

U.S. LITERATURE: 1865-1930
ENGLISH 656-Winter Quarter 2000

LISBETH GANT-BRITTON	Class meets:	T-Th	12:40-2:30, Library 206
Humphrey House: 213	Office hours:	M	3:00-5:00
Office phone: 7036		T	11:00-12:00, 2:30-3:30
English Dept. 7043		Th	11:00-12:00, 2:30-3:30
Email: lbritton@kzoo.edu			And by appointment

Course Description:

In this course, we will consider what being “American” means in texts ranging from the Civil War period to the inter-war years. We will examine literature that reflects how America’s diversity was (and still is) a divisive controversy, provoking battles over identity construction that continue today. We will then scrutinize works that critique the intricacies of class divisions in a purported democracy, and look at still others that call attention to frictions between rural and urban America. We will also compare several of these texts with excerpts from contemporary writers to detect significant influences.

The literary movements we will examine include the Emersonian tradition, realism as a reaction to romanticism; the new woman as a revolt against patriarchal oppression in the domestic sphere; realism and the rise of regional literature, and modernism.

Required Texts

1. George Perkins, ed. *The American Tradition in Literature*, Vol. II, 9th ed., Macmillan, 1999
2. Zora Neale Hurston *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
3. William Faulkner *As I Lay Dying*
4. Handouts William Gass, “Pulitzer, the People’s Prize, *Finding a Form* and selected poetry and essays
5. Library references include: *Poetry Criticism, Contemporary Literary Criticism, Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*
6. Library Homepage Web Study Guide and selected Internet webpages

Go to: K College Library Home Page/Research Guides/Course Research Guides/Course No.

(Note: Websites change or disappear without notice. These are intended as examples only. If need be, find a similar site to fulfill assignment.)

Why study U.S. literature?

- To explore a range of literary interpretations of what it means to be “American,” and in so doing, develop our own conceptualizations
- To perceive how the sociocultural developments of the period influenced the literary movements of the day, and how those movements affect present literary trends
- To develop our critical language with which to analyze historical literature
- These are three of my reasons -- what are yours?

COURSE SCHEDULE

ASSIGNMENTS DUE

(Please bring appropriate book(s)/handouts to each class. Also, as you read, please note on paper significant themes, metaphors, issues, etc. Bring notes to class as the basis for your participation.)

Week One- Whitman and the Emersonian tradition

- 1) Introduction; course goals; The Emersonian tradition
- 2) Walt Whitman, *Preface to Leaves of Grass; Song of Myself*

As background on Whitman in prep. for next class: Screen first 20 min. of Whitman video, “Voices and Visions” in library

Week Two- Whitman cont’d

- 1) Continue Whitman, *Song of Myself*
- 2) Whitman; compare with Ginsberg

Due Fri. 5 p.m.: Response Paper #1 - (3-4 pp.) - Whitman

Week Three- One Woman's Alternative Vision

As background on Dickinson in prep. for next class: Screen first 20 min. of Dickinson video, "Voices and Visions" in library

- 1) Emily Dickinson poetry
- 2) Discuss critical articles re Dickinson; compare with Adrienne Rich

Bring a critical article on Dickinson to class

Due Fri. 5 p.m.: Response Paper #2 – (3-4 pp.) – Dickinson

Week Four- The New Woman

- 1) Chopin presentations- Chopin, the cult of true womanhood vs. the new woman, the Reconstruction Era; discuss *The Awakening*
- 2) Presentations – Chopin: regionalism, naturalism; compare Chopin with contemporary writer

Due Fri. 5 p.m.: Response Paper #3 - (3-4 pp.) –Chopin

Week Five- Realism, Regionalism, Racism

- 1) Henry James, "The Art of Fiction," "Daisy Miller," "The Beast in the Jungle," "The Real Thing"
- 2) Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn* excerpts

Week Six- Realism, Regionalism, Racism cont'd

- 1) William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*; William Gass, "Pulitzer, the People's Prize, *Finding a Form*"; discuss research project and canonicity
- 2) Continue Faulkner

Week Seven- Novel of Manners; Naturalism

Due Mon. 5p.m.: Tentative thesis statement and outline for Research paper - (2 pp.)

- 1) Edith Wharton, "Roman Fever"; discuss research paper outlines
- 2) Steven Crane, "Maggie, A Girl of the Streets"; discuss bibliographies

Due in class: Annotated bibliographies for Research papers – (2 pp.)

Week Eight- Harlem Renaissance

- 1) Harlem Renaissance; discuss research papers
- 2) Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Week Nine- The Inter-War Years and Everyday People

- 1) Continue Hurston
- 2) Willa Cather, "The Neighbor Rosisky"; Katherine Anne Porter, "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall"

Due Fri. 5 p.m.: Research papers (8-10 pp.)

Week Ten- Modernism and questioning the American self

- 1) T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "The Hollow Men"
- 2) Eliot, "The Wasteland"

Week Eleven

Final exam (Timed, in class, comp style)

GRADING POLICY:

- Participation/Presentations/Lead discussion 10%
- 3 Response longer paper(s) @ 15% 45%
- Final paper
 - Annotated Bibliography 10%
 - Research paper 20%
- Final Exam 15%
100%
- **Lateness/Absence:** If you are absent **two (2) times without prior notification and a suitable explanation** or if you are **habitually late**, you will receive a lower grade. It is your responsibility to keep track of and handle any business related to your attendance.
- **Papers:** You will write three short papers (3-4 pp.) and one research paper (8-10 pp.) during the quarter.
 - **Research paper**-Periodization/Canonicity project – Option A: Compare a text or texts as being influenced by and/or influencing a historical period covered in class; Option B: Compare a text’s reception in its period with its reception today (including awards won or not won)
 - **Short papers**-Some optional spot revisions may be possible. You will **not** receive a better grade if you do only the slightest grammatical editing.
- **Examination:** The in-class **final** will be comprised of essay questions in the K comprehensive exam style. In answering the questions, be prepared to state a clear argument and support your statements with specific examples from the course texts and lectures. No class notes will be allowed.
- **Presentations/Discussion:** As well as participating in class discussions, you will also make an informational presentation and help *lead* discussions during either the first or second half of the quarter. In preparation for doing this, you will meet with me beforehand.
- **Preparation:** Complete the reading *before* each class period. Part of your grade is based on your class participation (or lack thereof). If you have a verifiable condition that prevents you from actively participating, it is your responsibility to notify me at the beginning of the course.
- **Participation:** Your final grade will be lower if your class participation is extremely meager or disrespectful of others. (If speaking in class is a severe challenge for you, see me at the beginning of the quarter to arrange alternative ways to fulfill participation requirement.)
- **Deadlines:** All written work must be turned in at the **beginning** of class or on the date due. Late papers will be graded down unless there is a verifiable emergency. It is your responsibility to see that I get official verification *in writing*.
- **Plagiarism:** If you use another’s ideas or words in your papers, you must acknowledge the source in writing. You will be graded down if you plagiarize. If you are unclear, please let me know. Also look at the K Honor Code in your K academic planner.
- **Disabilities:** If you have or suspect you might have a disability or any impairment which may affect your class work, please see me and the Dean of Experiential Education right away. I will do my best to work with you.