English 3355.001: American Literature Since 1900

Class Meeting Time: TR 11:00-12:15
Class Location: IH 157
Instructor: Kevin Concannon
Office: Faculty Center 282
Office Hours: W 10:00-12:00, TR 10:00-11:00
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Semester: Spring 2018

Course Description: While this class is designed to provide an overview of American literature from 1900 to the present day, we will also look at literature longitudinally, across the spaces of “America.” As a consequence, we will read texts which traditionally are marginalized because they are believed outside the American experience. While this might mean looking at works written about or by individuals from outside the US, it also means looking at works which centralize race, gender and sexuality in ways that counter normative assumptions about American identity.

We will also complicate how we define the other half of an “American literature,” by exploring how literature itself is defined in the postmodern era. To this end we will look at texts that may not be considered by some as literature, since they are written in ways which challenge what are assumed as the “standards” of a literary text.

Required Texts:

Judith Ortiz Cofer. *The Line of the Sun*
Paul Lauter (ed.) *The Heath Anthology of Literature* Volume 2
Américo Paredes. *George Washington Gómez*
Mark Twain. *Pudd’nhead Wilson*

Student Learning Outcomes:

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- integrate research into an analysis of texts
- respond critically to literary works

Course Evaluation:

1. Attendance and Class Participation: 10 points
2. Midterm and Final: 50 points each
3. Short Analytical Essays (2): 20 points each
4. Creative Research Essay: 25 points
5. Collaborative Teaching Activity: 15 points
6. Class Work and Quizzes: 10 points
1. **Attendance:** Much of this class will be conducted as a mixture of discussion and lecture, so you should come to class every day and be prepared to talk about the assigned readings. You may miss two classes without penalty. After that, two points will be deducted from your final grade for every class you miss.

2. **Midterm and Final Exams:** The two exams will each be divided into three parts. Part 1 will be a short answer section which can include terms and ideas raised in class discussion or questions from the readings. Part 2 will ask you to explain and identify quotes from the readings and Part 3 will be an essay question.

3. **Short Analytical Essays:** There will be two short analytical essays due during the semesters. The essays should be 3-4 pages in length and should only make minor reference to secondary materials (if any). MLA format is required for all analytical essays.

4. **Creative Research Essay:** In this assignment, you will choose a historical event or occurrence and create a story about it. For instance, one might look at the Bracero Program or The Million Man March or examples of school integration in the 1950s and choose an important figure and tell their story. It is important, however, not to choose a central figure whose story has already been told many times (don’t look at MLK or Cesar Chavez, for instance). One might also create a figure who could be seen as representative of the larger group (what was the experience like in “Occupy Wall Street” movement for instance). Whatever approach you choose, you need to be able to ground your story in historical texts. You should also focus on the day in the life of this figure. It should not be a biography of their life, but rather the experience, for example, of Jane Velez as a Bracero.

5. **Collaborative Teaching Activity:** Working with one other student in the class, you both will spend a total of 15-20 minutes discussing/analyzing an assigned work of literature. Your presentation should make clear the historical context of the work, as well as explain or identify important terms, themes or ideas. Please do not read from a prepared essay or from a power point presentation (though power point can be used). You should encourage class involvement by asking questions, providing handouts etc. Please feel free to meet with me before your presentation. In the past students have played short games with the class (Jeopardy, for example).

6. **Class Work:** There will be occasional in-class assignments that will be handed in for a grade. The assignments cannot be made up, but there will be opportunities in class for extra credit.

**Grades:**

The total number of points you can earn is 200. Your grade will be determined based on the following scale:

- 179-200: A
- 159-178: B
- 139-158: C
- 119-138: D
- 118 and below: F

**Reminder to English Majors:**

As part of the English undergraduate capstone course (ENGL 4351), all English majors are required to submit a portfolio of writings in different discourse genres that they have completed for their college classes. To help you prepare for this assignment, you should keep a copy of all essays, research papers, literary analyses, creative and report writing, etc., so that you will have an ample selection from which to choose when the portfolio comes due.

