

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo
Department of English
ENGL 344: Modern American Literature
T/TH, 1:00-2:20, SJ2 2007, Winter 2020

Instructor: Chad Wriglesworth
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Calendar Description:

A study of American literature from the early twentieth century through the second world war, emphasizing aesthetic innovation in the modernist movement, and its aftermath in the social writings of the 1930s.

Course Overview and Objectives:

In this course we will study American fiction, poetry, and drama written between the early twentieth century and the close of World War II. More specifically, we will trace relationships between U.S. literary production, socio-economic reform and national history from 1900-1950, a period of artistry that depicts people and places shaped by westward migration, religious thought, racial conflict, the Great Depression, federal conservation reform, and international wars. As we look to canonical writers such as Willa Cather, Ernest Hemingway, Zora Neale Hurston and John Steinbeck, we will also consider the importance of political writings, popular music, film adaptations, and documentaries produced by the federal government during the New Deal Administration. By reading major works of literature alongside lesser known artifacts of material and visual culture, we will ultimately begin to see how and why modernist texts are so deeply embedded in U.S. cultural history and identity.

By the end of this course, you will have a strong grasp of the complexities and particularities of modernist American literature, as expressed through the writers we study. In addition, you will further develop and hone your critical thinking skills through reading, research, conversing, and writing about modernist literature. Finally, speaking more broadly, it is my hope that you will take pleasure in the study of literature and the arts for their own sake.

Required Texts:

Willa Cather, *My Ántonia* (1918, Broadview Press)
Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929, The Hemingway Library Edition, Scribner)
Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937, Harper Perennial)
John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939, Penguin)
Muriel Rukeyser, "The Book of the Dead" (1938, Course Reserve, pdf)
Arthur Miller, *All My Sons* (1947, Penguin)
Materials on Course Reserve (accessible from UW library main page and SJU library)

Marking Scheme and Due Dates:

Short Essay (5-6 pages)	30%	Due: Week 7 (Tuesday, 2/25)
Long Essay Proposal (3 pages)	20%	Due: Week 9 (Thursday, 3/12)
Long Essay with Sources (8-9 pages)	40%	Due: End of Term (Friday, 4/10)
Participation	10%	Regular attendance and participation

There will be no final exam in this course.

General Instructions for Assignments:

As the course progresses, instructions and expectations will be distributed for the short essay, the long essay proposal, and the long essay. Generally speaking, the **short essay** will be 5-6 pages in length and will ask you to develop a close reading on some aspect of *My Ántonia*, *A Farewell to Arms*, or *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. This essay will not require the use of outside sources, but should be written in proper MLA style. The **long essay**, also written in MLA style, will be 8-9 pages in length and written on a different text than the short essay. It should be crafted from an argumentative thesis and sustained by close readings of print and / or visual texts. It will also include careful engagement with at least three secondary sources. You will be given opportunity to offer a description of your ideas for this paper in a 3 page **essay proposal** that will provide a narrative description of a tentative thesis, methodological approach, structural organization, and an annotated bibliography.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week One

T- 1/7 Introductions: syllabus, books, assignments, and reading schedule
Handout: passages from Frederick Jackson Turner's "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893)

Regionalism, Immigration, Nostalgia, and the American West: Willa Cather's *My Ántonia*

TH- 1/9 Joseph R. Urgo, "Introduction" to *My Ántonia*, 9-14, 22-26; Cather, *My Ántonia*, "Introduction," 47-50. In class: discussion of Manifest Destiny through landscape paintings of the American West: Thomas Cole, John Gast, George Willoughby Maynard and Alexandre Hogue

Week Two

T- 1/14 Cather, *My Ántonia*, 51-127 (Book I)

TH- 1/16 Cather, *My Ántonia*, 128-205 (Book II and III)

Week Three

T- 1/21 Cather, *My Ántonia*, 206-244 (Books IV and V); Appendix F, 287-298; Appendix G-I, 299-317 and "Introduction," 26-30; in class, historicizing *My Ántonia* with reviews, photographs, songs, illustrations and book jackets

A Modernist Remembrance of World War One: Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*

TH- 1/23 Hemingway's "Introduction" to the 1948 edition (vii-x); Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*, 1-67 (Book I)

Week Four

- T- 1/28 Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*, 68-140 (Book II); in class, scenes from Frank Borzage's *A Farewell to Arms* (1932)
- TH- 1/30 Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*, 141-201 (Book III); in class, passages from Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (1906, Handout)

Week Five

- T- 2/4 Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*, 202-84 (Books IV and V); Appendix II-III, "The Alternative Endings" and "List of Titles" (303-324); in class, passages from Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952, Handout) and Hemingway's Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech (1954, Handout)

Recovering a Lost Voice from the Harlem Renaissance: Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

- TH- 2/6 Alice Walker, "Looking for Zora" (297-313, course reserve); in class: discussion of Harlem Renaissance (prose and poetry by W.E.B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay and Countee Cullen)

Week Six

- T- 2/11 Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, 1-75 (Chapters 1-6)
- TH- 2/13 Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, 76-146 (Chapters 7-16)

Reading Break (2/17 - 2/21)

