ENG 392 The American Novel: 20th Century-Present

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course begins with the question of what is the American novel? It is a question asked and answered by some of the most ingenious and challenging thinkers of the 20th century, who, as it turns out, were novelists. But for these thinkers who thought in the form of novels, the 20th century was in many respects about breaking down the form of the novel and the idea of "Americanness," as it had been traditionally understood by Anglo-European settlers. This is a century of tradition-breaking, deep reckonings with history, and radical new identity formation in the cultural contexts of immigration, war, sexual liberation, feminism, black power, LGBTQ rights, and new media from comics to TV to Twitter. The fact that the novel survived all this and persists as a popular form will be one of our enduring riddles.

COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES
Students completing this course should be able to:
1) read 20th-c. American novels with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions, both formal and thematic;
2) situate individual 20th-c. American novels within relevant historical contexts;
3) present persuasive written interpretations of individual American novels using methods of formal analysis, historical analysis, and clear and convincing argumentation;
4) write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose;
5) offer clear, compelling, and poised class presentations;
6) employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce thoughtful, persuasive arguments both in class and on paper.

REQUIRED TEXTS (@Duck Store)
Willa Cather, My Antonia (1913)
William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (1929)
J.D. Salinger, The Catcher in the Rye (1951)
Alison Bechdel, Fun Home (2006)

Recommended critical essays available on CANVAS TBA

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One
Tu. 4/3
Course Introduction
What is a novel? What is the 20th American novel?
Th. 4/5
Cather, O Pioneers!

Week Two
Tu. 4/10
Cather, O Pioneers!
Th. 4/12
Faulkner, Sound and the Fury [read ONLY “April Seventh, 1928”]
Week Three
Tu. 4/17
Faulkner, Sound and the Fury [read ONLY “June Second, 1910”]
Th. 4/19
Faulkner, Sound and the Fury [read ONLY “April 6, 1928”]

Week Four
Tu. 4/24
Faulkner, Sound and the Fury [read ONLY “April 8, 1928”]
Th. 4/26
Salinger, Catcher in the Rye

Week Five
Tu. 5/1
Salinger, Catcher in the Rye
Th. 5/3
Salinger, Catcher in the Rye

Week Six
Tu. 5/8
In-Class Midterm Exam
Th. 5/10
Butler, “Bloodchild” and “Positive Obsession”

Week Seven
Tu. 5/15
Butler, “Speech Sounds” and “Amnesty”
Student Presentations
Th. 5/17
Student Presentations

Week Eight
Tu. 5/22
Díaz, The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao
Th. 5/24
Díaz, The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao

Week Nine
Tu. 5/29
Díaz, The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao
Th. 5/31
Student Presentations

Week Ten
Tu. 6/5
Bechdel, Fun Home
Th. 6/7
Bechdel, Fun Home
Final Paper DUE in class

FINAL EXAM: 12:30 Monday June 11th
ASSIGNMENTS & ASSESSMENT
This course offers a variety of assignments by which your performance is ultimately assessed so that your final grade is not dependent upon a single skill or performance. These include two exams, an in-class presentation, regular class participation, and a 6-8pp final paper. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are due at the beginning of the class on which they are due. Late assignments will be docked 1/3 grade for every day they are late. Grades will be assigned in accord with competencies and performance levels outlined in the English Department’s Undergraduate Grading Policies:
http://english.uoregon.edu/resources/attachment/english-dept-u-g-grading-policies-6

Attendance: At the start of every class, you must sign the attendance sheet (if you arrive late, it is your responsibility to make sure the sheet is signed). I consider attendance in your final grade: for every absence beyond two, your final grade will be reduced by a third of a grade.

Daily Reading Assignments: Read as much as you can of a given novel for the first class period in which it will be discussed, unless otherwise instructed (e.g. you have specific reading assignments for The Sound and the Fury). You are expected to have FINISHED the novel by the last class period in which it is discussed. Carefully pace yourself. Read thoughtfully, underline passages of interest, and try to take pleasure in the novels.

Class Participation: Bring one passage from each day’s reading or one thoughtful question about the reading to each class period and be prepared to share either with the group. Participation includes both attendance and active communication with others in the class about course texts and topics. Borderline grades will benefit from a high grade in participation.

