

Course Syllabus—English 361
American Literature, 1865 to the Present
Tuesday-Thursday, 9:30-10:50—Evans 417

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Other times by appointment. NOTE: I am director of the Elliott T. Bowers Honors Program, and I spend most of MWF in that office. I'm not really available for 361 appointments over there, but I can see you on those days if necessary. Just make an appointment.

My Evans Office Phone: 294-1426 (If I'm not there, leave a message. Please don't call the Honors office with ENG 361 business.)

Required Texts:

- *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 7th Edition, Volumes C, D, and E
- Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*

Course Description: American literature from 1865 to the present is a very broad subject, but we will cover the major authors and genres, and we will cover material from the Civil War to the very recent present. We will also study the major literary and intellectual movements of this time period, as well as writers who represent those movements and writers who do not. If you do the requirements well, this course will leave you with a thorough, though broad, understanding of modern American literature. Below is the official catalogue description of the course.

ENG 361 Survey of American Literature, 1865 to the Present. A survey of authors, genres, and movements in American literature from 1865 to the present, including representative works of Realism, Naturalism, Modernism, and Post-Modernism. Required of all English majors. Also required of all English minors not seeking certification. Prerequisites: 9 hours of English. Credit 3.

Course Goals.

- The main curricular goal of this course is that you arrive at a heightened understanding and appreciation of the intellectual, cultural, and social content of our national literature (and its components) since the Civil War.
- It is also important that you try to reach the fullest understanding possible of the defining movements of American literature and how these movements and trends intersect with the events of American history and the major aspects of American culture.

- A further objective is simply that you appreciate the achievement of our greatest writers and that you make every effort to ask and seek to answer the questions (literary, personal, and social) raised by these authors and their works.
- The final main objective has to do more with critical literacy or reading skills. The most important meanings of literature, like the important meanings of life, often lie between the lines. We will spend much time in discussion of what may be called “inferential reading”—reading closely, carefully, and between the lines. Predicting, reflecting, analyzing, and discussing. A main objective of this class is the development and refinement of these critical reading skills.

Basic Structure and Approach of the Course. This course will be a combination of lecture and open class discussion, with occasional group work. One requirement is the ability to view materials and submit assignments through Blackboard. This is a “W” (writing intensive) course, so most assignments and exams will be essay (or other forms of writing). Daily work may include objective quizzes. Both major exams will be essentially essay but both will have an objective component. All written assignments, as well as my evaluation criteria for each, will be explained in detailed handouts.

The Daily Readings and How to Read Them. This semester’s reading list includes more novels than is usual for my classes. The novels-reading weeks will be heavy reading weeks, and I advise you strongly to read out ahead. If you are able to, it would be a good thing to try to read all the three novels (and the longer short stories) here at the beginning of the semester, even before we get to them, and then to re-read them when they come up in the schedule. Since it works better to discuss novels as a whole rather than piecemeal, I have generally required that the entire novel be read by the first day we discuss it. On most of the other days, the readings are relatively light, so that we can involve ourselves in close discussions and to allow some of the readings to “linger” in the classroom. What this means for you is that you want to avoid just reading the material without a purpose (and certainly not speed-reading it). You’ll do your best in this class if you read carefully—slowly if necessary—and if you actually re-read as often as you are able to. The key to full appreciation of literary works is re-reading, even though it takes time. You should also know that different works call for different reading strategies. For instance, you should read poems differently from how you read fiction—including reading them aloud. Finally, since this is a survey course, with emphasis on broad coverage, you will read some works that we do not actually discuss in class. That’s just the nature of a survey. On the exams, you are responsible for all the assigned readings.

Introductions, Author Background, and Cultural Background Readings. I have assigned some general introduction reading, which is reflected on the reading schedule, but you are also responsible for acquiring basic background on the individual authors we are reading. There are different ways for you to do this. Probably the easiest would be simply by reading the author introductions in our text. They are generally just a page or two. For some authors, you may want to use internet sources (some of which I will supply for you) or standard reference book sources. I won’t ask you specific recall questions about authors’ lives but rather open-ended questions that would give you a range of possible responses. For testing purposes, you’ll simply need to be able to

address how an author's background contributes to his or her work. You will also be reading some of the contextual essays that are a new feature of the 7th Edition. These are together in essay "clusters," and are assigned to help you see the larger social, cultural, and historical contexts of the literature we are reading. We will focus on the literature, but I place heavy emphasis on cultural and social background. These literary works were not written in a vacuum, and we will often examine the non-literary milieu which forms the backdrop for literature.

