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: uoaec@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


**CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Wk 1:**
Mon 9/28: Introductions

**Wk 2:**

**Wk 3:**
Mon 10/12: Willa Cather, *My Ántonia*: books three and four, *Lena Lingard* and *The Pioneer Woman’s Story*.

**Wk 4:**

**Wk 5:**
Mon 10/26: Nella Larsen, *Passing*, parts one and two: “Encounter” and “Re-Encounter.”


Wk 6:

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


Wk 7:


Wk 8:


Wk 9:


Wk 10:


Wed 12/2: Conclusions

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

MONDAY 12/7: FINAL PAPERS DUE, 1 PM