E346 American Literature II (Spring 2002)

Instructor: Dr. David Sokolowski  
231 St. Mary's Hall  
x1538  
e-mail: dsokolow@smumn.edu  
Office hours: TBA

Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie  
F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby

Course Description: A study of major writers since the Civil War and the literary movements of which they were a part: realism, naturalism, modernism, and the Harlem Renaissance. Included as well will be selections from post-WWII poetry and fiction. E 346 American Literature is a Writing-Intensive course. What this means is that significant attention will be given to having you learn the conventions of writing about literature as well as having you engage the process of writing— invention, thesis construction, drafting, and editing. Therefore, time will be set aside—both in class and out of class—to ensure that you learn these conventions and fully engage the writing process.

Content Goals, Objectives, and Assessment

Goal 1: To acquaint students with the literary movements within American literary history, such as realism, naturalism, modernism, and postmodernism.

Objective: Students will be able to describe the essential characteristics of and place certain authors within the American literary movements listed above.

Assessment: Students will, for example, be asked to define “realism” on an exam and demonstrate why two or three authors fit into this literary movement.

Goal 2: To acquaint students with the forces in American and European intellectual, social, economic, and political history that came to bear on the American literary movements to be discussed.

Objective: Students will be able to identify and discuss some of the key events and/or persons in American and European intellectual, social, economic, and political history that influence the American literary movements to be discussed.

Assessment: On their exams, students will be asked to take into account broader historical influences when defining American literary movements and the themes/concerns of the authors involved.
Goal 3: To acquaint you with the themes/concerns of significant authors and/or works within these literary movements.

**Objective:** Students will be able to name and describe major authors their works as well as the themes/concerns of the authors demonstrated by these works.

Assessment: Students will be examined over the themes/concerns of majors authors within the literary time period studied.

**Written Communication Skills Goals, Objectives, and Assessment**

**Writing Goal 1:** To acquaint students with the specific conventions involved in writing about literature.

**Objective 1:** Students will learn the standard conventions for writing about literature, including but not limited to, the following: setting out an interpretive context, constructing a thesis about a literary work(s), applying literary terms of analysis, working with textual evidence, following MLA format for quoting from primary and secondary sources as well as other manuscript matters.

**Assessment:** Two papers that ask students to interpret and analyze specific literary works.

**Writing Goal 2.** Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively by addressing the general education goals for writing intensive courses:

a) *Awareness of rhetorical situation:* Students will demonstrate an awareness of the role of audience, context, and purpose in determining rhetorical choices.

b) *Thesis Statement and Development:* Students will demonstrate the ability to clearly articulate a thesis -- a main point or a controlling idea. Further, students will demonstrate the ability to develop a thesis through adequate support.

c) *Organization, Unity, and Coherence:* Students will demonstrate the ability to write organized documents that contain unified and coherent paragraphs.

d) *Correct Grammar, Punctuation, Usage, and Mechanics:* Students will demonstrate an ability to write following standard English with respect to grammar, punctuation, usage, and mechanics.
Objective 1: Students will demonstrate incremental improvement in applying a-d above in the process of writing two five-page papers.

Assessment: Two papers that ask students to interpret and analyze specific literary works.

Accomplishing Goals and Objectives
To accomplish the following goals and objectives, we must work as a team. I must, for instance, come to class prepared to teach the assigned readings and all that goes along with this, such as offering interpretation and reasons for this interpretation, providing background information, facilitating discussion by asking essential questions, etc. But you must do your part, which entails the following:

   A) Reading each assignment before the class in which it will be discussed (along with the biographical introductions to each author found in your anthology).

   B) Participating in class discussions.

   C) Completing and handing in on time all class projects.

   D) Working to improve your performance each week.

Course Projects: Two 5-page papers equaling ten pages of formal graded writing. I will hand out an assignment sheet for each project listing due dates, requirements, and the criteria by which you will be graded. Late writing projects will be penalized by a reduction in grade.

Project 1: A paper that interprets/analyses some aspect of a longer work from the unit on Realism.

Project 2: A paper that establishes a connection between the works of two authors from the unit on Modernism.

Exams: There will be two period-long exams given during the semester, the dates of these exams are marked on the course schedule. Exams can be made up only with an authorized excuse.

Grading: Your final grade will be determined as follows: Papers 50%; Exams 40%; Quizzes 10%. Discussion I will factor in as a borderline determinant.

Grading scale: A 93-100; A/B 92-88; B 87-83; B/C 82-78; C 77-73; C/D 72-68; D 67-60; F 59-0.

Plagiarism: Please see the SMU Student Handbook definition of plagiarism as well as the consequences of practicing plagiarism. If you are caught pirating someone else's text, you will most certainly fail the assignment, and you may also fail the course.
Course Schedule

Week 1
    J 9: Introduction to course: topics, themes, policies, texts and text selection, paper assignments, grading policies, etc. Realism vs. Romanticism.

Week 2
    J 14: Emily Dickinson’s poetry
    J 16: Emily Dickinson’s poetry con’t. Introduction to Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Week 3
    J 21: Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
    J 23: Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Week 4
    J 28: Henry James’ *Daisy Miller*
    J 30: Edith Wharton: selections TBA

Week 5
    F 4: Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*
    F 6: Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*

Week 6 (Paper #1 due)
    F 18: Introduction to Naturalism. Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat" and Jack London's "To Build a Fire"
    F 20: Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie*

Week 7
    F 25: Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*
    F 27: Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie*

Week 8
    M 4: Exam I on Realism/Naturalism
M 6: Poetry of Robert Frost

Week 9
M 11: Poetry of Robert Frost con’t. Poetry of Wallace Stevens
M 13: Poetry of Wallace Stevens con’t.

