

**St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo**  
**Department of English**  
**ENGL 347: American Literature Since 1945**  
**T/TH 1:00-2:20, SJ2 2007, Fall 2022**

“It all turns on affection . . .”  
E.M. Forster, *Howards End*

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**Office Hours: T/TH: 2:30-3:30**  
**Sweeney Hall: SH2209**

**Calendar Description:**

This course is a study of the movements of American literature following the second world war. The course will consider the formal and cultural diversity of writing in this period, with attention to topics such as avant-garde experiment, the persistence of realism, counter-cultural politics, feminism and literature, postmodernism, and the emergence of minority writers in the mainstream.

**Course Overview and Objectives:**

In this course we will study American fiction, poetry, and essays written between the end of World War II and the present day. We will explore how historical circumstances such as the Civil Rights movement, Indigenous displacement, and the Vietnam War are represented in American literature, while we also consider ways that art invites us to re-imagine how we think about various events, people, and places. In addition to thinking historically, we will also attend to matters of literary form and artistry, looking, for example, at ways postmodern and contemplative styles of writing can suspend time to re-member and reshape human experiences. Whether these are memories of beauty, encounters with violence, or profound experiences of the ordinary, each text will show us something about what it means to be human in a vast and awe-inspiring universe.

Thematically, each text on our reading list can be understood as a “love story” of some kind: works of art that are born out of an artist’s complex affections for people, places, spots of time, and longings for the sacred. With that in mind, we will attend to each work individually, but as the course unfolds we will also work across them by considering ways that these seemingly disparate engagements with life, time, and place still resonate with each other.

The content in this course can sometimes feel dark, isolating, and challenging. However, it is my hope that you also experience ways these artists show us that we do not exist in separation, but within an intertextual mosaic of experience that bears witness to a larger story of affection and freedom that transcends our ideological expectations and social categories. As your professor, I assume (and profess) that everything turns on that affection.

**COVID Contingency Plan:**

If, during the course of the term, the University of Waterloo must face short term closure (e.g. one week), course readings and pending due dates for assignments will be reassessed and potentially adjusted. If a longer-term cancellation of in-person meetings is required, the course will continue in an asynchronous environment following a pattern of recorded lectures (on T/TH). Students who cannot attend class due to temporary illness or self-isolation will be accommodated to the best of my ability (e.g. through access to PowerPoint slides, any materials posted on LEARN, and possibly through adjusted due dates for assignments).

**Required Texts:**

James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953)  
 Li-Young Lee, *The City in Which I Love You* (1990)  
 Louise Erdrich, *Love Medicine* (1984)  
 Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (1990) and "The Magic Show" (1991)  
 Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead* (2004)  
 Tracy K. Smith, *Life on Mars* (2011)  
 Selected Materials on Course Reserve / Learn

**Additional Materials of Interest:**

Additional materials such as podcasts/interviews, poems, essays, and film excerpts are listed throughout the syllabus. Links to these sources will be posted on Learn and/or Course Reserve as the term unfolds. These additional materials are not "required," but are being offered as a way for you to have a more immersive experience with the course. These materials may also help with your written assignments, particularly the long essay.

**Assignments and Due Dates:**

Short Essay (5 pages)	30%	Due: Week 5 (by midnight, Oct. 12)
Close Reading Exercise (3 pages)	20%	Due: Week 10 (by midnight, Nov. 14)
Long Essay (8-9 pages)	40%	Due: Week 12 (by midnight, Dec. 12)
Participation	10%	Ongoing

There will be no final exam in this course.

**General Instructions for Assignments:**

As the course progresses, instructions and expectations will be posted for the short essay, the close reading exercise, and the long essay. Here's a general description of the assignments:

The **short essay** will be 5 pages in length and will ask you to develop a close reading of a particular passage or idea from *Go Tell It on the Mountain* or *The City in Which I Love You*. I will provide guidelines and some possible writing topics (but I also encourage you to develop your own topics). This essay will not require the use of outside critical sources (although sources listed as "additional materials" throughout the syllabus may prove helpful), but should still be written in proper MLA style.

You will also do a **close reading exercise** on *Love Medicine* or *The Things They Carried*. This short paper (3 pages) will give you an opportunity to explore the intratextual and/or intertextual resonance of a particular word, phrase, or statement in a highly compressed response. This assignment is designed to bring you into an intense study of language and form.

