ENG 392
20th Century American Novel

Course Description: English 392 will examine the formal strategies and thematic concerns of six major American novelists of the 20th century: Edith Wharton, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Thomas Pynchon, and Toni Morrison. By means of close reading and detailed historical contextualization, we will investigate how these authors imagine and represent Americanness; we will explore the possibilities and limits of the novel form and how are they tied to personal and collective identities; and we will ask how major American writers construct (or deconstruct) the categories of race, class, and gender. The course is designed to help students engage in literary study and to hone their critical faculties through scholarly discussion and analytical writing about literature. Together with ENG 391, 19th Century American Novel, ENG 392 forms a chronological upper-division survey of the American novel from its beginnings in the 19th century to the present. These courses can be taken as a sequence, or they can be taken individually. No prerequisites are required, but students should be capable of advanced university-level work in literary studies. Although readings focus on the 20th century, the course challenges students to locate American fiction within broadly conceived historical, social, and political contexts. As concentrated surveys of major American fiction, both ENG 391 and ENG 392 satisfy the university's Group Requirement in the Arts and Letters category.

Papers, Exams, Grading: There will be two assigned papers in the course, a five page paper due on Thursday, October 20 (Week 4), and a 7 page paper due on Tuesday, November 22 (Week 9). There will also be a take-home final exam during exam week. The first paper and the final exam will each be worth 25% of the final grade. The second paper will be worth 40%. Class participation, including performance on occasional reading quizzes, will be worth another 10%, which means that students who make no effort to participate in class discussion or during office hours can earn no more than an A- for the term. All written material must be typed, double-spaced, thoroughly proofread, and printed.

Plagiarism: Students who hand in written material that is not their own will receive an F for the course, and a report will be submitted to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs to determine if additional penalties should be imposed.

Attendance: Students who have a legitimate reason for missing a class (e.g. illness or a scheduled conflict with university activities) may have up to TWO excused absences with no penalty. An excused absence must be explained and approved PRIOR to the class in question. Unexcused absences and any absences beyond the two permitted will result in a 1/3 reduction of the FINAL grade. Students who are not present when attendance is
taken at the beginning of class will be considered absent. Students who leave before the end of class will also be considered absent.

**Required Readings:** Books are available at the University Bookstore.

- Wharton, *Ethan Frome* (1911)
- Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925)
- Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926)
- Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (1930)
- Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (1977)

**Schedule of Assigned Readings**

**Week 1**
T: Introduction to the course
Th: Wharton (intro-ch. 3)

**Week 2**
T: Wharton (ch. 4-7)
Th: Wharton (ch. 8-end)

**Week 3**
T: Fitzgerald (ch. 1-4)
Th: Fitzgerald (ch. 5-7)

**Week 4**
T: Fitzgerald (ch. 8-9)
Th: Paper Due in Class (5 pages)
    Hemingway (ch. 1-6)

**Week 5**
T: Hemingway (ch. 7-13)
Th: Hemingway (ch. 14-19)

**Week 6**
T: Faulkner (pp. 3-84)
Th: Faulkner (pp. 85-176)

**Week 7**
T: Faulkner (pp. 177-261)
Th: Pynchon (ch. 1-3)

**Week 8**

T: Pynchon (ch. 4-5)
Th: Pynchon (ch. 6)

**Week 9**

T: Paper Due in Class (7 pages)
   Morrison (ch. 1-5)
Th: Thanksgiving

**Week 10**

T: Morrison (ch. 6-12)
Th: Morrison (ch. 13-15)

**FINAL EXAM:** The take-home final will be due Friday, December 9, 10:00 am, in class.