

ENG 660
Prof. Wonham
wonham@uoregon.edu

Office Hours:
W 3-6
PLC 274

American Literary Realism

"Realism, n. The art of depicting nature as it is seen by toads. The charm suffusing a landscape painted by a mole, or a story written by a measuring-worm."—Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary* (1911)

"Realism is nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material."—William Dean Howells (1886).

As these famous attempts at definition imply, "realism" has been a contested term since its earliest appearance in American critical discourse. More recent commentators have tended to bracket questions of truthfulness (Howells) and ugliness (Bierce) in describing American Literary Realism as a complex strategy "for imagining and managing threats of social change" (Amy Kaplan, *The Social Construction of American Realism*). However one defines this incorrigible and perhaps incoherent term, "realism" remains an indispensable tool for conceptualizing literary production in the United States after the Civil War. Students in this seminar will read works by Howells, Mark Twain, Edith Wharton, Mary Wilkins Freeman, Charles W. Chesnutt, Abraham Cahan, Sui Sin Far, Roland Barthes, Bill Brown, and others as they explore the contours of American Literary Realism in theory and in practice.

Required Texts:

Phillip Barrish, *The Cambridge Introduction to American Literary Realism*
William Dean Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*
Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*
Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Conjure Woman and Stories of the Color Line*
William Dean Howells, *A Hazard of New Fortunes*

Week 1: Beginnings

William Dean Howells, from "Criticism and Fiction" pdf
Phillip Barrish, from *The Cambridge Introduction to American Literary Realism* (intro and chapter 1)
Mary Wilkins Freeman, "A New England Nun" pdf
-----, "A Mistaken Charity" pdf
Andrew Lawson, from *Downwardly Mobile: The Changing Fortunes of American Realism* pdf

Week 2: High Realism: The Feeling of Reality

Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (first half)

Howells, from "Criticism and Fiction" pdf

Barrish, from *The Cambridge Introduction to American Literary Realism* (chapter 3)

Amy Kaplan, "The Mass-Mediated Realism of William Dean Howells" (from *The Social Construction of American Realism*) pdf

Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect" pdf

Week 3: High Realism: The Realism War

Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (second half)

Howells, from "Criticism and Fiction" pdf

Wai Chee Dimock, "The Economy of Pain: The Case of Howells" pdf

Barrish, "William Dean Howells and the Roots of Realist Taste" (from *American Literary Realism, Critical Theory, and Intellectual Prestige, 1880-1995*) pdf

Week 4: High Realism: The Language of Manners

Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth* (first half)

Barrish, from *The Cambridge Introduction to American Literary Realism* (chapter 4)

Nancy Bentley, "'Hunting for the Real': Wharton and the Science of Manners" (from *The Cambridge Companion to Edith Wharton*) pdf

Week 5: High Realism: Women in Realism/Reality

Wharton, *The House of Mirth* (second half)

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" pdf

Barrish, from *The Cambridge Introduction to American Literary Realism* (chapter 8)

Jason Puskar, "The Feminization of Chance: Edith Wharton and Crystal Eastman," from *Accident Society: Fiction, Collectivity, and the Production of Chance*) pdf

Week 6: Realism, Race, Reconstruction

Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Conjure Woman and Stories of the Color Line*

Mark Twain, "A True Story, Repeated Word for Word as I Heard It" pdf

Barrish, from *The Cambridge Introduction to American Literary Realism* (chapter 9)

Week 7: Realism and the New City

William Dean Howells, *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (first half)

Barrish, from *The Cambridge Introduction to American Literary Realism* (chapter 6)

Brad Evans, "Howellsian Chic: The Local Color of Cosmopolitanism" pdf

Week 8: Realism and the Chance-Life

Howells, *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (second half)

Amy Kaplan, "The Unreal City in *A Hazard of New Fortunes*" (from *The Social Construction of American Realism*) pdf

Jason Puskar, "The Insurance of the Real" (from *Accident Society: Fiction, Collectivity, and the Production of Chance*) pdf

Week 9: Realism and the Other Half

Sui Sin Far, "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" pdf

Abraham Cahan, "*A Providential Match*" pdf

Jacob Riis, from *How the Other Half Lives* pdf

Barrish, from *The Cambridge Introduction to American Literary Realism* (chapter 10)

Week 10: The Afterlives of Realism

Ernest Hemingway, "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" pdf

Bill Brown, "The Tyranny of Things" (from *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature*) pdf

Barrish, from *The Cambridge Introduction to American Literary Realism* (conclusion)

