *Nine Stories*. "The Laughing Man," "Down at the Dinghy," "For Esme--with Love and Squalor." **CRITICAL PAPER ASSIGNMENT DUE**

ADDITIONAL READING: Irving Howe, from "Mass Society and Postmodern fiction." On Canvas.

**Wk 9:**

Mon 11/23: J.D. Salinger, *Nine Stories*. "Pretty Mouth and Green My Eyes," "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period," "Teddy."

Wed 11/25: Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, to p.87.

ADDITIONAL READING: Martha Nussbaum, "Democratic Citizenship and the Narrative Imagination," *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* 107. 1 (2008): Chapter 10, 143-157.

**Wk 10:**

Mon 11/30: Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, pp.88-209.

Wed 12/2: Conclusions

**FRIDAY 12/4: FINAL PAPER PROMPTS RELEASED, 1PM**

**MONDAY 12/7: FINAL PAPERS DUE, 1 PM**