

**ENGLISH 252W-01:  
MAJOR AMERICAN AUTHORS - REALIST TO MODERN (3 CR.)  
(WRITING-INTENSIVE)**

Instructor: Christian Moraru  
Spring 2001

---

McIver 139B, MWF 10:00-10:50  
Office: McIver 112  
Office Hours: MWF 9:00-10:00, and by appt.  
Office Phone: (336) 334-3564  
Dept of English Phone: (336) 334-5311  
Home Phone: (336) 834-9866  
c\_moraru@uncg.edu

---

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:** This is a survey of American literature from realism to modernism and beyond with emphasis on narrative in a whole range of genres and traditions and covering both canonical and less canonical works. We will read primarily novels and short stories--but also some poetry, drama, and critical essays--by male and female writers with European-American, Native American, African American, and other ethnic and racial backgrounds. Course readings include texts by Henry James, Kate Chopin, T. S. Eliot, Zora Neale Hurston, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Don DeLillo among others. The Heath Anthology of American Literature, vol. 2, and Modernism. An Anthology of Sources and Documents (ed. Kolocotroni et al.) will be our textbooks. This section is writing-intensive.

**FOCUS, STRUCTURE, FORMAT:** The main questions we will ask regarding such a diverse body of literature will be, How do all these writers define America? How is America viewed and narrated at certain points in its history and by authors of various backgrounds? How do they tell the "American story"? Further, we will ask ourselves, How do regionalist, realist, naturalist, modernist, and postmodern writers put together the stories where American identity (or identities) is uncovered? And how do these stories bear upon the ways we see ourselves and we live? In view of these sustained interrogations, we will also address the interactions between literature, aesthetics, history, and politics. We will constantly discuss the relationships among style, culture, and ideology. The course will combine lectures by the instructor, discussion, and group work.

**REQUIREMENTS:**

- I. Students complete 5 major written assignments as follows:
  1. One brief, 3-5-p., typed, double-spaced paper in which they provide a close reading of an individual work indicated by the instructor. This assignment does not involve research.

2. One essay (also 3-5-p.), which represents a thorough revision of the previous essay based on the instructor's comments.
3. One bibliographical essay (4-6 pp.), which both compiles and comments critically on a set of interpretations of a primary source of the students' choice, and
4. A final project (6-8 pp. plus notes and bibliography), which, ideally, integrates bibliographical research done for project #3 and personal commentary. In any event, students consult with the instructor on the appropriateness of their subject by submitting a 1-p., single-spaced proposal to be discussed during an individual conference. The proposal should address primarily the thesis-argument part of the final project. Once the proposal has been accepted and they have received the instructor's suggestions, students start working on the final essay. A first draft of the essay is due on April 16. They will get the essay back from the instructor, revise it according to the comments received. Then, they turn in the
5. Final draft on the last day of classes. Thus, students revise two major assignments during the semester. Note: in all likelihood, the revised final project will look fairly different from its initial version.

The five major submissions (revisions included) will be graded as follows:

- a) initial versions or unrevised papers: 45%
- b) revisions: 40% (revision of the brief paper: 15%; revision of the final project: 25%);
- c) remaining 15%: class participation.

Students should be aware that the revisions will practically count as independent papers in terms of grading.

II. In addition, students keep a journal where they record two types of responses:

- a) their reflections and notes on the readings for the day, which must be recorded before the class and used in class during oral participation;
- b) brief freewriting responses to questions and issues the instructor and/or students themselves will raise during class periods. Students record their responses and notes almost on a daily basis. No entry should be shorter than 250 words or a three-ring binder page (legal size: 8.1/2x11). The journal should be regarded as a resource for the longer assignments.

I will comment on all student writing, regardless of its nature. While the journal entries will be graded on a check-plus/check-minus basis, too many minuses will lower the final grade by 10%.

Note on writing training and revision:

The concept and practice of revision are crucial both to the reading and writing component of the course. The latter is not an addition but an organic part of students' training in literary history and interpretation, the course's main objective. Students will discover that the ability to learn the basics of literary-historical comprehension and discourse entails the capacity to establish a dialogue with "professional" readers and their opinions, furthermore, the skill of building on, and ultimately revising, these opinions. More importantly perhaps, students will come to perceive and practice revision--and self-revision--not only as a formal operation but as a means to generate, refine, and better articulate critical insights.

Finally, they will learn to appreciate the heuristic significance of writing--writing as discovery--as well as the unit of form and content, seeing how formal revision bears upon the substance of their thought. In brief, they will become better readers of others' work as they become better readers of their own work; they will be better critics as they develop, under the instructor's guidance, self-criticism. Thus, stylistic and content-oriented revision is essential to this process. I should stress again that writing training is not an "addition" to the course but rather a learning method. We will discuss, for example, how to build an argument, support a thesis, treat evidence and use critical methods to make a specific case and thus advance a reading hypothesis.

