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ENG 3702-051: American Literature: Mid-19th Century to 1900

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American Literature: Mid-19th Century to 1900
English 3702-001
Summer 2010

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. To encourage preparation for class participation, I may give pop quizzes from time to time.

Out-of-Class Midterm Examination: 20%

The midterm 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%. 
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.).

In-Class Final Examination: 30%
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. For example, an 87% is a B+, an 85% is a B, and an 84% 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 quizzes from your average. After three unexcused absences, you will incur a penalty of 10% off your final grade; 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 May 17

- Introduction to the Course; Lecture on Literary Historical Context; Discussion of Two Poems by Herman Melville: "Shiloh" and "The College Colonel"

- Walt Whitman (10-12): From "Song of Myself" (13-29, 49-52) and "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" (52-56); Emily Dickinson (68-70): "Success is counted sweetest" (71), "These are the days when Birds come back" (71-72), "I like a look of Agony" (72), "There's a certain Slant of light" (73-4), "The Robin's my Criterion for Tune" (74), "A Bird came down the Walk" (77), "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), "The Brain—is wider than the Sky" (84), "Because I could not stop for Death" (87), "A narrow Fellow in the Grass" (89), Tell all the Truth but tell it slant" (91), "He preached upon `Breadth' till it argued him narrow" (91-92)

- Bret Harte (502): "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" (503-9); George Washington Cable (520-21): "Belles Demoiselles Plantation" (521-32); Mark Twain (144-46): "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" (147-51), From Life on the Mississippi (154-71)

- Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (173-228)

- Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (228-73)

2. Week of May 24

- Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (273-347)

- Henry James (400-402): Daisy Miller (403-43)

- Sarah Orne Jewett (552-3): "A White Heron" (554-61); Mary E. Wilkins Freeman (649-