

# ENG 392, The American Novel in the Twentieth Century

CRN 26556: Winter 2020, 4 credits

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1. **Where and when:** Tuesday/Thursday 10-11:20am, Anstett 191
2. **About me:** Dr. Mark Whalan: [whalan@uoregon.edu](mailto:whalan@uoregon.edu), room 207 PLC. **Office hours:** Wednesday 10-12, Monday 1-2pm. **You can call me:** Professor Whalan; pronouns he/him/his
3. **Purpose of the course:** To read and understand some of the best novels written in America between 1900 and the present. To understand this period of cultural and literary history better, and to develop your general skills in reading fiction, understanding fiction, and writing about fiction.
4. **Course description:** This course presents a survey of American novels in the twentieth and twenty-first 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.
5. **Learning objectives:** The class is aligned with the six learning outcomes informing the English Major. By the end of the class, you should have improved your ability to:
  - a. read literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions;
  - b. draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts;
  - c. perform critical, formal analyses of literary, cinematic, and other cultural texts;
  - d. write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose;
  - e. employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments;
  - f. 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:

- a) understand some of the formal and thematic developments of the twentieth-century American novel tradition
- b) know more about some of the major cultural and historical contexts informing this tradition
- c) improve your ability to perform critical analysis, both orally and in writing, of novels, novellas, and short fiction
- d) understand some of the trends in literary scholarship on the American novel

**6. Course materials to purchase: it is required that you bring copies of these texts to the classes where their discussion is scheduled.**

Willa Cather, *My Antonia*. Norton Critical ed., Sharon O'Brien, 2015. ISBN 978-0393967906  
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*. Broadview Critical ed., 2012. ISBN 978-1551119878  
Nella Larsen, *Passing*. Norton Critical Edition, ed. Carla Kaplan., 2008. ISBN 978-0393979169  
William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying: The Corrected Text*. Vintage Edition, 978-0679732259  
J.D. Salinger, *Nine Stories*. Back Bay Books, ISBN 978-0316767729  
Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Harvest Books, ISBN 978-0156034029

**7. Reading and Assignment Schedule**

**Wk 1:**

Tue 1/7: Introductions

Thu 1/9: Henry James, "The Middle Years," "The Art of Fiction." On Canvas.

ADDITIONAL READING: Wayne Booth, "On Discriminating Between Realisms." "When and Why: The Rise of the Modern Novel," Jesse Matz. Both on Canvas.

**Wk 2:**

Tue 1/14: Willa Cather, *My Antonia*, book one, *The Shimerdas*.

Thu 1/16: Willa Cather, *My Antonia*, book two, *The Hired Girls*.

ADDITIONAL READING: Richard King, "The Regions and Regionalism." On Canvas.

**Wk 3:**

Tue 1/21: Willa Cather, *My Antonia*: books three and four, *Lena Lingard* and *The Pioneer Woman's Story*.

Thu 1/23: Willa Cather, *My Antonia*, book five, *Cuzak's Boys*. **CLOSE READING ASSIGNMENT DUE**

ADDITIONAL READING: "The Novel D meubl ," "Miss Jewett," both from Willa Cather's essay collection *Not Under Forty*. On Canvas.

**Wk 4:**

Tue 1/28: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*, chapters 1-8.

Thu 1/30: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*, chapters 9-12.

ADDITIONAL READING: "Utopia and its Discontents." Edward Rothstein. In *Visions of Utopia*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003: 1-28. On Canvas.

**Wk 5:**

Tue 2/4: Nella Larsen, *Passing*, parts one and two: "Encounter" and "Re-Encounter."

Thu 2/6: Nella Larsen, *Passing*, part three: "Finale."

ADDITIONAL READING: Introduction to Norton edition of *Passing*, by Calra Kaplan; “The Novel as a Function of American Democracy,” Ralph Ellison, on Canvas; reportage from the Rhinelander Case, Norton edition of *Passing*.

**Wk 6:**

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

Thu 2/13: William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, pp.77-123.

ADDITIONAL READING: Virginia Woolf, “Modern Fiction” and “Ms. Bennet and Mrs. Brown,” Michael Whitworth, introduction, “Modernism.” All on Canvas.

**Wk 7:**

Tue 2/18: William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, pp.124-199.

Thu 2/20: William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, pp.200-248.

**Wk 8:**

Tue 2/25: J.D. Salinger, *Nine Stories*. “A Perfect Day for Bananafish,” “Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut,” “Just Before the War with the Eskimos.”