Attendance Policy. All public universities are now under federal directives for keeping track of attendance. I will take attendance every day. University policy allows you three hours of absences, which for Tuesday-Thursday means only two classes. I'll give you those two absences plus one more (but this does not excuse you from any course requirements). If you miss fewer than two, I'll give you bonus points come final grade time. If you miss more than three classes, I'll deduct points from your daily grade average, beginning with five points for the first absence over three and going up from there. If you miss more than five classes (without excused absences), I may have to drop you from the class entirely.

Make-up Work and Late Work. I do not give make-ups for missed quizzes and daily work. *However, when you miss a class (whether or not it is excused), you are required to write a one- to two- page makeup on the reading assigned for the day you missed.* (Just write a concise overall summary and response for the assigned readings. This summary response needs to show that you read the material and that you have thought about it. There will be a Blackboard section for these make-ups.) If you miss one of the exams, you may be allowed take a make-up if you are able to produce a documented excuse. I might or might not accept late work. If you turn in late work, it is subject to late penalties (10% for being late in the first place and then 5% per day after that).

Course Requirements and Evaluation. For each component of the course, you will be provided a description of both the assignment and the evaluation criteria I will be using. The breakdown for letter grades is as follows:

- A – 90% or above
- B – 80% to 89.9%
- C – 70% to 79.9%
- D – 60% to 69.9%
- F – Below 60%

Extra credit is not available. All of the course grades except daily grade components will be posted on Blackboard. (Go to "My Tools" and then "Grades.") I am happy to discuss your grades at any point of the semester. Below is the breakdown of course requirements.

- **Assignments (30%).** Every two or three weeks, approximately, I will put a short (2- to 3- page) writing assignment on Blackboard. You'll have a limited number of days to complete these assignments, and I'll give you a handout explaining

how to do them in general. Some of them will be more academic or research-oriented in nature, and some will be more open-ended and reflective.

- **Daily Work/Participation (15%).** The daily work component will cover all aspects of class participation, including such items as reading quizzes, short informal writings, Blackboard discussions, and other daily tasks. Also included will be class attendance. These measurements will be objective and numerical. Another factor, and a less mathematical one, will be your general participation in class—your demonstration that you come to class prepared and that you stay engaged. You don't have to talk in class to show that you are prepared and engaged. There are other ways. On the negative side of the ledger would be such unwanted behaviors as falling asleep in class or doing homework for another class. Most daily work, though, will be objective, so you should be able to keep a running tally of how you are doing. Sometime about mid-term and then again a few weeks before the end of the term, I will give you feedback about how you are doing in your daily work/participation.
- **Paper (20%).** You will write only one formal paper for this class. I will describe the requirements in much more detail in a separate handout, but briefly, the paper will be more formal and wider ranging than the assignments. It will be a comparison of at least two authors and works.
- **Exams (35%).** You will have two exams, both of which will be structured along the same lines. The first exam (worth 15%) will cover only the readings from the beginning up to just before the drop deadline. The final exam (20%) will cover only the readings from the mid-term to the end. Both will be primarily essay, though each is likely to have at least one objective section (probably identification of quotations). The final exam will not be comprehensive, though I may give you an essay question which asks you to think broadly about American literature.

Computer Skills and Using Blackboard. We will be making fairly considerable use of Blackboard this semester. I will load several websites and other material, and you will be responsible for viewing them. You should go online and begin to familiarize yourself with the features of Blackboard (especially "Assignments,") if you're not already familiar with it. You aren't going to have to be a computer nerd to take part.