Week 10
M 18: Poetry of T. S. Eliot

Week 11
A 3: Poetry of William Carlos Williams con’t.

Week 12
A 8: Ernest Hemingway’s short fiction (TBA)
A 10: William Faulkner’s short fiction (TBA)

Week 13
A 15: F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*
A 17: F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*

Week 14
A 22: Exam II on Modernism.
A 24: Selected authors of the Harlem Renaissance

Week 15
A 29: Selected authors of the Harlem Renaissance con’t.
M 1: Post-WWII fiction and poetry

Paper #2 due at Final
E 346 American Literature II: Paper Assignment I

**Due date:** Working draft, February 19; Final draft, February 26

**Format:** Essay that analyzes/interprets a literary work

**Length:** 5 pages (double-spaced)

**Citation/Documentation Style and Manuscript Form:** MLA (See “Guide to Writing About Literature”)

**Sources:** Primary text, with secondary sources optional

**Title:** Please give your paper a descriptive title

Writing Situation and Prompt: Pretend that you are writing to an educated reader like yourself (e.g., a fellow student) and assume that he or she has read the text about which you intend to write but has not analyzed it in depth. Your goal is to give your reader a deeper insight into the text through close and imaginative textual analysis. With this rhetorical situation in mind, I would like you to write an analysis/interpretation of some part of a text we have read up to this point in the semester. What you will be expected to do is to create a thesis wherein you relate some part of the novel to its theme—the overall meaning of the work. So, you will be responsible for articulating to your audience your understanding of the work’s overall meaning and then demonstrating how some aspect of the work contributes to this meaning.* For example, let’s say that you think that Twain’s work deals with the corruption inherent in slave society. Here you might discuss how the Shepherdson-Grangerford feud contributes to the Twain’s overall meaning. So, here are your central **tasks:**

1) Compose a specific thesis in which you a) address what you think is the overall theme/meaning of a text we have read up to this point in the semester and b) show how some aspect of this text is related to its overall meaning.

2) Demonstrate how the aspect of the text you’ve chosen to analyze contributes to an understanding of the whole work through close and imaginative textual analysis.

**Organization:** Your paper should contain an introduction that explains/provides context for your topic and leads into your thesis; body paragraphs that analyze specific facets of the part of the work you have chosen; a conclusion that summarizes and, if you so choose, adds some final flourish to your argument.

*It is quite possible to come at this assignment from the opposite perspective. For instance, if you think that Twain’s work is dedicated to the moral growth of Huck Finn, you might discuss how the Phelps’ farm episode (i.e., the ending of the novel) fails to contribute to this theme.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rhetorical Situation</th>
<th>Thesis</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Organization, Unity, and Coherence</th>
<th>Language and Mechanics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 (A-A/B Range)</td>
<td>Shows a truly sophisticated awareness of audience and purpose</td>
<td>Thesis is clear and specific in relating one aspect of the novel to the whole; sets forth a deeply insightful argument; gives clear sense of the direction the paper will take</td>
<td>Textual evidence in the form of quotes and/or summary of passages is relevant, sufficient, and well-placed; use of this evidence is explained in a clear and sophisticated manner</td>
<td>Essay has a clearly discernable plan; paragraphs have strong analytical topic sentences and exhibit topical unity; transitions between sentences and paragraphs are elegantly handled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (B-B/C Range)</td>
<td>Shows a good grasp of audience and purpose</td>
<td>Thesis is clear and specific in relating one aspect of the novel to the whole; sets forth a solid argument; gives a sense of direction paper will take</td>
<td>Textual evidence in the form of quotes and/or summary of passages is mostly relevant and adequate; use of evidence is explained well</td>
<td>Essay has a clear overall plan; paragraphs exhibit analytical topic sentences and topical unity; transitions between sentences and paragraphs are clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (C-C/D Range)</td>
<td>Shows an adequate grasp of audience and purpose</td>
<td>Thesis, though understandable, is rather general in relating part to whole; argument set forth is limited in its depth; not a good sense conveyed of the direction paper will take</td>
<td>Use of textual evidence is a bit erratic: sometimes relevant and/or sufficient and sometimes not; use of evidence not always clearly explained</td>
<td>Essay has an overall plan that reader may have to dig for a bit; some paragraphs are fairly strong, but others lack analytical topic sentences and/or unity; use of transitions, too, is uneven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (D Range)</td>
<td>Does not show an awareness of audience and fails to grasp fully the purpose of the paper</td>
<td>The thesis is either very vague or not understandable, and therefore argument set forward seems or is irrelevant</td>
<td>Use of textual evidence is either irrelevant and insubstantial; may rely heavily on plot summary</td>
<td>Essay lacks overall plan; topic sentences are either vague or non-existent; few transitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (Failing)</td>
<td>Shows no awareness of audience or purpose</td>
<td>No thesis</td>
<td>Evidence is listed without explanation or is confined to plot summary</td>
<td>No discernable plan or internal coherence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from “Scoring Rubric, LOWER-DIVISION WRITING ASSESSMENT (1997-98), Composition Program,” University of California at Irvine.