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ENG 3704-002: Contemporary American Literature

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English 3704, fall 2004
Guzlowski
Contemporary American Literature 6-830 Wednesday

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Hours: T 930-11, 530-630, W 900am-1100, 500-600pm, Th 930-1000, and by appointment

Special Needs: Students who require academic accommodations should contact Disability Services at 581-6583.

Course Objectives: The purpose of this class is to give a general background in the American Literature written since 1950. The course will focus on the central literary movements of this period (for example, later modernism, confessional poetry, the beat experience, existentialism, hippie-ism, postmodernism, neo-regionalism, and dirty realism) and the social, historical, and cultural conditions (for example, the Minority Rights movement, the rise of the suburbs, the Vietnam war, and the Mallification of America) which in part give rise to these movements. Along with this general background, we will read and discuss a number of literary works that will serve as examples of these movements.

Course Requirements:
- Reading of Assigned Texts
- Electronic Journal 100 points
- Final Paper 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 Texts: This course requires much reading and a couple of the works are hard. I've tried to space the big readings out so we aren't doing one big thing after another. But, pretty much, you have to keep reading.

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.

Essay: You'll write one paper, at least 2000 words long. This paper must be argumentative (proving some significant point) and critical (using significant outside sources, ie, professional journals and books of literary criticism). The papers will be graded on both form and content according to the English Department’s Guidelines for Evaluation Writing Assignments. Highest grades will go to papers that are most insightfully, thoughtfully, energetically and gracefully written. The paper is due during class on the last Wednesday of class, not the final exam. 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 2 grades for each calendar day it is late. More information regarding every aspect of this assignment later in the semester.

Electronic Journal: We learn about literature not only by reading and talking about it but also by writing about it. During the course of this session, each student will participate in a WebCT discussion group. The group site is available at the university’s WebCT cite under the following course title ENG3704JZG. The site is located under the course category: College of Arts and Humanities. You can also go to the WebCT cite. It's one of the menu items at the EIU site.

During the semester and before the final day of classes, you will submit 10 analyses to the egroup about the works we'll be reading and 20 responses to other students' analyses.
What should you write about in your 10 analyses? Each one should begin with an important question about the work 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 you raise.

How long should these analyses be? The length of a well-developed paragraph: at least 100 words each.

To make sure these 10 short analytical entries are equally spaced out (this will benefit all of us), each student will be expected to write 5 short analytical entries before mid-term and 5 after mid-term. You can write as many of these as you want but I will only count the first short analytical entry per week toward your grade.

Also, write your analyses of a work before we start talking about it.

Responses to other students' entries should be thoughtful and respectful and substantive. You might want to write about why you agree with a student's analysis of a work, or why you don't. You might write about something in the analysis that you would like to think about further.

How long should the responses be? About 2 or 3 thoughtful and substantive sentences.

The responses should also be spaced out. I expect each student to do 10 before mid-term, and 10 after mid-term. This is a minimum sort of requirement. Feel free to respond more often. But no more than 2 a week will count toward your required minimum of 10 before mid-term and 10 after mid-term.

If you have trouble getting on-line, see me. You can always post analyses or responses through my computer.

Quizzes: There will be 12 quizzes during the semester. These will be reading quizzes mainly. 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) The Existential and Confessional World
   Singer, Enemies, A Love Story
   Jarrell, poems
   Bishop and Roethke poems
   Lowell, poems
   Bellow, Seize the Day
C) Beats, Hippies, Radicals, and Post-Modernists
   Kerouac, On The Road
   Ginsberg, "Howl"
   Baraka, Dutchman
   Plath, Sexton poems
   Atwood, Surfacing
   Vonnegut, Slaughterhouse 5

Mid-Term

D) Minimalism, Dirty Realism, and Beyond
   Morrison, Sula
   Raymond Carver, Cathedral
   Various Poets: Rita Dove, Robert Pinsky, Louise Gluck, Mary Oliver, Ai
   Tim O'Brien, The Things They Carried
   Oates, Black Water

Final