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ENG 3703-001: 20th-century American literature

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ENGLISH 3703
AMERICAN LIT: 1900-1950
PROFESSOR MICHAEL LEDDY

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We will read great poetry and fiction, with one eye toward what is “modern” (or “modernist”) and “American” about what we’re reading, and another eye toward the distinctive qualities of the work under discussion. We’ll read poems by T.S. Eliot, Robert Frost, Langston Hughes, Marianne Moore, David Schubert, Wallace Stevens, and William Carlos Williams (making the course, among other things, an experience in how to really read poetry and get something from it). We’ll read fiction by Djuna Barnes, Willa Cather, William Faulkner, and Zora Neale Hurston.

TEXTS
Djuna Barnes, Nightwood
Willa Cather, The Professor’s House
William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury
Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God
Jahan Ramazani, et al., eds., Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry
William Carlos Williams, Collected Poems, V. 1

The works we’re reading contain material that some readers may find offensive or disturbing (language, sex, violence). In such cases, please consider taking another course.

REQUIREMENTS
The course will require dedicated daily work (reading and talking), quizzes, several short pieces of writing, and a final examination.

QUIZZES
They’re meant to be easy if you do the reading. Why quizzes? Michael Bérubé, who teaches English at Penn State, gives a good explanation:

Most of my students do most of the reading. How do I know? Loath as I am to admit it, I have begun giving quizzes.

ATTENDANCE
Be here, on time, every time. Students who miss class will find it very difficult to do the work of the course.

LATE, MAKE-UP WORK
Missed quizzes and writing cannot be made up. Late writing is acceptable only if you have my approval in advance. If you have a properly verified absence for illness, emergency, or participation in an official University activity, I’ll record a blank for a missed quiz, not a zero.

DISABILITIES
If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, contact the coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

OFFICE HOURS
Talking to professors is one of the smartest things a college student can do. Please, come in to ask questions and talk about your work in the class. If you feel uneasy about talking to your professors during office hours, read “How to talk to a professor,” available from the link in the left column.

E-MAIL
Before you e-mail me, please read “How to e-mail a professor,” available from the link in the left column.

DECORUM
The atmosphere in our class should be serious—not somber or pretentious, but genuinely intellectual. No eating, talking, sleeping, drumming, wearing headphones, doing work for other classes, or other private business. Phones and other devices should be turned off and kept out of sight. Please show proper respect to your fellow learners.

DISCUSSION
I like to ask questions that make people think. I also like it when people ask me such questions. So I think of discussion as a matter of asking questions to get at the substance of what we’re reading. Consider what the writer Thomas Merton says about a teacher he admired:

Most of the time he asked questions. His questions were very good, and if you tried to answer them intelligently, you found yourself saying excellent things that you
did not know you knew, and that you had not, in fact, known before. He had “educed” them from you by his question. His classes were literally “education”—they brought things out of you, they made your mind produce its own explicit ideas.

If you say something and I then ask you a question, I’m doing so in the spirit of dialogue. You should be asking questions too, of me and of one another.

**GRADING**
Your grade will be based on your written work (40%), quizzes (30%), a final exam (20%), and participation (10%).

Writing assignments receive letter grades. Missing writing receives a zero. Quizzes receive numerical grades. A quiz average of, say, 103% counts as 103 and not as an A (95); a quiz average of, say, 40% counts as 40 and not as an F (55). Participation in the course receives one of five grades: 100 (consistent, relevant, informed), 85 (frequent, relevant, informed), 75 (less frequent or less informed), 50 (occasional), 0 (little or no participation). “Informed” participation is simply participation that comes from having done the reading. You may check on quizzes and participation at any time.

To calculate semester grades, I use numerical equivalents for letter grades:

- A 95
- A- 92
- B+ 87
- B 85
- B- 82
- C+ 77
- C 75
- C- 72
- D+ 67
- D 65
- D- 62
- F 55

Sometimes when I grade an essay I’ll compromise—e.g., B+/A-, which falls between the two grades (89.5).

For semester grades, 90 or above is an A; 80 or above, a B; 70 or above, a C; 60 or above, a D; below 60, an F.

**EWP**
English 3703 is considered a “writing-intensive” course, so you may include work from the course in your Electronic Writing Portfolio. Please make sure that you understand the EWP requirements and fulfill them in a timely way. You can find more information about the EWP at http://www.eiu.edu/~assess/.

**PLAGIARISM**
The English Department’s statement on plagiarism says that “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 original work’ (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course.”

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**
Any breach of academic integrity—from cheating on a quiz to lifting words or ideas from Spark Notes to submitting a wholly unoriginal essay—is a serious matter and will get you a serious penalty. The Judicial Affairs office recommends an F for the course. You will also be required to take a course in ethics administered by Judicial Affairs, whose staff will keep your misconduct on record and notify your other professors that one of their students has violated academic integrity.

You should be familiar with Eastern’s statement on academic integrity (posted in classrooms) and should ask if you have any questions about quoting from and/or documenting sources. But because the work of the course is to be an expression of your ideas in your words (aside from words and ideas derived from the works we’re reading), questions of plagiarism and collusion should never arise. Do not “borrow” work or give your work to anyone (allowing someone else to make use of your work is also a breach of academic integrity and will also get you a serious penalty, up to and including an F for the course).

**PROVISIONAL OUTLINE**
(numbers = weeks)

1: Introduction to the course
1-2: Robert Frost
2-3: T.S. Eliot
3-4: William Carlos Williams
5-6: Langston Hughes
7: Marianne Moore
8: Wallace Stevens
9: David Schubert
10-11: William Faulkner
11-12: Willa Cather
13-14: Djuna Barnes
14-15: Zora Neale Hurston