Grading: A final grade of C or better for the course is required for English major credit. No incompletes will be granted, except in case of documented emergency.

Grades: Class Participation 10%; Midterm Exam 25%; Presentation plus 3pp. paper 15%; Final Paper (5-7pp), 25%; Final Exam, 25%.

Papers: You will write two papers: the first will be a very short, 3 pp. paper to accompany your in-class presentation due on the day that you present; the second will be a 5-7 pp. analytical paper due R 6/7 in class. All papers must be titled. You should proofread carefully; spelling, punctuation, and grammar count. Late papers lose 1 step per day (A to A-, B+ to B, C to C-, etc.) including weekends/holidays. After a week, late papers will not be accepted; they will count as missed assignments (F).

In-Class Presentation: Each student will deliver a 5-7 minute in-class presentation based on a pithy, compelling, and well-substantiated argument for why an individual novel on our syllabus ought or ought not to be included in a course list for “the 20th/21st century American novel. The presentation should offer arguments based on formal innovation, thematic originality, and significant engagement with history (or lack thereof). Students will write a 3-page short paper offering a clear statement of argument (thesis) and three items of substantiating evidence. Presentation grades will include both the quality of the argument, which will be visible in the paper, and the quality of the oral presentation (clarity of speech, eye contact, projection of voice).

Examinations: The in-class Midterm Exam covers the first half of the course. It will consist of short answer and identification questions (25% of final grade). The Final Exam covers the second half of the course. It will consist of short answer and identification questions (25% of final grade).
Make-up exams are given only in case of a documented medical condition or documented university obligation. University policy forbids the giving of make-up exams before the scheduled exam time.

**Discrimination and Harassment Reporting:** Any student who has experienced sexual assault, relationship violence, sex or gender-based bullying, stalking, and/or sexual harassment may seek resources and help at safe.uoregon.edu. From the SAFE website, students may also connect to Callisto, a confidential, third-party reporting site that is not a part of the university. As UO policy has different reporting requirements based on the nature of the reported harassment or discrimination, more information about reporting requirements for discrimination or harassment is available at http://aaeo.uoregon.edu/content/discrimination-harassment. For details about confidentiality of information and reporting obligations of employees go to: titleix.uoregon.edu. As a Student Directed Employee, I will direct students who disclose sexual harassment or violence to resources that can help and will only report the information shared to the university administration when the student requests that the information be reported (unless someone is in imminent risk of serious harm or a minor). I am required to report all other forms of prohibited discrimination or harassment to the administration.

**Incomplete Policy:** Undergraduate students have one calendar year to make up an incomplete mark assigned by a UO faculty member. Failure to make up the incomplete at the end of one calendar year will result in the mark of "I" automatically changing to a grade of "F" or "N." No incompletes will be granted, except in case of medical or personal emergency.

**Students Needing Accommodation:** UO strives to create inclusive learning environments. If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations, please notify me and the Accessible Education Center (164 Oregon Hall; http://aec.uoregon.edu), so we can make appropriate arrangements.

**Use of Electronic Devices.** Laptops and tablets for taking notes are permitted, but cell-phone use during class is forbidden. Texting or surfing the web during class time is distracting and disrespectful to your instructor and classmates. Students who violate this policy will be asked to leave class and marked as “absent (unexcused)”; final grades will be impacted negatively.

**Academic Integrity:** Academic dishonesty is not tolerated in this course or at this university. All work submitted must be your own and written for this course. The use of sources—ideas, quotations, paraphrases; from papers, articles, books, or websites—must be properly acknowledged and documented. If you have any doubts or questions about plagiarism or the University's policy on it, go to: http://policies.uoregon.edu/vol-3-administration-studentaffairs/ch-1-conduct/student-conduct-code. In accordance with English Department policy, cases of clearly established plagiarism or cheating will result in a final course grade of “F,” and all incidents will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. In cases of a second offense, plagiarism or cheating can result in dismissal from the University.

**Inclement Weather.** In the event of inclement weather, a banner will appear on the UO homepage displaying information about delay, cancellation or closure decisions for the Eugene campus. The latest updates and bulletins will be here: https://alerts.uoregon.edu/. I will use canvas to communicate information specific to the course. For more information on UO inclement weather policies go to: https://hr.uoregon.edu/about-hr/campus-notifications/inclement-weather.