

Bergen Community College
School of English
Department of Composition and Literature

Course Syllabus

LIT202: American Literature 1880 to Present

Instructor:
Office
Phone:
E-mail:
Office Hours: TBA

Course Description:

This course is a study of representative American literature from the late nineteenth century to the present. Students read works by such authors as Twain, O'Neill, Hurston, Hemingway, Faulkner, Frost, Wright, Ginsberg, and Rich.

General Education Course. Lecture (3.00). Prerequisite: WRT-101.

Suggested Text(s):

The Norton Anthology of American Literature, 6th Edition.
Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*. New York: Plume, 1970.
Roth, Philip. *Goodbye Columbus and Five Short Stories*. New York: Vintage, 1959.

Student Learning Objectives: As a result of meeting the requirements of this course, you will be able to:

1. Identify major works and themes of American literature from the latter nineteenth century to the present.
2. Employ close textual analysis to interpret and evaluate works of American literature.
3. Demonstrate, in both class discussion and written assignments, an understanding of the major genres of the period as well as the various literary techniques that writers use in constructing their texts.
4. Identify the correlative aesthetic, literary, historical, cultural, social, and/or political movements that contextualize the texts under study.
5. Apply appropriate critical lenses to works of American literature.
6. Produce a properly formatted written evaluation of selected works of American literature; and demonstrate competency in both research methodologies and literary analysis.

Course Requirements:

Students will be required to do the following:

1. Analyze works of literature using a variety of approaches.
2. Participate in class activities such as discussion, writing, and presentations.
3. Write 15-20 pages or 3750-5000 words for the course. This may include the following: journals, quizzes, papers, exams, research papers, class presentation, summaries, and responses

Final grade will be calculated as follows:

Written responses: 35%
Midterm Paper: 25%
Final Paper: 30 %
Class participation: 10%

Attendance Policy:

Your presence is vital to our classroom community, so regular attendance is required. You will be permitted *four absences* after which your grade will be negatively affected. You are expected to come to class every day prepared to discuss assigned texts and to produce written responses both in class and at home.

***A note on plagiarism:** please give credit where credit is due! Honesty is expected of you. It is expected that the work you hand in will always be your own, and that you will never copy sentences, phrases, paragraphs, or whole essays from any other person's work, for that is plagiarism. If you are ever unclear about how to cite another person or author's ideas, come see me or consult your manual.*

Written assignments must be formatted according to MLA standards. You will find citation guides on our library's website. Please note that you will also be expected to produce a documented term paper with secondary sources; and you may find appropriate—relevant—resources in our library. You are encouraged to schedule an appointment with one of our reference librarians if you did not attend an instructional seminar in your writing class.

BCC's Writing Center is located in L125, and you are encouraged to work with our faculty and professional writing tutors. Please note that the center is indeed a tutoring center—you are not to drop off your paper for proofreading as this is not a function of the center.

Sample Class Schedule/Reading List:

Week 1

Introductions.

American Literature and the sociopolitical landscape—introduction, pp. 3-14.

Week 2

Discussion of Realism, Regional Writing, and Representational Literature as a means of resistance.

Walt Whitman *Preface to Leaves of Grass* pp. 21-35

Walt Whitman *Leaves of Grass*, pp. 37-79

Martin Espada "Poetry like Bread: Poets of the Political Imagination" (handout)

Week 3

Whitman continued.

An introduction to women's voices—Dickinson & Gilman.

Emily Dickinson: 280, 315, 1545

Adrienne Rich "Vesuvius at Home: The Power of Emily Dickinson" (handout)

Week 4

No Class Tuesday 9/20. Charlotte Perkins Gilman "The Yellow Wallpaper" pg. 831

Week 5

The regional narrative...

Henry James "Art of Fiction" pp. 553-562

Theodore Dreiser "Old Ragaum and His Theresa" pg. 952

Abraham Cahan "A Sweat-Shop Romance" pg. 822

Writing Assignment #1: Please write a 2-3 page response to/analysis of Realism as a means of representation and/or resistance in a minimum of two of the texts covered.

Week 6

"American Literature Between the Wars" pp. 1071-1086

Gertrude Stein "The Making of Americans" pg. 1152

Robert Frost "The Figure a Poem Makes" pg. 1200

Week 7

Modern American Poetry/Prose

T. S. Eliot "The Wasteland" pg. 1430

Zora Neale Hurston "How It Feels to Be Colored Me" pg. 1516

Ernest Hemingway "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" pg. 1848

Midterm Paper assignment: Please write a 3-5 page comparative analysis of two authors from the Modern period—literature between the wars. This essay will be a documented paper and must adhere to MLA style.

Week 8

Race in America

Langston Hughes "Visitors to the Black Belt" pg. 1899

Ralph Ellison "Battle Royal" pg. 2083

James Baldwin "Going to Meet the Man" pg. 2191

Alice Walker "Everyday Use" pg. 2469

Week 9

Toni Morrison "Recitatif" pg. 2253

The Bluest Eye

Week 10

The Bluest Eye

Week 11

Finish *The Bluest Eye*

Topics/Proposals due for final paper.

Your final paper (due Week 15) will be a 5-7 page deep analysis of a specific genre and/or author. You will analyze/critique the author and/or specific text for both its representational and aesthetic qualities.

Week 12

"American Prose Since 1945" pp. 1953-1965

Saul Bellow "Looking for Mr. Green" pg. 2095

Kurt Vonnegut "Fates Worse Than Death" pg. 2183

Thomas Pynchon "Entrapy" pg. 2357

Introduction to Philip Roth's *Goodbye Columbus*

Week 13

Goodbye Columbus

Writing Assignment #2: This will be a short (1-2 page) response to a principle character in the text.

Thanksgiving

Week 14

Women's Voices

Maxine Hong Kingston "Tripmaster Monkey" pg. 2402

Gloria Anzaldua "El sonavabitché" pg. 2455

Louise Erdrich "Fleur" pg. 2562

Week 15

American Poetry since 1945

Amiri Baraka "A Poem for Willie Best" pg. 2315

Stanley Kunitz "Father and Son" pg. 2653

Gwendolyn Brooks "The Last Quatrain of the Ballad of Emmett Till" pg. 2786

& "The Blackstone Rangers" pg. 2786

Allen Ginsberg "Howl" pg. 2865 & "A Supermarket in California" pg. 2872