

American Literature, 1865 to Present: Ambitious Nation

ENGL 222-0101

Spring 2019

Instructor: Hillary Roegelein
Time: Tu/Th 11:00am-12:15pm
Location: 0102 Francis Scott Key

Email: hbr@umd.edu
Office Hours: Tu 2-3pm & by appt.
Office: 2205 Tawes Hall

Course Description

The title of this course, “Ambitious Nation,” asks us to consider how the concept of ambition has shaped American identity in literature from the late-nineteenth through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. After the trauma of the Civil War, Americans began to rebuild, or reconstruct, the stories they had told about themselves, their country, and its ambitions. As American writers respond to industrialization, the Great Depression, two World Wars, the Civil Rights movement, and modern-day social change, their writings reconsider again and again the true meaning of progress and the value of ambition. In this class, we will read important works of poetry, fiction, and essay from 1865-present that consider the idea of ambition from diverse perspectives. From stories about women leaving the home in search of work and independence, to poetry about racial uplift in the face of prejudice, to novels that challenge the false promise of the American Dream, the readings in this course trace differing attitudes toward the nation and its “progress” over time. Finally, this class will consider the changing ambitions of literature itself, or, how authors interpreted the form and purpose of literature differently throughout modern history.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- understand the conventions of different literary movements;
- develop their own literary interpretations using the method of close reading;
- communicate persuasive arguments about literature orally and in writing;
- describe how American literature relates to its social and historical contexts.

Required Texts

Please do not purchase any other version of these books other than the ones I’ve specified below. I’ve included the publisher and ISBN numbers to ensure you obtain the right copy.

- *The Norton Anthology of American Literature Shorter 9th Edition Vol. 2: 1865 to Present.* (Norton) ISBN: 9780393264531
- Louisa May Alcott, *Work: A Story of Experience.* (Penguin) ISBN: 9780140390919
- Richard Yates, *Revolutionary Road.* (Vintage) ISBN: 9780375708442

Grade Distribution

- Reading pop quizzes (lowest grade will be dropped) **(5%)**
- Participation **(10%)**

- One presentation to guide discussion **(5%)**
- Close Reading Paper I, 2-3 pages with one revision **(15%)**
- Close Reading Paper II, 2-3 pages **(20%)**
- Critical Analysis Paper, 5 pages **(25%)**
- Final Exam **(20%)**

Course Policies

Essays: The purpose of the writing assignments will be for you to develop your own interpretations of our texts and to support your arguments with close reading, i.e. the careful analysis of how the details of a text's language and form shape its meaning. I will provide specific assignment sheets for each essay.

Quizzes: There will be pop quizzes given at regular intervals throughout the semester, which you will take in the beginning of class. These will be closed book, and you will have 10 minutes to complete each quiz. They will assess whether or not you have completed the reading. The lowest grade will be dropped.

Participation: This course is discussion based. To succeed in this class, you must come prepared to discuss aloud, read aloud, ask questions, and listen to one another every class meeting. You are expected to read the assigned text carefully *before* class and mark significant passages while reading. Participation is meant to be analytical and critical. Simply showing up to this class does not satisfy satisfactory participation. **Bring your copy of the assigned text to every class meeting.** You will not be able to participate without it. On days that readings have been posted to ELMS, you must bring either a print-out or laptop to access the text electronically.

Attendance: You are allowed **4 absences with or without documentation** before your participation grade is affected. **Subsequent absences will result in your participation grade being reduced by 10% per absence.** There is no need to tell me why you have been absent from class. I highly encourage you to visit office hours if you are absent to discuss the material missed. If you anticipate absence(s) due to a religious observance, University-sanctioned event, sports team obligations, it is your responsibility to notify me of this **within the first two weeks of class.** Should an extenuating circumstance (such as an extended illness) arise in the semester, it is your responsibility to notify me as soon as possible so that we can arrange alternative participation assignments.

Accessibility Statement: Your success in the class is important to me. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for adapting assignments to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. If you have a disability registered with Disability Support Services that requires accommodation, please see me **within the first two weeks of class** so we can provide the resources you need. If you have not yet registered with DSS in the Shoemaker Building, please see the following link for information about this process: <https://www.counseling.umd.edu/ads/start/eligibility/>.

Technology & Classroom Etiquette: During class, do not eat, sleep, chat with your classmates, or use any technology other than your laptop/tablet to access readings. All of this comes under the heading of respect for yourself, your classmates, and your instructor, which comprises a section of your participation grade. **Laptops are prohibited** from this class unless I have specified otherwise, (i.e. the day's reading is electronic) or you have an accessibility request that is documented with DSS.

Instructor Communication: I regularly communicate with students via email through ELMS. Please ensure that the email address linked to your ELMS profile is one that you regularly check. To change your preferred email address on ELMS, follow these instructions: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10592-4212710338>.

