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ENG 3604-001: Recent American Fiction

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Prof. Guzowski, Spring 99

Office: 320 Coleman Hall
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M 9-12, TTH 9-9:30 & 1230-2, W 930-1230, & by appt. at other times

Special Needs: Students with special needs who require academic accommodations should contact Martha Jacques at Disabilities Services 9581-6583).

Course Objectives: The purpose of this course is to give the student a general background in American fiction written during the last 20 years. We will discuss the central literary movements of this period (modernism, 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
   Responses 50 points
   Exercises 50 points
   Mid Term 100 points
   Final Exam 100 points

Grades: 360 - 400 points = A
         320 - 359 points = B
         280 - 319 points = C
         240 - 279 points = D
         0 - 239 points = F

Reading: This is a heavy reading class. We're going to read a lot of works, and a number of them will be difficult, but the reading is not impossible. I expect you to keep up. If I feel that the class is falling behind on the reading, I'll start giving objective reading quizzes. Let me tell you here that some of the reading is pretty raw in terms of its portrayal of sexual relations and violence.

Paper: You'll write one paper, at least 2000 words long, on one of the authors we'll be reading this semester. This paper must be argumentative (proving some significant point) and must be critical (showing an awareness of the critical context the works you are discussing exist in). The papers 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 adhere to the MLA format. The paper is due during the last class. Late papers will be accepted without penalty if there is a valid excuse (death, illness, and some act of God). If the excuse is unacceptable, the paper grade will be dropped a letter grade for each calendar day it is late. More information regarding every aspect of this assignment later in the semester.

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) explain in short essay answers important issues as they relate to the literature, and 4) answer longer essay questions about them
Responses: We learn about literature not only by reading and talking about it but also by writing about it. During the semester, each student will write 9 responses to the books we'll be reading. No student can write more than one response per book. The responses may be hand-written or typed. They should be at least 200 words long. Each response should either analyze an important issue in the work you are responding to or answer some important question or questions that you feel the work raises. Summaries of class discussion of the work will not be accepted.

The individual responses must be turned in on the day that we start discussing the work the response responds to. The reason for this is that I want your fresh response [no matter how hesitant] uncluttered by the possible interference from the classroom discussion. Responses may be revised within 10 days of being turned in. Late responses will not be accepted without a valid excuse.

Exercises: For each book you read, you will turn in a sheet of paper with the page references to the 5 most significant, troubling, or puzzling sections, scenes, or quotes you have found in the work. For each book, you will also do a short presentation about these 5 in class. Each exercise/presentation will be worth about 9 points. Your grade will be based on thoughtfulness and completeness.

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:

Dean's December (1981), Saul Bellow
Cathedral (1983), Raymond Carver
Accidental Tourist (1984), Anne Tyler
In Country (1984), Bobbie Anne Mason
Love Medicine (1984), Louise Erdrich
Less Than Zero (1987), Brett Easton Ellis
The Things They Carried (1991), Tim O'Brien
Beloved (1992), Toni Morrison
Black Water (1993), Joyce Carol Oates