

Spring 1-15-2019

# ENG 3704-001: American Literature 1950 to Present

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## ENGLISH 3704.001 – AMERICAN LITERATURE, 1950-Present

Professor: Dr. Marjorie Worthington  
Office: Coleman Hall 3321  
Email: mgworthington@eiu.edu  
Class: Coleman Hall 3150, MWF, 10:00am  
Office Hours: MWF 12:00-2:00pm, or by appt.

### **Texts:**

Jess Walter, *The Zero*, 2006  
Tim O'Brien, *In the Lake of the Woods*, 1994  
Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America*, 2004  
Everett: Percival Everett, *Erasure*, 2001  
Chuck Palahnuik, *Fight Club*, 1996  
Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*, 1965  
Toni Morrison, *Jazz*, 1992  
Ruth Ozeki, *A Tale for the Time Being*, 2013  
Leslie Marmo Silko, *Ceremony*, 1977

**Description:** Oxford Dictionaries' 2016 word of the year, "Post-truth," is defined as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief." If we live in a post-truth world, it is not that truth doesn't exist, but that people no longer care what it is; instead, they act according to what they want the truth to be, rather than what it is. As Stephen Colbert claimed on *The Colbert Report*, "Anyone can read the news *to* you. I promise to feel the news *at* you." And, of course, this has culminated in the election of a President that we are exhorted to take *seriously*, but not *literally*. What does that even mean?

Literature, as always, can help us figure that out. American fiction has been grappling with the slipperiness of truth for decades, from novels that doubt we can ever know the truth, to ones that posit that "the truth" is simply made out of the language we use to describe it, to ones that suggest that there is no such thing as truth at all. Some say that literature is meant to hold a mirror up to the world to help us understand it. But what kind of world is it if we hold up that mirror and only *language* is reflected back?

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- To read, discuss and analyze representative texts of the late twentieth century to the present.
- To familiarize ourselves with differing critical stances on some of these works.
- To learn about and engage in literary research.
- To hone skills related to writing literary analyses.
- To explore relevance of this literature to other texts, arts, disciplines and world issues.

### **ASSIGNMENTS:**

**YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS TO PASS THIS COURSE.**

**Short Essays:** Over the course of the semester, you will write four one-page *single-spaced, thesis-driven* essays based on assignments I will provide. It is my hope that these papers will: 1) help you keep up with the reading; and 2) generate interesting ideas for discussion.

**Longer Essays:** You will write two longer essays of about 5-6 double-spaced pages, based on assignments I will provide.

**Presentation:** The information in your second longer essay will serve as the basis for your presentation.

**Final Exam:** This will be cumulative and will be a series of take-home essays. It will be due on the final exam day and we will use the exam period itself to watch a film that the class can choose, based on the theme of this course.

**Class Participation:** In a class as small as ours, it is important that you come each day prepared and ready to contribute. You must participate substantially EVERY DAY. If you are not accustomed to doing so, GET ACCUSTOMED. Consider it good preparation for the real world.

**Attendance:** I take attendance every day (even if you do not see me doing it). You are permitted no more than three unexcused absences. Each unexcused absence after three will lower your final grade by thirty points (3%). Excused absences are accompanied by appropriate legal or medical documentation.

**Office Hours:** The hours listed above are times when I will be in my office ready to meet with students. You can also make a special appointment to see me if you are unable to come during office hours.

**Academic Integrity:** Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as de-fined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be re-reported to the Office of Student Standards.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is defined as appropriating words or ideas that are not your own without giving proper credit. The temptation to plagiarize can be great, particularly in the advent of extensive computer technology and the collaborative nature of our class. However, the consequences of plagiarism are dire and can result in a grade of F for the assignment and even for the course. It will also result in a report to the Judicial Affairs Office.

**Students with Disabilities:** If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

**Student Wellbeing:** I will try to bring snacks to class every day. Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact your RA for support. Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to help you access the help you need.

**Writing Center:** EIU's Writing Center provides free one-to-one conferences with writing center consultants who can help you with brainstorming, organizing, developing support, documenting your papers, and working with sentence-level concerns. To schedule an appointment, you can drop by the center (3110 Coleman Hall) or you can call 581-5929.

