

English 467: American literature 1900-present [American literature beyond borders]

ANSTETT 191, MW 12-1:20PM

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Office Hours Thursday, 10-1pm, 207 PLC

Course outline:

This course provides a survey of American literature since 1900 with a focus on American literature in the world. We consider what happens when American writers (and characters) travel, how American writers use cultural and linguistic resources from around the world, as well as what America and characteristically American themes look like from the outside. Topics covered will include what is involved in processes of translation and cultural exchange; how race in America is understood across the world; how moments of political crisis or war can become occasions for international artistic collaboration; and the experience of being an immigrant and a tourist in America in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. Writers covered will include Edith Wharton, Claude McKay, Ezra Pound, James Baldwin, Elizabeth Bishop, and Azar Nafisi.

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 ways American literature operated across and beyond borders in the twentieth century and beyond
- 2) Understand some of the theoretical concepts informing a transnational approach to literary study

- 3) Have an introductory appreciation of some of the major transnational texts and authors with connections to America in the twentieth century and beyond
- 4) Have improved your ability to perform critical analysis, both orally and in writing, of novels, poetry, and short fiction

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.

Every week, there are secondary readings available on Canvas to provide further information on the primary readings and to introduce you to some of the scholarly debates that have oriented discussion of these texts. This reading is not compulsory, but will help you get the most out of the course and will be especially helpful when preparing for assignments.

Assignments and grading:

Class participation 10%; presentation 10%, 2 short papers 40% (3-4pp each), final paper 40% (8-10pp).

Papers:

Questions will be circulated for papers two weeks in advance of the paper deadline.

Presentations:

You will all deliver a group presentation, in groups to be established in the first week of term. These presentations should last for no more than ten minutes.

Class participation:

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 might occasionally set small in-class activities and presentations which will also count towards this grade.

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>) 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 in class 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.

Inclusive Learning Environments:

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center (formerly Disability Services) in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

ESSENTIAL READING: please purchase these texts or arrange access for them for the duration of the course. These texts are available at the Duckstore.

Claude McKay, *Selected Poems*. Dover, 1999. 0486408767.

James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, Delta Press, 2000 (0385334583)

Vladimir Nabokov, *The Annotated Lolita*, ed. Alfred Appel Jr. 1991. 0679727299

Elizabeth Bishop, *Poems*. Farrar-Strauss-Giroux, 2011. 0374532362

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU BRING THESE BOOKS—AND PRINTOUTS OF INDIVIDUAL STORIES, ARTICLES OR POEMS FROM CANVAS THAT ARE THE SUBJECT OF THE DAY'S DISCUSSION—TO CLASS. You should also get into the habit of marking up your texts as you go along: it will help you focus your reactions and ideas for class discussion, and will improve the detail and insight of your written papers.

READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTIONS, AND AN INTRODUCTION TO TRANSATLANTIC TASTE

M 1/4: Introductions.

W 1/6: Edith Wharton, "False Dawn" parts I-VI (pp.3--74), on Canvas.

Extra reading: Lawrence Buell, "American Literary Emergence as a Postcolonial Phenomenon." *American Literary History* 4.3 (1992): 411-442. Available on JSTOR and ProjectMUSE.

WEEK TWO: POUND, TRANSLATION, AND CHINA

M 1/11: Ezra Pound, poems up to *Cathay* section (on Canvas), and "A Retrospect," available at http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/m_r/pound/retrospect.htm

W 1/13: Ezra Pound, *Cathay*, on Canvas, and alternative translations of "A River Merchant's Wife," available at http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/m_r/pound/othertranslations.htm

Extra Reading:

*Hugh Kenner, "Imagism," "The Invention of China," "The Persistent East," in *The Pound Era*, Berkeley: U of California P, 1972. On Canvas.

Ezra Pound, "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry," available at http://www.pileface.com/sollers/IMG/pdf/The_Chinese_Written_Character_As_A_Medium_For_Poetry_Ernest_Fenollosa-Ezra_Pound_.pdf

Barry Ahearn, "Cathay: What Sort of Translation?" in *Ezra Pound and China*, ed. Zhaoming Qian. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2003. On Canvas.

Ignacio Infante. *After Translation: The Transfer and Circulation of Modern Poetics across the Atlantic*. New York: Fordham UP, 2013.

WEEK THREE: THEORIZING THE TRANSNATIONAL

M 1/18: NO CLASS: MLK DAY

W 1/20: Theorizing the transnational.

Jahan Ramazani, "A Transnational Poetics." *American Literary History* 18.2 (2006): 332-359. On Canvas.

Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies: Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 12, 2004." *American Quarterly* Vol. 57, No. 1 (Mar., 2005), pp. 17-57. On Canvas.