**Technology in the Classroom:**

You may use computers and e-readers in this class. If their use becomes disruptive to others in the class, however, you will be asked to turn them off.
Late Assignments:

Please contact me by e-mail if an emergency arises and you cannot attend class. I will not accept late assignments unless you have made previous arrangements. An “Incomplete” will be given at my discretion only and must involve exceptional circumstances. To qualify for consideration, you must have satisfactorily completed two-thirds of the course requirements.

Academic Integrity/Plagiarism:

University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism (plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work). In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a failing grade.

Dropping a Class:

I hope you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation will not automatically result in your being dropped from the class.

Classroom/professional behavior:

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Grade Appeal Process:

As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals. These documents are accessible online at: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the
process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html.

Disabilities Accommodations:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Statement of Academic Continuity

In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e. emails, web sites and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Academic Advising:

The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit System. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

Syllabus

*I will give you advanced notice of any slight changes that might be made to the readings during the semester.

**The readings listed below are required. Occasionally, we may not cover one of the readings listed in class; even so, these readings will still appear on the midterm or final.

Week 1: The New South (January 16-18)
Readings: Booker T. Washington *Up From Slavery* (508-524), W.E.B. Du Bois *The Souls of Black Folk* (526-541) and Anna Julia Cooper “Our Raison D’être” (handout)

Week 3: Realism (January 30/Feb. 1)
Readings: Begin reading Mark Twain’s *Pudd’nhead Wilson* (novel)

Week 4: Realism con’t. (Feb. 6/8)
Readings: Finish reading Twain’s *Pudd’nhead Wilson* Optional: Henry James *Daisy Miller* (94-137)
February 8: Essay #1 due on Blackboard by midnight.

Week 5: Gender and Power (Feb. 13/15)
Readings: Mary E. Wilkins Freeman “A New England Nun” (182-191), Susan Glaspell “Trifles” (585-596) and Edith Wharton “Roman Fever” (546-555) Optional: Sarah Orne Jewett “The White Heron” (172-180)

Week 6 Gender and Power con’t. (Feb 20) and The Mexican Revolution (Feb 22)

Week 7: Paredes con’t. (Feb. 27/March 1)
Readings: Continue reading *George Washington Gómez*

Week 8: Paredes con’t (March 6/8)
Readings: Finish reading *George Washington Gómez*
March 6: Essay #2 due on Blackboard by midnight
March 8: Midterm

Week 9: Spring Break (March 12-16)

Week 10: Immigration and Assimilation (March 20/22)
Readings: Mary Antin “The Promised Land” (390-97), Anzia Yezierska “America and I” (833-840) and Jovita González “Shades of the Tenth Muses” (941-946), Mitsuye Yamada, “Evacuation” (1057) and “Desert Storm” (1058) Optional: Carlos Bulosan “Freedom from Want” (947-949)

Week 11: Mobility (March 27/29)
Readings: Saul Bellow “Looking for Mr. Green” (995-1011) and Flannery O’Connor “A Good Man is Hard to Find” (1012-1024) Optional: James Baldwin “Sonny’s Blues” (1064-1087)

Week 12: Postmodernism (April 3/5)
Readings: Thomas Pynchon “Entropy” (1158-1168), Kurt Vonnegut “Harrison Bergeron” (1176-81) and Luis Valdez “Los Vendidos” (1244-1251) Optional: Amiri Baraka *Dutchman* (1209-1228)

Week 13: Postmodernism con’t. (April 10) and the Americas (April 12)
Readings: Raymond Carver, “What We Talk about When We Talk about Love” (1363-1371) Begin reading Judith Ortiz Cofer *The Line of the Sun* Optional: Gish Jen “In the American Society” (1515-1526)
Week 14: Cofer con’t. (April 17/19)
Readings: Continue reading *The Line of the Sun*
April 17: Creative Research Essay due on Blackboard by midnight

Week 15: Cofer con’t (April 24/26)
Readings: Finish reading Cofer. Review for the final exam
May 1: Final Exam