Plagiarism. Plagiarism means taking words or ideas from a source without giving proper credit to that source. There are different types of plagiarism, ranging from relatively innocent to serious. However, plagiarism is—generally—taking ideas or statements (whether quoted or not) from a source without properly and clearly citing or crediting that source. The opportunities and temptations to plagiarize (especially on the internet) have become much more available, but there are also increasing ways for plagiarists to be caught at it. Whatever the case, plagiarism is a serious academic offense, and I do not take it lightly. (Neither does the University. See the student guidelines for a discussion of the penalties of plagiarism.) The long and short of this message is simple: Don't do it. If you work hard and do the work yourself, I'll give you every benefit of the doubt, and

I'll help you as much as you need it. It won't be hard to write your own papers, and you'll have plenty of help with them. Just sweat it out and do the work yourself. I guarantee it's better that way.

Course Assessment. Toward the end of the term, you will do an "IDEA" assessment of the course. These evaluations are a part of our faculty evaluation system, but even if we didn't do them, I take student evaluation seriously. In addition to the formal university teaching evaluation, I will be seeking feedback from you about the course. I never begin planning a course until I have considered student feedback from previous classes.

Guidelines for Academic Conduct and Classroom Procedures. Below are official University statements on other aspects of academic conduct and classroom procedures (with a link to the full guidelines). The material in italics is official university language. The non-italicized material is my own clarifications or comments on these policies. If you have any questions about any of this, please ask.

Student Syllabus Guidelines: Following are some official university guidelines for students to know about. There are more detailed descriptions online, as well as links to the specific university policy or procedure:

<https://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

Academic Dishonesty: *All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. See also the statement on plagiarism, above.*

Classroom Rules of Conduct: *Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students are to treat faculty and students with respect. Students are to turn off all cell phones while in the classroom. Under no circumstances are cell phones or any electronic devices to be used or seen during times of examination. Students may tape record lectures provided they do not disturb other students in the process.* Besides these university rules, I have some guidelines of my own. I am not too much bothered when a cell phone goes off (though the rule in my class is that I get to answer it). What does bother me is students who leave class early. I have also had some issues with laptops in class. If you use a laptop in my class, just don't let me discover you checking your e-mail (or, worse yet, surfing the internet). Don't be offended if I ask you for an explanation or justification of your laptop use. You definitely may not use laptops, cell phones, or any other electronic device during exams. For the university statement on classroom conduct, see the following:

<https://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html>.

Student Absences on Religious Holy Days: Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

"Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

Students with Disabilities Policy: It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If a student has a disability that may affect adversely his/her work in this class, then the student is encouraged to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how best to deal with the situation. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center.

Visitors in the Classroom: Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted into the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom. This policy is not intended to preclude visitors altogether. If you want to bring a visitor with you to class, please just check with me first.

TENTATIVE DAILY SCHEDULE
ENGLISH 361—AMERICAN LITERATURE SINCE 1865
DAILY READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS SCHEDULE
FALL 2007—DR. GENE YOUNG

