

## ENGLISH 214: AMERICAN LITERATURE II: JAMES TO THE PRESENT Spring 2018

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Rebecca Stephens  
**OFFICE:** 445 CCC  
**OFFICE HOURS:** M,T,Th 2:00-3:00 and by appt.

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“In the United States there is more space where nobody is than where anybody is.  
This is what makes America what it is.  
Does it make human nature in America what it is?  
If not does it make the human mind in America what it is?”

—Gertrude Stein



**COURSE PURPOSE:** As the quote above from an American writer illustrates, determining what is American, who is American, and how one thinks as an American are questions that have continually pre-occupied writers, critics and students (and teachers) of American literature. Our goal in this class is not necessarily to solve this problem, but rather to explore the various answers we see when we read different forms and voices in American literature and examine the literary history of the United States. With this in mind, we will be reading a variety of literary genres and essays on literary history to develop multiple strategies for analyzing, discussing, and viewing written pieces to understand both their content and how their ideas fit in with social, political, and literary constructs.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** This course is designed to help you

1. Understand and analyze texts and cultural contexts of American literature since the late nineteenth century.
2. Examine, discuss, and apply a variety of critical approaches useful for interpreting literature.
3. Explore the various genres of American literature, including poetry, short fiction, drama, novels and non-fiction.
4. Enhance understanding of the formation of individual and national identity through literature.
5. Question mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in American literature and, thus, historic constructions of power.
6. Use writing to increase your understanding of literary works and their context and to think critically about your own and others' written work.
7. Enjoy some works of literature that may be new to you.

**COURSE TEXTS:**

**Rental**

- *The Heath Anthology of American Literature, Volumes C, D, and E*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, Paul Lauter, ed., Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

**Purchase**

- *The Street*, Ann Petry. Houghton Mifflin: Mariner Books, 1946, 1974.
- One additional novel which you will select from a list provided.

## COURSE WORK:

### I. Reading Responses (50% of final grade):

The purpose of these response writings is to ensure that you keep up with the reading for the class and to encourage you to pose questions and formulate your responses to the readings before coming to class for group discussion. These responses will take three forms: postings to an on-line discussion forum in Desire To Learn, Reader's Notebook entries, and "wildcard" responses.

#### ◆ D2L (Desire to Learn) Postings (25% of final grade)

Each week you will be writing short journal-entry type responses to the reading and to others' ideas about what we've read. In order to facilitate an interactive, rather than static, type of response, we will be using an electronic forum to post and respond and by using the format below, I hope that we will be able to hear as many of everyone's ideas as possible. The process for the responses will be the following:

- For each a portion of each week's reading assignment (identified by an asterisk on the course calendar) you will need to post **by midnight (11:59 p.m.) on Thursday** a short (about 200 words minimum) response to what you've read. I will post an initial document that will include questions to help you get started on your response.
- **By 9:00 p.m on Tuesday**, you will need to complete a second posting of at least the same length. This posting should bring together all the various readings and activities we've done for week and respond to at least 1 of your classmate's comments from the Thursday posts or from class discussion. These responses should reflect your reaction to the reading and may include questions that the reading raised for you; these can be quite informal, but they should be spellchecked and otherwise made readable and should demonstrate clearly that you've read and reflected thoughtfully about the readings. I will provide a rubric that I'll use to grade the posts.

#### ◆ Wildcard Reading Responses (10% of final grade)

For the reading assignments for which you have not completed a D2L posting, you will be given a specific activity each Monday to be brought to the next week's class; these activities will involve a variety of strategies designed to help motivate you to complete your reading and to stimulate discussion in class. The activities may include preparing discussion questions, writing a short analysis, directed note-taking, quizzes, or some type of creative approach to the readings. I will describe the activity in class each Monday for the following week; I will also post a description of the activity's requirements to the D2L Content folder in case you miss class. Since these activities are designed to help focus our in-class discussions, they are assignments that **cannot** be made up.

#### ◆ Reader's Notebook (5% of final grade)

The last 15-20 minutes of class each week will be set aside for writing about that week's class. Your Reader's Notebook will be a free-form space for capturing your ideas, observations, thoughts, and reflections about what we've read and discussed that week. These will help you effectively synthesize the materials for your second post each week and give you a record of your ideas to help develop your final project.

The D2L postings, the wildcard activities, and the Reader's Notebooks will be graded on a point system. The total points allocated to this component will be divided by the total number of responses we complete during the semester to determine the final points each post/task is worth.

**COURSEWORK (continued)****II. Collaborative Presentation (20%)**

You will be required to prepare one presentation for the entire class on the novel selected by your group in collaboration with your group of two to three other classmates. The format and topic of the presentation will be flexible and should be derived from your group's mutual interests and what your group perceives as the key idea of your novel. You will receive a more detailed description of this assignment and its requirements, along with the list of books, later in the semester (see schedule).