More specifically, the course will include: freewriting sessions, draft workshops, peer revisions, and writing workshops following submissions of major assignments. Individual conferences will also insist on all aspects of students' writing, on the premise that one cannot work out a critically compelling interpretation if one cannot write well. Indeed, writing is a learning tool in this course. A significant amount of class time will be devoted to rhetorical issues (outline, exposition, argument, thesis, introduction, conclusion, evidence), stylistic matters, research tools, format, and so on. I will not simply evaluate students' writing; since my approach to student writing is rather developmental, my comments will usually suggest ways for improvement, expansion, and progress, drawing not only upon what students' writing is but also upon what it can become, upon its potential. The revision of the final project will particularly require close consultation on a one-on-one basis between the instructor and students. During this meeting, we will address both the form and substance of writing, emphasizing the structural character of revision whereby changes in form impact the substance.

Also, I will hold final conferences where I will discuss with students their writing progress throughout the semester. (The discussion will include a comparison of one of their first assignments to a later, fully revised one.)

- III. Quizzes and Brief Responses: Occasionally, you will be given quizzes and brief in-class responses testing reading comprehension and requiring answers to questions we will find particularly relevant.
- IV. Attendance and Participation: Both are expected and will be reflected in the final grad

(see below). I expect you to come to class with the assignments for the day completed and ready to participate orally, individually or in your group.

- V. Group Activities: You will be assigned to groups of 4-5 members, which will meet during class time and, occasionally, outside the classroom to complete various brief assignments. Usually, groups discuss a specific material or problem and then designate a group member to report their conclusions back to the rest of the class. Reports will be oral and rather informal, about 10 minutes long, and their main role is to help us speed up debates. Group work will be graded, too. Students in one group will get the same grade regardless of who gives the presentation.

CONFERENCES: Please meet with me during my office hours or make an appointment to discuss your work or any aspect of the course. We will have at least two rounds of “formal” conferences during the semester. You must make a first appointment early on and a second one around early-April to discuss your final paper project.

#### COURSE POLICIES:

1. Late Papers: No late papers accepted. Please come to see me ahead of time if you foresee any deadline problems.
2. Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of others’ materials both in form (wording) and substance (ideas). Any paper bearing your name signifies that you are the author, namely, that the words and the ideas are yours, with exceptions indicated by quotations marks and paraphrases. Evidence of plagiarism will result in one or more of the following: a failing grade for the assignment, an “F” for the whole course, and/or a report filed with the dean. Also, consult the UNCG policies on plagiarism.
3. Absences: You are allowed no more than 3 absences during the semester for illnesses (which you must document afterwards), religious holidays and emergencies preventing you from attending. Any unjustified absences will seriously affect your grade; 3 undocumented absences may result in your being asked to drop the course. If you are the victim of an emergency or serious illness, please stay in touch with me by e-mail or phone. Do not hesitate to call me at my home number. In addition, because tardiness disrupts class, too, be aware that coming in late 3 times will count as an absence.

GRADING: No incompletes. See the final grade breakdown above. Also, this is my view of the final grade; on the first class, I would like to discuss these percentages with you in greater detail and possibly make some adjustments depending on your input.

#### REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. Lauter, Paul. General Ed. The Heath Anthology of American Literature. 3rd ed. Vol. Two. Boston. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998. ISBN 0395868238 (pbk.). Referenced as Heath followed by page numners.

2. Kolocotroni, Vassiliki, et al., eds. Modernism. An Anthology of Sources and Documents. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1998. ISBN 0226450740 (pbk.). Referenced as Modernism followed by page numbers.
3. Hurston, Zora Neale. Their Eyes Were Watching God. New York: Harper Collins, 1998. ISBN 0060931418 (pbk.)
4. Fitzgerald, F. Scott. The Great Gatsby. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995. ISBN 0684801523 (pbk.)
5. DeLillo, Don. White Noise. Text and Criticism Ed. by Mark Osteen. New York: Penguin, 1998. ISBN 0140274987 (pbk.)
6. Powers, Richard. Plowing the Dark. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2000. ISBN 0374234612 (hard cover).

Note: Do not purchase other editions.

#### COURSE SYLLABUS:

##### **Week 1**

Mon. Jan 8 Introduction to the course: goals, requirements, policies, and evaluation of student work. The writing-intensive component. Our class: the survey and the focus - the “narrative of America.”