Wider reading: Susan Castillo, "Interesting times: A Meditation on American Studies in Britain, 2007." *The European Journal of American Culture* 27.1 (2008): 5-14. On Canvas.

WEEK FOUR: THE BLACK DIASPORA AND CLAUDE MCKAY'S GLOBAL POETICS

M 1/25: Uncollected poems and *Harlem Shadows*, in *Claude McKay: Selected Poems*

W 1/27: *Harlem Shadows*, in *Claude McKay: Selected Poems*

Wider reading:

Kenneth Warren, Appeals for (Mis) recognition: Theorizing the Diaspora," in Donald Pease and Amy Kaplan, eds. *Cultures of U.S. Imperialism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993. On Canvas.

William J. Maxwell, "Introduction," *The Collected Poems of Claude McKay*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2004. On Canvas.

WEEK FIVE: THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR AND THE INTERNATIONAL COALITION

M 2/1: Spain. Read Cary Nelson's overview of the Spanish Civil War at <http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/scw/overview.htm>. Ernest Hemingway, "The Denunciation," "The Butterfly and the Tank," "Night Before Battle," "Under the Ridge." All in *The Fifth Column and Four Stories of the Spanish Civil War*. New York: Scribner's, 1998; on Canvas.

FIRST ASSIGNMENT DUE

There will also be a screening of Ken Loach's film of the Spanish Civil War, *Land and Freedom* (1995), in support of this week and next week's readings. Date and time TBA.

W 2/3: W.H. Auden, "Spain," "September 1, 1939," "On this Island," from "Sonnets from China," "Musée des Beaux Arts," "Gare du Midi," "Epitaph on a Tyrant," "In Memory of W.B. Yeats," "In Praise of Limestone," "The Shield of Achilles," "England to Me is My Own Tongue," "Refugee Blues." On Canvas.

Extra Reading: Stephen Burt, "'September 1, 1939' Revisited: Or, Poetry, Politics, and the Idea of the Public." *American Literary History* 15.3 (2003): 533-559. On ProjectMUSE.

Cary Nelson, "Poetry Chorus: How Much for Spain?" in *Revolutionary Memory: Recovering the Poetry of the American Left*. Routledge: New York, 2001. 181-243. On Canvas.

WEEK SIX: JAMES BALDWIN AND AMERICANS IN PARIS

M 2/8: James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, to the end of Part Two, Chapter Two.

W 2/10: James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, to conclusion.

Extra Reading: "'A Cavern Opened in My Mind': The Poetics of Homosexuality and the Politics of Masculinity in James Baldwin." Cora Kaplan. In *Representing Black Men*, ed. Marcellus Blount and George P. Cunningham. New York: Routledge, 1995. 27-54.

"James Baldwin in Paris: Exile, Multiculturalism and the Public Intellectual." Lloyd Kramer. *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*, 27.1 (2001): 27-47. Both on Canvas.

WEEK SEVEN: NABOKOV AND POSTWAR AMERICA I

M 2/15: Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, Foreword and chapters 1-23.

W 2/17: Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, chapters 24-33.

Extra Reading:

"Virtual Eden: 'Lolita,' Pornography, and the Perversions of American Studies," Paul Giles. *Journal of American Studies* 34.1 (2000): 41-66. On Canvas.

WEEK EIGHT: NABOKOV AND POSTWAR AMERICA II

M 2/22: Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, part two, chapters 1-22.

SECOND ASSIGNMENT DUE

W 2/24: Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, part two, chapters 23-36, and “On a Book Entitled Lolita.”

Extra reading: “Lolita in History,” Susan L. Mizruchi. *American Literature*, Volume 75, Number 3, September 2003, pp. 629-652. On Canvas.

WEEK NINE: BISHOP AND THE POETRY OF GEOGRAPHY

M 2/29: Bishop, *Geography III* and *New Poems*

W 3/2: Bishop, *Questions of Travel*, plus “The Map.”

Extra reading: “Home, Wherever That May Be: Poems and Prose of Brazil.” Barbara Page. *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Bishop*, ed. Angus Cleghorn and Jonathan Ellis. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014: 124-140.

“Bishop, History, and Politics.” Stephen Gould Axelrod. *The Cambridge Companion to Elizabeth Bishop*, ed. Angus Cleghorn and Jonathan Ellis. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014: 35-48. Both on Canvas.

WEEK TEN: READING LOLITA IN TEHRAN

M 3/7: Azar Nafisi, Section One: *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. On Canvas.

Extra Reading: “Reading “Reading Lolita in Tehran” in Idaho,” John Carlos Rowe. *American Quarterly* 59.2 (2007): 253-275. On Canvas.

W 3/9: Conclusions

M 3/14: FINAL PAPER DUE