American Literary Realism and Naturalism

Selected Bibliography of Book-length Works*

- Balkun, Mary McAleer. *The American Counterfeit: Authenticity and Identity in American Literature and Culture*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2006.
- Barrish, Phillip. *American Literary Realism: Critical Theory and Intellectual Prestige, 1880-1995*. Cambridge: Oxford UP, 2001.**
- Becker, George, ed. *Documents of Modern Literary Realism*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963.
- Broadhead, Richard. *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993.**
- Bell, Michael Davitt. *The Problem of American Realism*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993.**
- Becker, George, ed. *Documents of Modern Literary Realism*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963.
- Berthoff, Werner. *The Ferment of Realism: American Literature, 1884-1919*. New York: Free Press, 1965.
- Boeckmann, Cathy. *A Question of Character: Scientific Racism and the Genres of American Fiction, 1892-1912*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2000.
- Borus, Daniel. *Writing Realism: Howells, James and Norris in the Mass Market*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1989.**
- Brown, Bill. *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003.**
- Cadle, Nathaniel. *The Mediating Nation: Late American Realism, Globalization, and the Progressive State*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1014.**
- Cady, Edwin H. *The Light of Common Day: Realism in American Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1971.**
- Campbell, Donna. *Resisting Regionalism: Gender and Naturalism in American Fiction, 1885-1915*. Columbus: U of Ohio P, 1995.
- Carter, Everett. *Howells and the Age of Realism*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1954.**
- Chase, Richard. *The American Novel and its Tradition*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1957.
- Conder, John J. *Naturalism in American Fiction: The Classic Phase*. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1984.
- Corkin, Stanley. *Realism and the Birth of the Modern United States: Cinema, Literature, and Culture*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1996.
- Den Tandt, Christophe. *The Urban Sublime in American Literary Naturalism*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1998.
- Dudley, John. *A Man's Game: Masculinity and the Anti-Aesthetics of American Literary Naturalism*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2004.
- Fetterley, Judith and Marjorie Pryse. *Writing out of Place: Regionalism, Women, and American Literary Culture*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2003.**
- Fisher, Philip K. *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel*. New York: Oxford UP, 1985.**
- Fleissner, Jennifer L. *Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American*

- Naturalism*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2004.
- Geismar, Maxwell. *Rebels and Ancestors: The American Novel, 1890-1915*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1953.
- Giles, James Richard. *The Naturalistic Inner-City Novel in America: Encounters with the Fat Man*. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1995.
- Glass, Loren Daniel. *Authors Inc.: Literary Celebrity in the Modern United States, 1880-1980*. New York: New York UP, 2004.
- Glazener, Nancy. *Reading for Realism: The History of a Literary Institution*. Durham: Duke UP, 1997.**
- Habegger, Alfred. *Gender, Fantasy, and Realism in American Literature*. New York: Columbia UP, 1982.**
- Hochman, Barbara. *Getting at the Author: Reimagining Books and Reading in the Age of American Realism*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2001.
- Howard, June. *Form and History in American Literary Naturalism*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1985.**
- Jones, Gavin. *Strange Talk: The Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1999.
- Kaplan, Amy. *The Social Construction of American Realism*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988.**
- Kolb, Harold H., Jr. *The Illusion of Life: American Realism as a Literary Form*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1969.
- Lawlor, Mary. *Recalling the Wild: Naturalism and the Closing of the American West*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2000.
- Lawson, Andrew. *Downwardly Mobile: The Changing Fortunes of American Realism*. New York: Oxford UP, 2012.**
- Lehan, Richard Daniel. *Realism and Naturalism: The Novel in an Age of Transition*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2005.
- Levine, Lawrence. *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988.
- Link, Eric Carl. *The Vast and Terrible Drama: American Literary Naturalism in the Late Nineteenth Century*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2004.
- Martin, Jay. *Harvests of Change: American Literature, 1865-1914*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967.
- Martin, Ronald E. *American Literature and the Universe of Force*. Durham: Duke UP, 1981.
- McKay, Janet H. *Narration and Discourse in American Realistic Fiction*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1982.
- Michaels, Walter Benn. *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism: American Literature at the Turn of the Century*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1987.**
- Mitchell, Lee Clark. *Determined Fictions: American Literary Naturalism*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988.**
- Murphy, Brenda. *American Realism and American Drama, 1880-1940*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1987.
- Nettels, Elsa. *Language and Gender in American Fiction: Howells, James, Wharton, and Cather*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1997.

- Orvell, Miles. *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1989.**
- Papke, Mary E., ed. *Twisted from the Ordinary: Essays on American Literary Naturalism*. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2003.
- Pizer, Donald, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism: Howells to London*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1995.
- . *Documents of American Realism and Naturalism*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1998.
- . ***Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1966.**
- . *The Theory and Practice of American Literary Naturalism: Selected Essays and Reviews*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1993.
- Puskar, Jason. *Accident Society: Fiction, Collectivity, and the Production of Chance*. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 2012.**
- Quirk, Tom and Gary Scharnhorst, eds. *American Realism and the Canon*. Newark: U of Delaware P, 1994.
- Roggenkamp, Karen. *Narrating the News: New Journalism and Literary Genre in Late Nineteenth-Century Newspapers and Fiction*. Kent, OH: Kent State UP, 2005.
- Rohrbach, Augusta. *Truth Stranger than Fiction: Race, Realism, and the U. S. Literary Marketplace*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.
- Shi, David E. *Facing Facts: Realism in American Thought and Culture, 1850-1920*. New York: Oxford UP, 1995.
- Sundquist, Eric, ed. *American Realism: New Essays*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1982.
- Thomas, Brook. *American Literary Realism and the Failed Promise of Contract*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1997.
- Trachtenberg, Alan. *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1982.**
- Walcott, Charles Child. *American Literary Naturalism: A Divided Stream*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1956.
- Wadsworth, Sarah. *In the Company of Books: Literature and its "Classes" in Nineteenth-Century America*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2006
- Warren, Kenneth. *Black and White Strangers: Race and American Literary Realism*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993.**
- Wilson, Christopher. *The Labor of Words: Literary Professionalism in the Progressive Era*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1985.**
- Wonham, Henry B. *Playing the Races: Ethnic Caricature and American Literary Realism*. New York: Oxford UP, 2004.
- Ziff, Larzer. *The American 1890s: Life and Times of a Lost Generation*. New York: Viking, 1966.

*Titles in bold are of particular interest and value.