**The Student Success Center:** Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center ([www.eiu.edu/~success](http://www.eiu.edu/~success)) for assistance with time management, text taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

**Grade Breakdown:**

Short Essays (4 @ 10% each)	40%
Essay 1	20%
Essay 2	20%
Presentation	10%
Take-Home Final Exam	10%

**ENG 3704 READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

M Jan. 7	Welcome to the Desert of The Real	
W Jan. 9	<i>The Zero</i> , pp. 1-100	
F Jan. 11	<i>The Zero</i> , pp. 101-200	
M Jan. 14	<i>The Zero</i> , pp. 201-end & “Whistler’s Druthers” (in D2L)	
W Jan. 16	<i>In the Lake of the Woods</i> , Chaps. 1-8	
F Jan. 18	<i>In the Lake of the Woods</i> , Chaps. 9-12	
M Jan. 21	NO CLASS MLK DAY	
W Jan. 23	<i>In the Lake of the Woods</i> , Chaps. 13-23	
F Jan. 25	<i>In the Lake of the Woods</i> , Chaps. 14-end	<b>Short Essay 1 due</b>
M Jan. 28	<i>The Plot Against America</i> , skim the Postscript (note that you can use it as a reference as you read the novel); read Chaps. 1-2	
W Jan. 30	<i>The Plot Against America</i> , Chap. 3 and most of 4	
F Feb. 1	<i>The Plot Against America</i> , Rest of Chap. 4 and all of Chap. 5	
M Feb. 4	<i>The Plot Against America</i> , Chap. 6 & 7 and 10 pages of Chap. 8	
W Feb. 6	<i>The Plot Against America</i> , Chap. 8	
F Feb. 8	<i>The Plot Against America</i> , Chap. 9	
M Feb. 11	<i>Erasure</i> , pp. 1-72	
W Feb. 13	<i>Erasure</i> , pp. 73-108	<b>Short Essay 2 due</b>
F Feb. 15	NO CLASS LINCOLN’S BIRTHDAY	
M Feb. 18	<i>Erasure</i> , pp. 109-220	
W Feb. 20	<i>Erasure</i> , pp. 221-end	
F Feb. 22	<i>The Crying of Lot 49</i> , Chap. 1 & “Peter Pan Morality” (in D2L)	
M Feb 25	<i>The Crying of Lot 49</i> , Chaps. 2-4	
W Feb. 27	<i>The Crying of Lot 49</i> , Chap. 5	
F March 1	<i>The Crying of Lot 49</i> , Chap. 6	
M March 4	<i>Fight Club</i> , Chaps. 1-11	
W March 6	<i>Fight Club</i> , Chaps. 12-18	
F March 8	<i>Fight Club</i> , Chaps. 19-end	<b>Essay 1 due</b>

**March 11-15 SPRING BREAK**

M March 18 *Jazz*, pp. 1-87 **Short Essay 3 due**  
 W March 20 *Jazz*, pp. 88-113  
 F March 22 *Jazz*, pp. 114-155

M March 25 *Jazz*, pp. 155-198  
 W March 27 *Jazz*, pp. 198-end  
 F March 29 *A Tale for the Time Being*, pp. 1-53

M April 1 *A Tale for the Time Being*, pp. 54-153  
**Tues, April 2 ENGLISH STUDIES CONFERENCE**  
 W April 3 *A Tale for the Time Being*, pp. 154-203  
 F April 5 *A Tale for the Time Being*, pp. 204-258 **Short Essay 4 due**

M April 8 *A Tale for the Time Being*, pp. 259-355  
 W April 10 *A Tale for the Time Being*, pp. 356-end (including Appendices)  
 F April 12 *Ceremony*, pp. 1-55

M April 15 *Ceremony*, pp. 55-160  
 W April 17 *Ceremony*, pp. 161-210  
 F April 19 *Ceremony*, pp. 210-end **Essay 2 due**

M April 22 Presentations  
 W April 24 Presentations  
 F April 26 Presentations

**FINAL EXAM – Tuesday, April 30, 10:15am-12:15pm – we will watch a film on this day – maybe *The Manchurian Candidate?***

**CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Emphasis on such topics as modernism, the Harlem Renaissance, the Great Depression, and World War II. Writers may include Cather, Eliot, Wharton, Hemingway, Hurston, W. C. Williams, Moore, Faulkner, Stevens, Wright, O'Neill. (Group 3C) WI