Thu 2/27: J.D. Salinger, *Nine Stories*. “The Laughing Man,” “Down at the Dinghy,” “For Esme--with Love and Squalor.” **CRITICAL PAPER ASSIGNMENT DUE**

ADDITIONAL READING: Irving Howe, from “Mass Society and Postmodern fiction.” On Canvas.

**Wk 9:**

Tue 3/3: J.D. Salinger, *Nine Stories*. “Pretty Mouth and Green My Eyes,” “De Daumier-Smith’s Blue Period,” “Teddy.”

Thur 3/5: Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, to p.87.

ADDITIONAL READING: Martha Nussbaum, “Democratic Citizenship and the Narrative Imagination,” *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* 107. 1 (2008): Chapter 10, 143-157.

**Wk 10:**

Tue 3/10: Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, pp.88-209.

Thur 3/12: Conclusions

**FRIDAY 3/13: FINAL PAPER PROMPTS RELEASED, 1PM**

**MONDAY 3/16: FINAL PAPERS DUE, 1 PM**

**8. GRADED WORK (all assignments are due in class on the nominated date)**

**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 1/23**

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 2/11**

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 2/27**

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%, due 3/16**

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.

## **9. Grading criteria and rubric**

A+	97.6-100+
A	93.6-97.5
A-	89.6-93.5
B+	87.6-89.5
B	83.6-87.5
B-	79.6-83.5
C+	77.6-79.5
C	73.6-77.5
C-	69.6-73.5
D+	67.6-69.5
D	63.6-67.5
D-	59.6-63.5
F	<59.6

**See appendix for full grading criteria.**

**10. 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.**

- 11. 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.
- 12. Plagiarism:** I expect you to abide by university regulations on the proper acknowledgement of source material, and to follow accepted conventions for the correct scholarly presentation of research papers. I advise you to check on the university's student conduct code (<http://policies.uoregon.edu/vol-3-administration-student-affairs/ch-1-conduct/student-conduct-code>) 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 <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>, and at the Knightcite MLA citation application (<http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/>).
- 13. Late papers/undelivered presentations:** Papers should be handed in on the day of the seminar 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. Failure to deliver any assigned presentation will result in a 2/3 letter grade deduction from your final grade. Any request for extensions will be carefully considered, but should be made as far in advance of the due date as possible.
- 14. Accessibility:** The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. For more information or assistance, you are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center, 164 Oregon Hall, 346-1155; website: <http://aec.uoregon.edu/>
- 15. Sexual Violence and Survivor Support Statement:** The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.
- If you report experiencing an incident of sexual violence or sexual harassment to me I am required to consult with the Office of Crisis Intervention and Sexual Violence Support Services to ensure you have all necessary access to the university's support, and to assess any ongoing risks. I will not compromise your anonymity without your consent. Should you want to make a report to the institution, I am available to assist you in reporting information to the Title IX coordinator or to report on your behalf.
- If you wish to speak to a trained counsellor confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO's 24-hour hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at [safe.uoregon.edu](http://safe.uoregon.edu).

## Appendix: University of Oregon Department of English Undergraduate Grading Policies

Overall Course Grade	Holistic Performance in Class	Engagement with Course Materials and Participation	Essay Writing
A-/A/A+*	Excellent, exceeds expectations	Reads texts or images closely and carefully, incorporates this consideration of the assigned material into thoughtful contributions to class discussion.	Makes an original argument supported by a clear line of reasoning and analysis of textual evidence. Allows the scholarly community to conceive of the question at issue in a new way. No errors in grammar, style, or mechanics. Exceeds expectations. Revises.
B-/B/B+	Good, meets expectations and occasionally exceeds some expectations	Reads texts or images carefully. Listens to fellow students and instructor and contributes occasionally to class discussion.	Makes an original argument about a text. Textual analysis supports a line of reasoning. Few errors. Revises.
C-/C/C+	Adequate, meets but does not exceed expectations	Has read or viewed course materials and actively listens.	Makes an argument. Some reasoning supports main argument. Textual evidence is present. Some errors.
D-/D/D+	Poor, fails to meet some expectations	Has put minimal effort into preparation for class. Fails to participate constructively in class discussion.	No clear main argument. Errors are such that meaning is obscured. Some reference to text in question, but no textual evidence. Does not meet expectations for assignment.
Failing Grade	Does not meet expectations	Unprepared for class. No class participation.	Essay does not meet assignment expectations. No argument, no line of reasoning or original thought expressed.