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 and close reading exercise. It will be crafted from an argumentative thesis and a well thought out interpretive methodology. It will be sustained by close analysis of the primary text(s) and critical engagement with at least three secondary sources. I have placed a number of secondary sources on Course Reserve (accessible electronically via the UW library website or through the Course Reserve link in LEARN). There will also be a number of "additional materials" posted on Learn throughout the term (as listed on the syllabus). You are not required to use these materials in your long essay, but they may prove helpful as you think and write.

## SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

### Week One

TH-9/8 Introduction: overview of syllabus, assignments, and reading schedule

Introduction to the Course; Complicating the Sacred/Secular Binary: Religion, Jazz, and the “Music” of African American Preaching

Additional Materials of Interest:

Scene from *La La Land* (2016; see Learn); Cannonball Adderley, “Mercy, Mercy, Mercy” (live recording, 1966; see Learn); preview of Aretha Franklin, “Amazing Grace” (live recording, 1972; see Learn); Martin Luther King, Jr., “But If Not” (live recording, 1967; see Learn); Daniel Chapter 3 (see Learn)

### Week Two

#### UNIT I

#### LONELINESS, LOVE, AND FREEDOM: THE PRESENCE OF THE OTHER IN AMERICA’S CITYSCAPES

#### Toward the Civil Rights Movement: *James Baldwin’s Go Tell It on the Mountain*

T-9/13 Baldwin, 1-56 (Part One, “The Seventh Day”)

Additional Materials of Interest:

Baldwin, opening to *The Fire Next Time* (1963, pp. 15-23, see Learn)  
Preview of *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket* (1990, see Learn)

TH-9/15 Baldwin, 57-150 (Part Two, “Florence’s Prayer” and “Gabriel’s Prayer”)

Additional Materials of Interest:

Langston Hughes, “The Weary Blues” and “Harlem” (see Learn)  
Variations of the song “Go Tell It on the Mountain” (see Learn)

### Week Three

T-9/20 Baldwin, 151-192 (Part Two, “Elizabeth’s Prayer”)

Additional Materials of Interest:

“James Baldwin and Documentary Filmmaker Raoul Peck,” *Fresh Air with Terry Gross* (1986, 2017; see Learn); Paul Laurence Dunbar, “We Wear the Mask” (see Learn)

TH-9/22 Baldwin, 193-226 (Part Three, “The Threshing Floor”)

Additional Materials of Interest:

Genesis 9:20-27 and Matthew 13: 24-30; Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream” (1963, see Learn); selection from “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” (1968, see Learn)

**Week Four**

**Immigrant Songs of Isolation and Union:  
Li-Young Lee’s *The City in Which I Love You***

T-9/27 Lee, 1-48 (Part I and II)

Additional Materials of Interest:

Li-Young Lee, “Descended from Dreamers: Poems by Li-Young Lee,” *PBS NewsHour Poetry Series* (2009, see Learn)

TH-9/29 Lee, 49-64 (Part III and into IV)

Additional Materials of Interest:

Li-Young Lee, reading at Lensic Performing Arts Center (2000, see Learn)

**Week Five**

T-10/4 Lee, 61-76 (Part IV)

Additional Materials of Interest:

Li-Young Lee, interview with Michael Silverblatt, Lensic Performing Arts Center (2000, see Learn)

TH-10/6 Lee, 77-87 (Part V)

Additional Materials of Interest:

Li-Young Lee, “Chaos and Order: Making Sense of the World through Poetry” (2018, see Learn)

**Due: Short Essay (Submit by Midnight, Wednesday, October 12<sup>th</sup>)**

**Thanksgiving and Reading Break (10/10 - 10/14)**

**Week Six**

**UNIT II**  
**NARRATING TRAUMA AND NAVIGATING GENRE:**  
**REVISIONIST HISTORIES, COMMUNAL IDENTITIES, AND STORY CYCLES**

**Indigenous Story Weaving and Mythic Histories:**  
**Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine***

T-10/18 Erdrich, 1-101; list of chapters, key dates, and narrators (Learn)

TH -10/20 Erdrich, 102-162

Additional Materials of Interest: Bill Moyers and Louise Erdrich (2010, Learn)

**Week Seven**

T-10/25 Erdrich, 163-225

TH-10/27 Erdrich, 226-333

**Week Eight**

**Ghosts of the Vietnam War:**  
**Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried***

T-11/1 O'Brien, 1-81

TH-11/3 O'Brien, 82-130; Pitman and Orr, "The Black Hole of Trauma" (1990, see Learn and Course Reserve)