Date	Readings, Assignments, and Deadlines
Tuesday, Aug. 21	Course Introduction and Overview
Thursday, Aug. 23	VOLUME C: AMERICAN LITERATURE 1865-1914. “Introduction” (1-17); MARK TWAIN (SAMUEL L. CLEMENS) “The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” (104-08); from <i>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> , “Notice,” “Explanatory” and Chapters I-IV (108-19)
Tuesday, Aug. 28	Complete your reading of <i>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i>
Thursday, Aug. 30	Finish discussion of HF
Tuesday, Sept. 4	KATE CHOPIN— <i>The Awakening</i>
Thursday, Sept. 6	Continue discussing <i>The Awakening</i> ; AMBROSE BIERCE—“An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”
Tuesday, Sept. 11	CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN—“The Yellow Wallpaper”; and “Why I Wrote ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’”; EDITH WHARTON—“Roman Fever”
Thursday, Sept. 13	“Realism and Naturalism” (911-12); HAMLIN GARLAND—“Under the Lion’s Paw”; JACK LONDON—“The Law of Life” and excerpt from <i>What Life Means to Me</i>
Tuesday, Sept. 18	STEPHEN CRANE—“The Open Boat”
Thursday, Sept. 20	CORRIDOS—“El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez”; “Debates over ‘Americanization’” (1147-48); FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER—from <i>The Significance of the Frontier in American History</i> (1148-53) and HELEN HUNT JACKSON—from <i>A Century of Dishonor</i> (1159-64)
Tuesday, Sept. 25	VOLUME D: 1914-1945; Introduction (1177-91); “World War I and Its Aftermath” (1371-72); ERNEST HEMINGWAY—“Letter of August 18, 1918, to His Parents”; T. S. ELIOT—“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and “The Hollow Men”
Thursday, Sept. 27	WALLACE STEVENS—“Sunday Morning” and “Peter Quince at the Clavier”; EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON—“Richard Cory” and “Mr. Flood’s Party”
Tuesday, Oct. 2	ROBERT FROST—“Mending Wall”, “Home Burial”, “After Apple Picking”, “The Wood-Pile”, “The Road Not Taken”, “Birches”; “Out, Out--”, “Provide, Provide”, “The Gift Outright”, and “Directive”
Thursday, Oct. 4	Exam #1
Tuesday, Oct. 9	CARL SANDBURG—“Chicago”; WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS—“The Widow’s Lament in Springtime”, “To Elsie”, “This is Just to Say”, “Landscape with the Fall of Icarus”; E.E. CUMMINGS—“In Just-“ and “anyone lived in a pretty how town”
Thursday, Oct. 11	KATHERINE ANNE PORTER—“Flowering Judas”
Friday, Oct. 12	Drop Deadline
Tuesday, Oct. 16	ZORA NEALE HURSTON—“The Gilded Six-Bits”; F. SCOTT FITZGERALD—“Babylon Revisited”
Thursday, Oct. 18	ERNEST HEMINGWAY—“Hills Like White Elephants” (copy provided); WILLIAM FAULKNER—Read Faulkner background; preview of <i>As I Lay Dying</i>
Tuesday, Oct. 23	WILLIAM FAULKNER—Finish reading <i>As I Lay Dying</i>
Thursday, Oct. 25	<i>As I Lay Dying</i>
Tuesday, Oct. 30	Finish discussion of <i>As I Lay Dying</i> ; LANGSTON HUGHES—“The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” “Mother to Son,” “The Weary Blues,” and “Theme for

	English B”
Thursday, Nov. 1	VOLUME E: AMERICAN LITERATURE SINCE 1945. Introduction and Timeline (2083-97); EUDORA WELTY—“Petrified Man”;
Tuesday, Nov. 6	ELIZABETH BISHOP—“In the Waiting Room”; THEODORE ROETHKE—“My Papa’s Waltz”; ROBERT HAYDEN—“Those Winter Sundays”
Thursday, Nov. 8	RALPH ELLISON—from <i>Invisible Man</i> “Prologue and Battle Royal”; GWENDOLYN BROOKS—“Kitchenette Building”, “The Mother”, and “The Coora Flower”; ALLEN GINSBERG—“A Supermarket in California”
Tuesday, Nov. 13	BERNARD MALAMUD—“The Magic Barrel”; RAYMOND CARVER—“Cathedral”; RICHARD WILBUR—“The Death of a Toad”
Thursday, Nov. 15	POSTMODERN MANIFESTOS (2485-86); HUNTER S. THOMPSON— from <i>Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas</i> ; FLANNERY O’CONNOR—“Good Country People”; URSULA K. LE GUIN—“ She Unnames Them”; DONALD BARTHLEME—“The Balloon”
Tuesday, Nov. 20	TONI MORRISON—“Recitatif”; SYLVIA PLATH—“Daddy” ; THOMAS PYNCHON—“Entropy”
Wed., Nov. 21	Begin Thanksgiving Holidays
Tuesday, Nov. 27	CORMAC MCCARTHY— <i>The Road</i>
Thursday, Nov 29	Finish <i>The Road</i>
Tuesday, Dec. 4	Paper #2 Due. JOHN UPDIKE—“Separating”; ART SPIEGELMAN—from <i>Maus</i>
Thursday, Dec. 6	Last Class Meeting. AMY TAN—from <i>The Joy Luck Club</i> ; SANDRA CISNEROS—“Woman Hollering Creek”; BILLY COLLINS—“Forgetfulness”; CATHY SONG—“Heaven”;
Tuesday, Dec. 11	Final Exam (8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.)