ENG 2009G-001: Literature and Human Values: Labor, Class and Power

Michael Loudon
Eastern Illinois University

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Course Description:
We’ll begin with some working definitions and reflections on key terms, and then ground these issues in 19th C. America with a brief poem from Whitman and the short novels Life in the Iron-Mills and Maggie: A Girl of the Streets (A Story of New York). We’ll focus then on conditions in rural early 20th C. America with Caldwell’s Tobacco Road, John Ford’s film version of Steinbeck’s The Grapes of Wrath and Faulkner’s As I Lay Dying before examining urban conditions in Sinclair’s The Jungle, Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby and brief poems by William Carlos Williams and Galway Kinnell’s long poem “The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ into the New World.” Using Pasolini’s film The Gospel According to St. Matthew and a late sermon by Martin L. King, Jr., we’ll explore Christian contexts of work and wealth and explore bell hooks’s memoir Where We Stand: Class Matters before looking at Jamaica Kincaid’s Antiguan memoir A Small Place and Japanese director Kurosawa’s film Dodes ‘ka-den for international perspectives. We’ll use the documentary film The Fog of War for nationalistic reflection on the late 20th C. We’ll rely on Cornel West’s Democracy Matters for a concluding account of American values from Ralph Waldo Emerson to hip hop culture.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:
Discussion (participation, homework and reading quizzes as necessary) -- 20%; three short essays (3-4 pp) for a total of approximately 10-12 typewritten pages -- 60%; and a final essay examination -- 20%. (General Education Program and Group 2)

Course Texts:
Erskine Caldwell, Tobacco Road
Stephen Crane, Maggie: A Girl of the Streets (A Story of New York)
William Faulkner, As I Lay Dying
F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby
Rebecca Harding-Davis, Life in the Iron Mills
bell hooks, Where We Stand: Class Matters
Jamaica Kincaid, A Small Place
Upton Sinclair, The Jungle (Uncensored Original Edition)
Cornell West, Democracy Matters

Handouts (in order of readings):
Raymond Williams, Keywords: “Class” (60-68); “Democracy” (93-98); “Labor” (176-179); “Management,” “Masses” and “Materialism” (189-201); and, “Wealth,” “Welfare” and “Work” (331-337)
Walt Whitman, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”
William Carlos Williams, “Shoot It, Jimmy” and “To Elsie”
Galway Kinnell, “The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ into the New World”
Martin Luther King, Jr. sermon
Robert McNamara, The Fog of War (summaries)
Films (in order of screenings):

John Ford (Director), *The Grapes of Wrath*
Pasolini, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*
Kurosawa, *Dodes 'ka-den*
Robert McNamara, *The Fog of War*

General Policies:

*Grading Standards:* I shall follow the EIU English Department Guidelines, distributed in class. In all cases, I shall use a plus and minus system to distinguish, say, a high B from a low one.

*Attendance:* I do take roll, and I evaluate attendance only indirectly in the context of your participation in the course (15%); however, each two days is the equivalent of a week in the fifteen-week semester. Obviously, cuts have a direct influence on your participation.

*Conferences:* These are at your request unless I ask to see you. Please ask for help as soon as you feel you need it; please don't wait until the last few days of class.

*Submission of work:* Essays should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of the paper only, titled and indicate the following: name, date, course and section number, and assignment number. Exercises and quizzes must be legible.

*Late Essays:* For each day that the essay is late, the letter grade will fall by one full grade: an A essay due on Friday will be an F by the next Thursday. If difficulties arise, please see me.

*Plagiarism:* The English Department Policy

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and the representation of them as one's own original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.

If I discover an act of plagiarism, I shall exercise the right to the fullest extent possible. (See *The Blair Handbook*, pp. 242-244, but see also pp. 228-242 for a further discussion of what constitutes plagiarism and how to integrate properly your material from sources.)

*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.
Course Syllabus

Readings should be completed before class discussions; for example, when we begin discussion of Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* on 2/7, you should have completed the novel by then. Reading quizzes will be given at the beginning of class with that assumption. Written homework assignments, other than the three formal essays noted below, will have due dates assigned.

**January**

**T 10:** Course introduction: Work, Money and Control?

**R 12:** Definitions/Premises/Values: selections from Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (handout): “Class” (60-68); “Democracy” (93-98); “Labor” (176-179); “Management,” “Masses” and “Materialism” (189-201); and, “Wealth,” “Welfare” and “Work” (331-337)

**I. Nineteenth-Century American Contexts:**

**T 17:** Whitman, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” (handout)

**R 19:** Rebecca Harding-Davis, *Life in the Iron Mills* (Both this text and Crane's for next week are "cultural editions" with optional but recommended ancillary readings.)

**T 24:** Stephen Crane, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (A Story of New York)

**R 26:** (continued) (Essay #1 assigned)

**II. Twentieth-Century Rural American Perspectives:**

**T 31:** Erskine Caldwell, *Tobacco Road*

**February**

**R 2:** (continued)

**T 7:** William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*

**R 9:** (continued)

**T 14:** *The Grapes of Wrath* (film)

**R 16:** (continued) **Essay #1 DUE**

**III. Twentieth-Century Urban American Perspectives:**

**T 21:** Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*

**R 23:** (continued) (Essay #2 assigned)

**T 28:** F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

**March**

**R 2:** (continued)
T 7: William Carlos Williams, "Shoot It, Jimmy" and "To Elsie" (handout) 
R 9: Galway Kinnell, "The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ into the New World" (handout) Essay #2 DUE

Spring Break

IV. Christian Perspectives:

R 23: (continued)

T 28: Martin Luther King, Jr. sermon (handout) 
R 30: bell hooks, Where We Stand: Class Matters (Essay #3 assigned) 

April
T 4: (continued)

V. International Perspectives:

R 6: Jamaica Kincaid, A Small Place 
T 11: Kurosawa, Dodes 'ka-den (film) 
R 13: (continued)

VI. The Power of Americans, American Power

T 18: Cornell West, Democracy Matters 
R 20: (continued)

T 25: Robert McNamara, The Fog of War (film) Essay #3 DUE 
R 27: (continued)

Final Examination: Tuesday, May 2, 12:30-2:30