**III. Final Essay (20% of final grade)**

The objective of this project is to help you make a connection between the many readings and ideas that we will cover in this class. For this paper, you will be writing a reflective essay that synthesizes your thoughts and those of your classmates with those of the writers we'll read over the semester. You will have the two options for formatting the paper, both of which will allow for some creativity: a personal essay or a multigenre essay.

In each case, the paper will be approximately 4-5 pages long, plus a works cited page. You will receive a handout that discusses the methods, frames the assignment, and covers all of the specific details later in the semester.

**IV. Participation (10%)**

You will be expected to discuss the assigned readings for each day as well as to participate in any group work, impromptu writings, or other in-class activities. Please prepare for each class by doing the assigned readings and responses; your grade and your enjoyment of the class will both suffer if you are not present (in mind as well as in body). Since this class meets only once a week, missing one class is the equivalent of missing one week of class, therefore, after one missed class, your grade will be lowered by one half grade and more than 4 absences will be grounds for failing the class. Likewise, if it is clear that you are consistently not keeping up with the reading—and this *will* become apparent through your contributions in class, in writing, and in small group work—expect that your grade will suffer. If you are not contributing because you're feeling lost, please talk to me and I will do my best to help you with strategies to feel more comfortable with the material.

**Cell Phone/Laptop Policy:** Use of cell phones, unless for a specific class purpose, is prohibited. If you use a laptop to take notes, please sit against a wall so that others are not distracted by your screen; also, please refrain from using your laptop during the discussion portions of the class. If you have a special circumstance that requires deviating from this policy during a class, please discuss it with me prior to class on that day.

**Video/Audio Recording:** Out of respect for students' privacy and the intellectual ownership of the professor, video or audio recording of the class are prohibited without the written consent of the instructor.

## COURSE CALENDAR

Note: Asterisks (\*) denote readings for D2LThursday response posts

Week	Reading Assignment	
1 1/22	<b>V O L U M E  C</b>	Introductions Syllabus "The Man With the Hoe" and "The Preacher and the Slave" (handouts) Harper "Aunt Chloe's Politics" p. 568
2 1/29		*Twain "The War Prayer" p. 104 *Alcott "My Contraband" p. 652 Harris "Free Joe and the Rest of the World" p. 111 Chesnutt "The Passing of Grandison" p. 135 Oskison "The Problem of Old Harjo" p. 224
3 2/5		*James "Daisy Miller: A Study" p. 281 Freeman "The Revolt of 'Mother'" p. 723
4 2/12		*Gilman <i>The Yellow Wall-Paper</i> p. 578 Antin from <i>The Promised Land</i> p. 823 Eaton "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of a Eurasian" p. 777 Bonnin from <i>Days of an Indian School Girl</i> Ch. I-VII p. 811
5 2/19	<b>V O L U M E  D</b>	*Toward the Modern Age p. 867 *Wharton "Roman Fever" p. 1019 Masters from <i>Spoon River Anthology</i> and <i>New Spoon River</i> pp 1029-1032 Anderson "Hands" p. 1073
6 2/26		*Lowell "The Sisters" p. 1141 *Cummings "[pity this busy monster humanunkind]" p. 1277 *Stein "Geographical History of America" p. 1153 *Eliot "The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock" p. 1280 Faulkner "Barn Burning" p. 1464 Porter "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" p. 1388
7 3/5		*Hughes "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" p. 1521, "I, Too" p. 1525 *Larsen from <i>Passing</i> , One and Two p. 1605 Gold from <i>Jews Without Money</i> p. 1658 LeSueur "Women on the Breadlines" p. 1728 Whitecloud "Blue Winds Dancing" p. 1752
8 3/12		Petry, <i>The Street</i> Ch. 1-9
9 3/19	Petry, <i>The Street</i> Ch. 10-18 (end)	
3/26-3/30	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
10 4/2	<b>V O L U M E  E</b>	*Hellman from <i>Scoundrel Time</i> (D2L e-reading) Miller <i>The Crucible</i> p. 2053 Choice Books Assigned Group Meetings
11 4/9		*Ferlinghetti "I am Waiting" p. 2252 *Ginsberg "America" p. 2240 and "A Supermarket in California" p. 2231 Yamamoto "Seventeen Syllables" p. 2164
12 4/16		*Mohr From <i>Rituals of Survival</i> "A Thanksgiving Celebration (Amy)" p. 2578 Mukherjee "Orbiting" (D2L e-reading) Reader's Notebooks Due
13 4/23		Presentation Conferences/Presentation Preparation Time
14 4/30	Presentations	
15 5/7	Presentations	
5/14-5/18	<b>FINALS WEEK</b> Presentations (if needed) + Final Papers Due at (or before) Scheduled Final Exam 5/15/2018, Tuesday 5:00PM - 7:00PM	

