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ENG 3703-003: Modern American Literature

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Course Objectives: The purpose of this course is to give the student a general background in the American literature since the First World War. We will discuss the central literary movements of this period (modernism, imagism, existentialism, postmodernism, neo-realism), and the social, historical and cultural conditions which in part gave rise to these movements. Along with this general background, we will read and discuss a number of literary works which will serve as examples of these movements.

Course Requirements: Reading of Assigned Texts
- Paper 100 points
- Short Analytical Essays 100 points
- Mid Term 100 points
- Final Exam 100 points
- Quizzes 60 points

Grades:
- 414-460 points = A
- 368-413 points = B
- 322-367 points = C
- 276-321 points = D
- 0-275 points = F

Reading of Assigned Texts: This course requires much reading and a couple of the works are difficult. I’ve tried to space the big readings out so that we aren’t doing one big thing after another. But, pretty much, you have to keep reading.

Papers: You will write one paper, at least 2000 words long (about 6 pages), on the authors we’ll be reading this semester. This paper should be argumentative (proving some relatively significant point) but need not be critical (i.e. using outside criticism). The paper will be graded on both form and content. Highest grades will go to papers which are most insightfully, thoughtfully, energetically and gracefully written. Further, the papers should be typed and should use the MLA format. Papers will be due shortly before the end of the semester. More information regarding every aspect of this assignment will be handed out following mid-term.

Exams: They will be comprehensive and will contain objective and subjective components. You will be asked to 1) identify characters, situations, images from the literature, 2) identify and explain quotations from the works we will be reading, 3) answer essay questions about them.

Short Analytical Essays: We learn about literature not only by reading and talking about it but also by writing about it. During the course of the semester, each student will write 10 short essays about the literature we’ll be reading. To make certain that these essays are equally spaced (this will benefit both you and me), each student will be expected to write 5 essays before mid-term and five after mid-term. In addition, no student will be allowed to write more than 1 essay per week. These essays may be hand-written or typed. They should be at least 200 words long.

What should you write about in your responses? Each short essay should begin with an important question—clearly stated—about the text you are analyzing. This important question should be about an important issue in the work you are analyzing, or the question should focus on an important quote. Your analysis should
answer the question that your raise. At the end of your essay, you should state another question, one that your analysis lead you to.

What should you not write about in your essays? Although I realize the importance of responding to a work of literature on a personal level, I want these essays to be analytical rather than personal. Also, the responses should not be summaries of the works being responded to.

The individual essays must be turned in on the day that we start discussing the work or works the response responds to. The reason for this is that I want your fresh and pure analysis [no matter how hesitant].

Quizzes: There will be 12 quizzes during the semester. The questions will sometimes be objective, sometimes subjective. Each quiz will be worth 5 points.

Plagiarism: Note the English Dept's statement: "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism--'The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work' (Random House Dict.)--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.

Syllabus: The following may change because of various unforeseen factors. Also, note well that I do not give the titles of specific poems that we will be reading; this information will come before each assignment.

A) Intro to historical and literary backgrounds

B) Modernists:
   Eliot, "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Wasteland" (P) and Pound (P)
   Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby
   Cummings, e.e. (P) and Williams, W. C. (P)
   Lowell, Amy and Elinor Wylie (P)
   Hemingway, Sun Also Rises

C) The Thirties:
   Faulkner, As I Lay Dying
   Hughes (N) and Cullen (N)
   Wright (N) and Hurston (N)
   Steinbeck, Grapes of Wrath

Mid-Term

D) World War II and After:
   Singer, Enemies, A Love Story
   Jarrell (P)
   Bishop (P) and Roethke (P)
   Lowell (P) and Plath (P)
   Ginsberg, "Howl"
   Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse 5

E) Contemporary:
   O'Brien, The Things They Carried
   Oates, "Where are You Going" (P)
   Carver, "A Small, Good Thing" (P)
   Morrison, Sula

Final