

The Alienated Storyteller

In this course we will trace the lineage of the outwardly dispassionate, inwardly obsessive, alienated narrator in American fiction. The storytellers we will study share similar character traits: each has trouble shaping his or her imposing intellect to the realities of a common world; their dramas of mind are distanced, frustratingly so, from their dramas of life. Thus they are all outsiders, living and re-living experience exquisitely in their own imaginations. In one sense, these narrators constitute a counter-movement to the expansive frontier themes that dominate much of American literature, but each must confront that legacy in his or her own story. We will locate these figures in the house of literary history as it becomes necessary or interesting to do so, but for the most part we will speak of what sort of American tradition they build rather than fit into.

Required Texts

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow and Other Stories from The Sketch-Book, Washington Irving
Moby-Dick, Herman Melville
The Blithedale Romance, Nathaniel Hawthorne
The Aspern Papers and The Turn of the Screw, Henry James
My Antonia, Willa Cather
The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald
The Sound and the Fury, William Faulkner
The Annotated Lolita, Vladimir Nabokov (introduction and notes by Alfred Appel)
Endless Love, Scott Spencer
Housekeeping, Marilynne Robinson

We will read these texts in the order they are listed. You may use any edition of these works—except I request everyone purchase *The Annotated Lolita*.

Reading Assignments

We read ten books this semester—getting through them all will take considerable time. For each class I will assign a certain portion of a text and will expect that you come to class having read the material and ready to discuss it. *Given that this will be a discussion-based course, it is imperative that you keep up with the class-by-class reading assignments.*

Essays

There will be three essays and a final take-home examination due in this course. Your first essay is due Wednesday September 23, and the later dates are provided in the course plan. These essays do not require external research. You can certainly incorporate outside research if you wish, but I am more interested in how you develop an interpretive argument based on the readings done for class. Late papers seriously disrupt the routine and rhythm of the course; accordingly, essays not completed on time will be penalized half a grade for each day late.

Rough drafts/revisions of essays

I am happy to look at a rough draft of an essay. However, I ask that you leave the essay with me overnight to allow me the time to consider it carefully. (I find it difficult to read rough drafts “on the spot” as a student waits in the office.) This means that you will need to complete the rough draft well in advance of the due date. You are also welcome to revise an essay (assuming you have not turned it in late); for this, I ask that you meet with me in my office to discuss the essay and what might be accomplished in the revision. The final grade for the essay will be an average of the original and revised essay grades.

Quizzes, Examinations

Depending upon the volume and quality of class discussion, there may be a number of unannounced quizzes during the term. A substantial take-home final will be due during exam week. There will be no mid-term examination.

Blackboard discussion questions.

I have set up a Blackboard site for the course, which can be accessed by going to <http://courses>. The day before each class session, I post questions that will be part of the next day's class discussion. I will write individual student names next to the questions, with the expectation that the student named will open up the topic (informally and conversationally) as a way of beginning discussion on that particular issue. I will expect all students (even if you are not one of the students named) to read and think about each Blackboard question and to come to class ready to speak about it. Also, I will occasionally post links and other materials relevant to class discussion. Thus, class-by-class consultation of the Blackboard site will be a course expectation. (Note: Blackboard questions do not require written responses.)

Classroom etiquette.

- Please come to class on time, having completed the reading and ready to discuss the Blackboard questions or anything else that interested you about the assignment.
- Please do not leave the room during class—unless, of course there is some emergency.
- Do not fall asleep during class: this is an embarrassment—to you, to me, and to your fellow students—and drains energy from the class. Feel free to bring coffee to class if that helps.
- Please turn off your cellphone during class: no texting or checking texts during discussion.

Absences

My hope is that you will attend every class. However, to accommodate unforeseen circumstances, you will be allowed *four* absences with no questions asked and without penalty. Each absence thereafter will directly affect your final grade.

Plagiarism

Dishonesty in any form--turning in work that is not entirely your own, copying work from a friend, from the web, or from any other unacknowledged source material--will normally result in an "F" in the course and become a matter for the Office of Judicial Affairs.

