"I am large. . . . I contain multitudes"

Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself"

Course description and objectives

In this course we will read and study the work of more than forty authors who wrote prose fiction and nonfiction and poetry from the turn of the 20th century to its end. These forty-plus writers represent a sort of literary e pluribus unum: They include several "major" writers from the canon of American literature, as well as a number of writers whom you may not have heard of, let alone read, because their work they has long been unanthologized or out of print. This kind of variety should be one way for us to call into question the American idea of e pluribus unum and its dominant metaphor, the melting pot.

Outcomes – by the end of this course you should be able to:

• demonstrate awareness of the range of American literature in the 20th century, including its development as part of the national cultural and historical experience over that time
• recognize issues of the literary canon, canonicity, and canon formation as they apply to American literature in the 20th century
• read and write critically through rhetorical analysis about literary texts, literary history, authors and their reception, and American cultural history (e.g. such figures as the melting pot and such stories as rags-to-riches) over the period
• collaborate with classmates to create knowledge about the course subject matter
• use bibliographic resources to find and identify relevant published criticism related to American literature in the 20th century.

Grades and evaluation –

• Midterm and final exams (take-home essays): 20 percent each
• Group presentation on a 20th-century Am. Novel, incl. other representations thereof: 15 percent
• Group paper on a 20th-century Am. Novel, incl. other representations thereof: 15 percent
• Group Discussion leading (twice): 10 percent each
• Attendance/participation - 10 percent
Required books –


One novel selected by group

Statement on academic honesty --

It is every student’s responsibility to be aware of College policy regarding academic honesty and plagiarism. The policy is laid out on pp. 26-31 of the *Student Handbook*.

Statement on disabilities --

If you have a learning disability and believe you may require accommodation to succeed in this course, you should contact the Learning Services Office at 1307 Main Street. Its phone number is 861-1510. Do this as soon as possible to enhance the likelihood that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. Any student who wishes to disclose a disability and request accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for this course first MUST meet with either Mrs. Laurie Roth in the Office of Learning Services (for learning disabilities and/or ADD/ADHD) or Dr. Ronald Kline in the Counseling Center (for all other disabilities).
Tentative assignment schedule –

Week I
M 1/14 – F 1/18

T – Introduction etc.


Week II
T 1/22 – F 1/25


Week III
M 1/28 – F 2/1

T – **Toward the New American Century (prose fiction)** - *AL*:


Week IV
M 2/4 – F 2/8


Week V
2/11 – F 2/15

Week VI  
M 2/18 – F 2/22  
**T – The ‘New Negro’ Renaissance - AL:** McKay, introduction and poems, pp. 544-45; Brown, introduction and poems, pp. 678-82; Hughes – introduction and poems, pp. 683-95.  


Week VII  
M 2/25 – F 2/29  
**T – Library day (?)**  

**R – Test due**

**Spring break**  
Sa 3/1 – Su 3/9

Week VIII  
F 3/14  


Week IX  


**Easter break**  
F 3/21 – M 3/24


R – TBA


Week XIII |  T – Review/preview

R – **Groups 1 & 2 presentations**

Week XIV  |  T – **Groups 3 & 4 presentations**

R – **Group 5 presentation; course evaluations**

Final exams |  TBA – Take-home final due