#### I. REALISM AND REALIST AESTHETICS

Wed. Jan 10 Howells, The Rise of Silas Lapham, Heath 417-430  
Courbet and Zola, Modernism 169-174

#### II. REALISM TO MODERNISM: NEW VOICES

Fri. Jan 12 Henry James, Daisy Miller, Heath 452-492 (I)

##### **Week 2**

Mon. Jan 15 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday - no class

Wed. Jan 17 Daisy Miller (II)  
Henry James, Modernism 147-150

Fri. Jan 19 Gilman, “The Yellow Wall-Paper”, Heath 725-737  
Optional: Freud, from The Interpretation of Dreams, Modernism 47-51

##### **Week 3**

Mon. Jan 22 “The Yellow Wall-Paper” (the movie)  
Gilman, Modernism 185-198

Chopin, "The Story of an Hour," Heath 536-538  
**1st, 3-5-p. essay assigned**

Wed. Jan 24 Zitkala-Sa, Heath 860-873

### III. MODERNISM AND MODERNIZATION OF LITERATURE AND SOCIETY IN AMERICA

Fri. Jan 26 Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois, Heath 918-924; 935-943; 951-966

#### **Week 4**

Mon. Jan 29 **1st essay due (in class)**  
 Writing workshop

Wed. Jan 31 Langston Hughes, Heath 1612-1633  
 Alain Locke, Modernism 411-417

Fri. Feb 2 Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God 1-50

#### **Week 5**

Mon. Feb 5 Their Eyes Were Watching God 51-115

Wed. Feb 7 Their Eyes Were Watching God 116-193  
**2nd submission: revision of 1st essay due (in class)**

Fri. Feb 9 Frost poems, Heath 1148-1160

#### **Week 6**

Mon. Feb 12 Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants," Heath 1522-1525

Wed. Feb 14 Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily," Heath 1548-1554  
 Midterm evaluations

Fri. Feb 16 Amy Lowell poems, Heath 1244-1251  
 Lowell, Modernism 342-344

#### **Week 7**

Mon. Feb 19 Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Heath 1399-1403  
 Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Heath 1405-1410  
**3rd essay (4-6-p.) assigned (bibliographical project)**

Wed. Feb 21 F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby 5-64  
 Fitzgerald, Modernism 439-443

Fri. Feb 23 The Great Gatsby 65-102

**Week 8**

Mon. Feb 26 The Great Gatsby 103-153

Wed. Feb 28 The Great Gatsby 154-194

Fri. Mar 2 Flannery O'Connor, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," Heath 2165-2175

**Week 9**

Mon. Mar 5 Spring Break: No Class  
Begin reading Hwang (due Mar. 16)

Wed. Mar 7 Spring Break: No Class

Fri. Mar 9 Spring Break: No Class

**Week 10**

Mon. Mar 12 Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti poems, Heath 2434-2437; 2442-2454  
**Personal diaries due**

Wed. Mar 14 **3rd essay due (in class)**  
Writing workshop

Fri. Mar 16 Hwang, M. Butterfly, Heath 2826-2875 (I)

**Week 11**

Mon. Mar 19 M. Butterfly (II)

Wed. Mar 21 M. Butterfly (III): the opera, the play, and the movie

Fri. Mar 23 Mukherjee, "A Wife's Story," Heath 3191-3201

**Week 12**

IV: POSTMODERN AMERICA: THE MEDIA AND CONSUMPTION CULTURE

Mon. Mar 26 DeLillo, White Noise 1-60  
Optional: the introduction and critical essays in our edition

Wed. Mar 28 White Noise 61-105

Fri. Mar 30 White Noise 109-163

**Week 13**

Mon. Apr 2 White Noise 167-256

Wed. Apr 4 White Noise 257-326

Fri. Apr 6                    The final project: substance, format, expectations  
**Final essay assigned**  
 Begin reading Powers (due April 15)

**Week 14**

Mon. Apr 9                    Discussing your final project (**1-p. proposal due**    in my mailbox by  
 8:00 AM): individual conferences    in my office

Wed. Apr 11    Discussing your final project: individual conferences in my office

Fri. Apr 13    Spring Holiday: No Class

**Week 15**

Mon. Apr 16    **Final essay (first draft) due (in class)**  
 Writing workshop

VI: CYBERCULTURE, GLOBALISM, AND NEW NATIONAL ANXIETIES

Wed. Apr 18    Powers, Plowing the Dark 1-115

Fri. Apr 20    Plowing the Dark 115-197  
**Personal diaries due**

**Week 16**

Mon. Apr 23    Plowing the Dark 197-288

Wed. Apr 25    Plowing the Dark 288-364

Fri. Apr 27    Plowing the Dark 364-417

**Week 17**

Mon. April 30 Last meeting  
 Course overview  
**Final essay (final draft) due (in class)**  
 Final evaluations

Note: I would like to think of this syllabus as final. However, I welcome your input as we might be able to make some changes as we go along.