To communicate with me, please send emails to hbr@umd.edu. I do not use ELMS messaging. Please ensure you follow standard email etiquette: include your full name in your signature and "ENGL 222" in the subject line. If you email me during business hours (M-F 8am-5pm) I will do my best to respond within 24 hours. Note: I **will not respond** to any question over e-mail that can be answered by reading the syllabus.

Late Papers: Because all of the writing assignments in this course are concise by design, I do not grant extensions in this class, excepting extreme cases such as hospitalization. Late papers and assignments will lose 10% from the final grade per each day late.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism and academic dishonesty is a serious and punishable offense. If I find any part of an essay or exam has been plagiarized or fabricated, your work will be submitted directly for review by the Student Honor Council, which can result in failure of the course. You should review the definitions and consequences of dishonesty provided on the university's website: <https://www.studentconduct.umd.edu/academic-dishonesty>.

Course Schedule

Readings should be completed by the day on which they are listed. This syllabus may also be subject to change during the semester. I will announce any changes via email.

*Asterisks mark major grading events—any medically excused absences on these days require official documentation from a health care provider verifying that you are unable to meet your academic responsibilities for this date.

Week 1

Tu 1/29 Introductions

Th 1/31 “Reconstructing America” (*Norton* 3-6); Walt Whitman “Song of Myself” section 6 (*Norton* 28) & “The Wound-Dresser” (*Norton* 74-75)

Week 2

Tu 2/5 Henry James “The Art of Fiction” (*Norton* 584-86) & Edith Wharton “The Other Two” (*Norton* 526-39)

Th 2/7 Theodore Dreiser *Sister Carrie* (*Norton* 597-611)

Week 3

Tu 2/12 Elizabeth Stuart Phelps “The Moral Element in Fiction” (PDF); Louisa May Alcott *Work: A Story of Experience* (6-73)

Th 2/14 Alcott *Work* (74-132) 58 pgs; Introduce Close Reading Paper I

Week 4

Tu 2/19 Alcott *Work* (133-98)

Th 2/21 In-class practice close reading workshop [continue reading *Work* (198-258)]

Week 5

Tu 2/26 Alcott *Work* (258-344)

***Th 2/28 Close Reading Paper I due;** Booker T. Washington *Up From Slavery* (*Norton* 471-74) & W.E.B. Du Bois *The Souls of Black Folk* (*Norton* 562-67)

Week 6

Tu 3/5 Langston Hughes “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” (*Norton* 816-18); poems by Hughes (*Norton* 1037-39)

Th 3/7 Jean Toomer "Georgia Dusk" (*Norton* 968); e.e. cummings "anyone lived in a pretty how town" (*Norton* 966); Ezra Pound "In a Station of the Metro" (*Norton* 799)

Week 7

***Tu 3/12 Close Reading Paper I REVISION due;** Gwendolyn Brooks poems from *A Street in Bronzeville* (PDF)

Th 3/14 Richard Yates *Revolutionary Road*, Part One (1-55)

Week 8 **Spring Break**

Tu 3/19 **No Class;** Finish Part One of *Revolutionary Road* (56-122)

Th 3/21 **No Class;** see above

Week 9

Tu 3/26 Yates *Revolutionary Road*, Part Two (123-76); Introduce Close Reading Paper II

Th 3/28 Yates *Revolutionary Road*, Part Two (177-222)

Week 10

Tu 4/2 Yates *Revolutionary Road*, Part Three (223-88)

Th 4/4 Yates *Revolutionary Road*, Part Three (289-355)

Week 11

Tu 4/9 Allen Ginsberg "Howl" (*Norton* 1394-1402)

Th 4/11 Joan Didion "Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream" (PDF)

Week 12

***Tu 4/16 Close Reading Paper II due;** Elizabeth Bishop "The Fish," "At the Fishhouses," "The Armadillo," "Sestina," & "One Art" (*Norton* 1108-11)

Th 4/18 Rachel Carson *Silent Spring* excerpts, Gary Snyder "Riprap," & W.S. Merwin "The Coming Extinction" (PDF); Introduce Critical Analysis Paper

Week 13

Tu 4/23 Sylvia Plath "Lady Lazarus" & "Blackberrying" (*Norton* 444, 449); Audre Lorde "Coal" (*Norton* 449-50)

Th 4/25 Adrienne Rich "Transcendental Etude" (*Norton* 1423-27)

Week 14

Tu 4/30 Louis Erdrich "I Was Sleeping Where the Black Oaks Move" & "Fleur" (*Norton* 1625-35)

***Th 5/2 Critical Analysis Paper due;** Junot Diaz "Drown" (*Norton* 1709-16)

Week 15

Tu 5/7 Tommy Orange *There There* excerpts (PDF)

Th 5/9 Wrap-Up & Review

Week 16

Tu 5/14 **No Class**

***Th 5/16 Final Exam** 8:00-10:00am (in our normal classroom)