Grades

Your grade will be deliberated as follows:

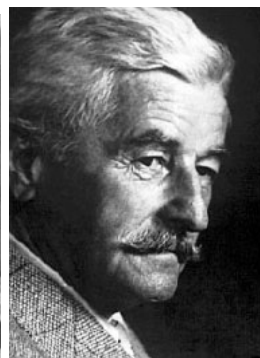
- three essay assignments (55%)
- final take-home exam (25%)
- class participation, attendance and Blackboard preparation (20%).



Melville



Cather



Faulkner



Robinson

Tentative Course Plan

- Wed Aug 26: Introduction and course materials
- Fri Aug 28: *The Sketch-Book*: “The Author’s Account of Himself,” “The Voyage,” “Roscoe,” “The Wife,” “Rip Van Winkle,” “English Writers on America,” “The Broken Heart.”
- Mon Aug 31: *The Sketch-Book*: “The Art of Book Making,” “The Boar’s Head Tavern, East Cheap,” “The Mutability of Literature,” “Rural Funerals” “The Inn Kitchen,” “The Spectre Bridegroom.”
- Wed Sept 2: *The Sketch-Book*: “The Pride of the Village,” “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.”
- Fri Sept 4: *Moby-Dick*: “Etymology,” “Extracts,” and chapters 1-22.
- Mon Sept 7: Labor Day—NO CLASS
- Wed Sept 9: *Moby-Dick*, chapters 23-40.
- Fri Sept 11: *Moby-Dick*, chapters 41-59.
- Mon Sept 14: *Moby-Dick*, chapters 60-86.
- Wed Sept 16: *Moby-Dick*, chapters 87-108.
- Fri Sept 18: *Moby-Dick*, chapters 109-Epilogue.
- Mon Sept 21: *The Blithedale Romance*, “Preface” and chapters 1-9. **First essay due**
- Wed Sept 23: *The Blithedale Romance*, chapters 10-18.
- Fri Sept 25: *The Blithedale Romance*, chapters 19-29.
- Mon Sept 28: *The Aspern Papers*, chapters 1-6.
- Wed Sept 30: *The Aspern Papers*, chapters 7-9.
- Fri Oct 2: *The Turn of the Screw*, chapters 1-12.
- Mon Oct 5: *The Turn of the Screw*, chapters 13-24.
- Wed Oct 7: *My Antonia*, Book I
- Fri Oct 9: *My Antonia*, Book II
- Mon Oct 12: *My Antonia*, Books III and IV
- Wed Oct 14: *My Antonia*, Book V **Second essay due**
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- Mid-term break**
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- Mon Oct 19: *The Great Gatsby*, chapters 1-3.
- Wed Oct 21: *The Great Gatsby*, chapters 4-6.
- Fri Oct 23: *The Great Gatsby*, chapters 7-9.
- Mon Oct 26: *The Great Gatsby*, TBA.
- Wed Oct 28: *The Sound and the Fury*, “April Seventh, 1928.”
- Fri Oct 30: *The Sound and the Fury*, “June Second, 1910.”
- Mon Nov 2: *The Sound and the Fury*, “April Sixth, 1928.”
- Wed Nov 4: *The Sound and the Fury*, “April Eighth, 1928.”
- Fri Nov 6: *The Sound and the Fury*, TBA.
- Mon Nov 9: *Lolita*, Part One, chapters 1-20.
- Wed Nov 11: *Lolita*, Finish Part One. Part Two, chapters 1-3.
- Fri Nov 13: *Lolita*, Part 2, chapters 4-24.
- Mon Nov 16: *Lolita*, Part 2, chapters 25-36.
- Wed Nov 18: *Endless Love*, chapters 1-5.
- Fri Nov 20: *Endless Love*, chapters 6-8. **Third essay due**
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- Thanksgiving break**
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- Mon Nov 30: *Endless Love*, chapters 9-15.
- Wed Dec 2: *Endless Love*, chapters 16-18.
- Fri Dec 4: *Housekeeping*, chapters 1-4.
- Mon Dec 7: *Housekeeping*, chapters 5-7.
- Wed Dec 9: *Housekeeping*, chapters 8-11.
- Fri Dec 11: Summary, evaluation, review

Final take-home essay due during finals week.