Week Seven

- T- 2/25 Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, 147-193 (Chapters 17-20); Trystan T. Cotten, "Lost in Translation: Irony and Contradiction in Harpo's Production of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*" (161-178, course reserve)
Due: Short Paper

Documentary Fiction and Social Reform in the Great Depression: John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*

- TH- 2/27 Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*, 1-85 (Chapters 1-8); in class, writings on religion and labor reform by Woody Guthrie and Dorothy Day (Handout)

Week Eight

- T- 3/3 Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*, 86-192 (Chapters 9-16); in class: discussion of Steinbeck's *The Harvest Gypsies* (1936)
- TH- 3/5 Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*, 193-281 (Chapters 17-20); in class: scenes from *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (Pare Lorentz, New Deal Admin., 1936)

Week Nine

- T- 3/10 Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*, 282-349, (Chapters 21-25); "John Brown's Body" (1861, Handout) and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" (1862, Handout)
- TH- 3/12 Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*, 350-455 (Chapters 26-30); in class Bruce Springsteen, "The Ghost of Tom Joad" (1995); an account of Roman Charity
Due: Long Essay Proposal

Week Ten

Documentary Poetics and Social Reform in the Great Depression: Muriel Rukeyser's *The Book of the Dead*

- T- 3/17 "Introduction" from *Collected Poems of Muriel Rukeyser* (Course Reserve, xxxiii-xli); start *The Book of the Dead*
- TH- 3/19 Rukeyser, 73-91 (Course Reserve); in class, scenes from *Stop Silicosis* (Department of Labor, 1938)

Week Eleven

- T- 3/24 No Class: Away at a Conference
- TH- 3/26 Rukeyser, 91-111 (Course Reserve); start Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*

Week Twelve

Staging the Socioeconomic Power of World War II: Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*

- T- 3/31 Miller, *All My Sons* (Act I) and Miller, "Tragedy and the Common Man" (1949, handout and course reserve)
- TH-4/2 Miller, *All My Sons* (Act II and III)
Due: Long Essay (Friday, April 10th, my SJU drop box by 4PM)

ADDITIONAL DETAILS AND PROCEDURES

LATE ASSIGNMENTS AND PARTICIPATION

- **Late Assignments:**

All essays and assignments are to be handed in at the start of class on the due date. **Late essays will be penalized 2% per day late, including weekends.** Late assignments must be submitted to me electronically (so I know when they were completed) **and also as in hardcopy to my drop box (2nd floor of SJU).**

- **Attendance and Participation:**

I have high expectations for English majors in upper division courses. It should go without saying that I expect that you will attend class on a regular basis. I also expect that you will have read the material for each day in thoughtful and critical ways. In addition, I also expect that you will have something to say about the readings each day – meaning that you should contribute to class discussion on a regular basis. In terms of participation marking, you should expect the following: If you do not attend class on a regular basis, your participation mark will be assessed at 0-50; if you attend class but do not contribute to course discussion on a regular basis, expect a mark between 60-70; if you attend class regularly and participate in meaningful ways, you should expect a participation mark ranging from 75-100.

EMAIL COMMUNICATION AND OFFICE HOURS

Students using email to contact me should include their first and last names, as well as the course in which they are enrolled in the email subject line. Feel free to contact me about the course through email, but please keep the following in mind:

- I am unable to provide in-depth email responses about assignments, readings, and proofreading. If you wish to discuss these matters, please come to my office hours.
- I am unable to provide in-depth email responses about materials and lectures that you may have missed due to an absence.
- I am unable to answer last-minute emails about assignments, formatting, or editing. For questions about MLA formatting, you may want to consult Purdue University's Online Writing Lab. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES

I am committed to establishing a face-to-face classroom environment that is conversational and relational. For this reason, please be respectful to others and their ideas, and please, do not text during class.

UW POLICY REGARDING ILLNESS AND MISSED TESTS

The University of Waterloo Examination Regulations (www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/ExamRegs.pdf) states that:

- A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the "University of Waterloo Verification of Illness" form or it will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from Health Services or at www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health_Services/verification.html

- If a student has a test/examination deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test/examination at a mutually convenient time, to be determined by the course instructor.
- The University acknowledges that, due to the pluralistic nature of the University community, some students may on religious grounds require alternative times to write tests and examinations.
- Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time.

OTHER INFORMATION

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.]

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. [Read the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances, \[www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/upload_file/PLCY_AOM_Student-Petitions-and-Grievances_20151211-SJUSCapproved.pdf\]\(http://www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/upload_file/PLCY_AOM_Student-Petitions-and-Grievances_20151211-SJUSCapproved.pdf\)](#). When in doubt, please be certain to contact the St. Jerome's Advising Specialist, Student Affairs Office, who will provide further assistance.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline, \[www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Discipline_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf\]\(http://www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Discipline_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf\)](#). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo Policy 71, Student Discipline, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm. For typical penalties, check the Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under the [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances](#) (other than a petition) or the [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline](#) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to the [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Appeals, \[www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Appeals_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf\]\(http://www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Appeals_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf\)](#).

Note for students with disabilities: [AccessAbility Services](#), located in Needles Hall (Room 1401) at the University of Waterloo, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term, www.uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/.