ENG 3702-001: American Literature: Mid-19th Century to 1900

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Purpose

The course offers a literary-historical study of works associated with the development of American Realism, a literary movement that especially flourished from 1865 to 1900 and that continues to this day. We will examine ways in which writers including Dickinson, Twain, Howells, James, and Chopin sought to represent reality. In addition, we will consider how social and intellectual changes influenced the writers’ literary techniques and concepts of reality. You will have the opportunity to read a wide range of outstanding works reflecting economic, racial, gender and other issues that accompanied America’s transition from an agrarian to an urban society.

Scope

Because the American Realists excelled at writing stories and novels, most of the works fit into those genres. But there is plenty of variety. Realism is by no means a monochromatic movement. There are the Realism of local color, the Realism of social criticism, the Realism of psychological analysis, the Realism of biological and economic determinism, and even the Realism of gothic horror.

Your final grade will be based on the following components:

Class Participation: 10%

Your informed responses and discussion show active engagement with the works and contribute to classroom learning.

Written Responses: 30%

During the semester, you will write six written responses (300-400 words each) focusing on questions I will pose in class. In each response, you will be expected to state a clear position in a main-idea sentence and support that position with evidence and reasoning. Responses will be evaluated for content (clarity and depth of main-idea sentence, sufficiency and coherence of evidence and reasoning) and, to a lesser extent, for grammar and mechanics. A response can receive a failing grade if the composition includes a
great number of drastic sentence errors (fragments, splices, disagreements, dangling modifiers, etc.).

**Critical Essay:** 40%
You will turn in an essay of 8-10 pages (not including endnotes and works cited) in twelve-point type. Essays will be evaluated for content (clarity and depth of thesis, sufficiency and coherence of evidence and reasoning) and, to a lesser extent, for grammar and mechanics. However, an essay can receive a failing grade if the composition includes a great number of drastic sentence errors (fragments, splices, disagreements, dangling modifiers, etc.).

**Final Examination:** 20%
The final examination will be in two parts. Part I will include four items from which you will choose two items as the basis of 250-300 word responses. Part II will include three items from which you will choose one item as the basis of a 600-800 word response. Part I will count 40% of the exam; Part II will count 60%.

**Note:** When I evaluate written responses, critical essays and final examinations, I use a simple ten-point scale linked to letter grades. That is, an 87% is a B+, an 85% is a B, an 82% is a B-.

**Attendance and Grading**
If you have a verifiable excuse from a doctor, the Health Service, or an appropriate University official, I will drop missed written responses from your average. You cannot make up missed written responses. If you accumulate three unexcused absences, each subsequent unexcused absence will carry a penalty of 5% off your final grade.

**Information for Students with Disabilities**
If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

1. Week of August 25
   - Introduction to Course
   - Lecture: Literary-Historical Background; Handout of Melville Poems
   - Discussion of Poems from Melville’s Battle-Pieces (handout), Whitman’s “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” (52-56), Dickinson’s “I like a look of Agony” (72)

2. Week of September 1
   - Labor Day: No Classes
   - Poems by Dickinson: “These are the days when Birds come back” (71), “The Robin’s my Criterion for Tune” (74), “A Bird came down the Walk” (77), “There’s a certain slant of light” (73), “I died for Beauty—but was scarce (80), “I heard a Fly buzz—when I died” (80), “I like to see it lap the miles” (84), “He preached upon ‘Breadth’ till it argued him narrow—” (91-2)
   - Bret Harte: “The Outcasts of Poker Flat” (502-9); George Washington Cable: “Belles Demoiselles Plantation” (520-32)

3. Week of September 8
   - Twain: “The Notorious Jumping Frog” (144-51), from Life on the Mississippi (154-71)
   - Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (172-209)
   - Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (209-58)

4. Week of September 15
   - Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (258-309)
   - Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (309-44)
   - “How to Tell a Story” (344-47)

5. Week of September 22
   - Harris: “The Wonderful Tar-Baby Story” (532-36); Chesnutt: "The Passing of Grandison" (661-72)
   - James: "Daisy Miller" (400-21)
   - James: "Daisy Miller" (421-43)

6. Week of September 29
   - Jewett: “A White Heron” (552-60); Freeman: “The Revolt of Mother” (649-61)
   - Crane (separate book): Maggie: A Girl of the Streets (1-31)
   - Maggie: A Girl of the Streets (31-61)

7. Week of October 6
   - Chopin: The Awakening (560-97)
   - The Awakening (597-634)
   - Fall Break: No Classes
8. Week of October 13  
- *The Awakening* (634-50)  
- Gilman: “The Yellow Wallpaper” (695-708)  
- Bierce: “The Boarded Window” (517-20); James: “The Beast in the Jungle” (459-66)

9. Week of October 20  
- The Beast in the Jungle” (466-88)  
- *The Red Badge of Courage* (115-179)

10. Week of October 27  
- *The Red Badge of Courage* (180-225)  
- London: “The Build a Fire” (823-834); Garland: “Under the Lion’s Paw” (685-95)  
- **Proposals for Critical Essays Due;** Crane’s “The Open Boat” (290-313 in Separate book)

11. Week of November 3  
- Dreiser: *Sister Carrie* (1-90)  
- *Sister Carrie* (90-160)  
- *Sister Carrie* (160-227)

12. Week of November 10  
- *Sister Carrie* (227-313)  
- *Sister Carrie* (313-69)  
- Further Discussion of *Sister Carrie*

13. Week of November 17  
- Cather: “Neighbor Rosicky”  
- Howells: from *Criticism and Fiction* (380-85); “Editha” (391-400)  
- Wharton: “The Muse’s Tragedy” and “Roman Fever” (708-728)  
**THANKSGIVING BREAK (Nov. 24-28)**

14. Week of December 1  
- Discussion of Critical Essays: Bring Any Drafts and Outlines  
- Robinson: Poems (841-853)  

15. Week of December 8  
- Frost’s “Home Burial” (907-910), “The Witch of Coos” (920-23), and “Two Tramps in Mud Time” (924-25)  
- Sandburg: Poems (928-32); Anderson: from *Winesburg, Ohio*” (932-40)  
- Orientation for Final Examination; **Critical Essays Due**