Additional Materials of Interest:

Tim O'Brien, Lecture on the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Publication of *The Things They Carried* at Harvard University (2010; see Learn)

**Week Nine**

T-11/8 O'Brien, 131-179; O'Brien, "The Magic Show" (1991, see Learn and Course Reserve)

TH-11/10 O'Brien, 180-233

**Due: Close Reading Exercise (Submit by Midnight, Monday, Nov. 14)**

**Week Ten**

**UNIT III  
COSMOLOGY, FORM, AND ELEGY:  
MIND, PLACE, AND THE EMERGENCE OF HOME**

**Complexities of the Mind, Place, and Family:  
Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead***

T-11/15 Robinson, 1-57

Additional Materials of Interest:

Marilynne Robinson, "Rethinking Reality" (Regent College, 2017; see Learn)

TH-11/17 Robinson, 58-139

Additional Materials of Interest:

Dennis Danielson, "Telescopes for the Mind" in *The Book of the Cosmos* (2000, see Learn); Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-32, see Learn)

**Week Eleven**

T-11/22 Robinson, 140-216

Additional Materials of Interest:

Marilynne Robinson Bookclub Interview/Podcast with *The Guardian* (2012, see Learn)

TH-11/24 Robinson, 217-247

Additional Materials of Interest:

President Obama and Marilynne Robinson: A Conversation in Two Parts (2015, see Learn)

**Week Twelve**

**Elegy, Emergence, and Cosmology:  
Tracy K. Smith's *Life on Mars***

T-11/29 Smith, 3-24 (Part I)

Additional Materials of Interest:

Smith, "Survival in Two Worlds at Once: Garcia Lorca and Duende" (2005, see Learn)

T-12/1 Smith, 27-53 (Part II and III)

Additional Materials of Interest:

Smith, "Wipe That Smirk off Your Poem" (2014, see Learn); "Politics and Poetry" (2018, see Learn)

### Week Thirteen

T-12/6 Smith, 57-70 (Part IV)

Additional Materials of Interest:

"love is a language / Few practice, but all, or nearly all speak," Tracy K. Smith Interview/Podcast with Krista Tippett for *On Being* (2018, see Learn)

**Due: Long Essay (Submit by Midnight, Monday, December 12<sup>th</sup>)**

## ADDITIONAL DETAILS AND PROCEDURES

### ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS

- All assignments will be submitted to a dropbox on LEARN. On the week an assignment is due (for example, Week 5), I will open a dropbox for the assignment. Assignments must be submitted by no later than midnight on the due date. Assignments submitted after the deadline (at midnight) will be marked 2% per day late, including weekends.

### PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE

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 addition, I also expect that you will have something to say about the readings, meaning that you should attempt to 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 responses about assignments, readings, and proofreading. If you wish to discuss these matters, please stop by during office hours.
- 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/>

## **UW POLICY REGARDING ILLNESS AND MISSED TESTS**

The University of Waterloo Examination Regulations

([www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/ExamRegs.pdf](http://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](http://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.

## **INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

Students should be aware that this course contains the intellectual property of their instructor, TA, and/or St. Jerome’s University. Intellectual property includes items such as:

- Lecture content, spoken and written (and any audio/video recording thereof);
- Lecture handouts, presentations, and other materials prepared for the course (e.g., PowerPoint slides);
- Questions or solution sets from various types of assessments (e.g., assignments, quizzes, tests, final exams); and
- Work protected by copyright (e.g., any work authored by the instructor or TA or used by the instructor or TA with permission of the copyright owner).

Course materials and the intellectual property contained therein, are used to enhance a student’s educational experience. However, sharing this intellectual property without the intellectual property owner’s permission is a violation of intellectual property rights. For this reason, it is necessary to ask the instructor, TA, and/or St. Jerome’s University for permission before uploading and sharing the intellectual property of others online.

Permission from an instructor, TA, or the University is also necessary before sharing the intellectual property of others from completed courses with students taking the same/similar courses in subsequent terms/years. In many cases, instructors might be happy to allow distribution of certain materials. However, doing so without expressed permission is considered a violation of intellectual property rights.

Please alert the instructor if you become aware of intellectual property belonging to others (past or present) circulating, either through the student body or online. The intellectual property rights owner deserves to know (and may have already given their consent).



## OTHER IMPORTANT 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/](http://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/](http://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](http://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](http://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/](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/).