English 3334.001: Contemporary American Literature
Department of English
Fall 2020
T/Th: 11-1215
Ferguson 183

Instructor: Dr. Michael Martin
Office: Liberal Arts North 212
Phone: 936-468-2007
E-Mail: martinmj@sfasu.edu

Office Hours:
I will be in my office during these hours, but can also meet you via ZOOM at these times as long as the ZOOM meeting is scheduled.
Monday: 830-930, 3-430
Tuesday: 830-1030. 2-3
Wednesday: 830-930
Thursday: 830-1030, 2-3
Or by scheduled appointment

Bulletin Description: “A close study of American literature from 1945 to the present. The course will cover literary schools of the period and major authors such as Salinger, Vonnegut, Ellison, Carver, Ginsberg, O’Connor, Morrison, Barth and Williams.”

Course Justification: ENGL 3334 “Modern American Literature” (3 credits) typically meets three times each week in 50-minute segments or twice each week in 75-minute segments for 15 weeks, and also meets for a 2-hour final examination. Students are expected to complete a significant amount of weekly reading of primary and/or secondary source material. The weekly reading will be accompanied by such assignments as reading quizzes, in-class and out-of-class writings, and class presentations. The amount of writing will average between 16-24 pages over the semester and will, at times, require substantial research. The required outside of class workload will average 6 hours per week.

Course Description: For this semester, we will—to a certain degree—be centering our study around a theme: the American century. We will start the semester looking at Henry Luce’s famous essay that contributed to the “naming” the second half of the twentieth century as the American century. Then, we will move into a number of “units” of study. In each unit, we will be looking at literature that, in some way, responds to Luce’s ideas. For example, we will look at the idea of the rebellion, war, reality, race, and gender, all in the context of how the literature of this past 73 years has participated in or complicated notions of the American century. Finally, we will end the semester on a study of where we can go when all has been “burned.” The overall goal of this study will be to introduce you to important names (some very well known, others less known) in the most recent decades of American literature. Each unit can be seen as a tip of
the iceberg—in other words, we will be beginning conversations that go much deeper and get much larger.

As you can imagine, this will be an intensive, discussion-based course. Our class discussions will center around primary texts and our avenue for discussing those texts will come from our own critical insights and those provided by secondary and tertiary source materials that we will read alongside certain authors. The expectation that I have is that students will stay on top of the readings and come to class not only having completed the readings for that period but with questions and points of discussion. While there will be periods and times when I lecture and introduce broader concepts, the greater amount of time will be spent in critical conversation with the class.

**Delivery Format:** As we will discuss today and you can see from the calendar for the course, we will be taking certain precautions to provide the safest learning environment possible. The university has studied classrooms and stipulated how many individuals are safely allowed to be in a room at any given time; on top of that, the course capacity for this course was raised. Taking all of this into account, there can be no more than 10 students and myself in the classroom at one time. As we have 25 students enrolled, the class has been broken up into two groups. On every designated class meeting, one group will physically attend class and the students in the other group will attend the class via ZOOM. We will rotate which group is in the classroom each day. While the other students will not be in the room, you will be REQUIRED to attend via ZOOM. Attendance will be taken each day.

**PLOs:** As this course may be taken to fulfill a requirement within the English major, the following Program Learning Outcomes will be achieved:

1. The student will demonstrate the ability to read complex texts, closely and accurately.
2. The student will demonstrate the ability to comprehend both traditional and contemporary schools/methods of critical theory and apply them to literary texts to generate relevant interpretations.
3. The student will demonstrate knowledge of literary history in regard to particular periods of American literature.
4. The student will demonstrate ability to effectively conduct literary research.
5. The student will demonstrate the ability to write clear, grammatically correct prose for a variety of purposes in regards to literary analysis.

**Learning Outcomes:** Specifically, the above goals will be met through the more specific/class centered outcomes:

1) Students will be reintroduced to the concepts of American Modernism, but will focus more on the theoretical and literary aspects associated with post-WWII American Fiction.

2) Beyond being introduced to these writers, and the theory heavy school of Postmodern American fiction, students will display their ability to engage these complex ideas and still be able to analyze the works at hand, connect these works to their literary and
cultural moment, and, finally, judge the success/failure of said works/theories. This will be accomplished through the completion of essay assignments.

3) Students will display their ability to conduct primary and secondary research through the completion of a seminar project. This research will require that students are able to make use of the library catalog and on-line indexes. Furthermore, it will be expected that these papers are clean of stigmatized errors, show correct use of MLA citation, and, finally, provide a coherent and original argument that is supported with developed literary analysis.

Required Texts:
Barth, John. *Lost in the Funhouse.*
Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*
Allen Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems*
Chester Himes, *Rage in Harlem*
Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad*
Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*
Marilynne Robinson, *Housekeeping*
Phil Klay, *Redeployment*

Finally, throughout the semester, I will supply (via D2L) students with copies of secondary readings and short works. It is expected that you have these handouts available in class when they are under discussion. This means that you will either have to print them out or have them available via an electronic device—other than your phone—during class meetings.

Grade Determination:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Grades</th>
<th>Semester Grades</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: 100-90</td>
<td>A: 500-445</td>
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<td>B: 89-80</td>
<td>B: 444-396</td>
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<td>C: 79-70</td>
<td>C: 395-346</td>
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<td>D: 69-60</td>
<td>D: 345-296</td>
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<td>F: 59-0</td>
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Major Course Assignments:

*Short Essay One: Source Analysis*

During the first half of the semester, you will write a Source Analysis Paper. As you can see from the calendar and the attached list, I have broken the class into three groups. While I will assign secondary and tertiary readings to texts throughout the semester, I will assign one specific secondary essay to each book that will serve as the basis for your source analysis. For this source analysis paper, each student in the assigned group will read this additional outside source and individually write an essay on this source. This essay will be a source analysis. The requirement is that you, first, summarize the overall argument being made by the critic and, second, develop an objective analysis of his/her argument. In this objective analysis you will
analyze the thesis, point of support, use of resources, etc., and thus decide whether or not the author’s end argument is strong and well developed. The due date for each group’s Source Analysis will be found on the course calendar.

As I hope is clear, this is meant to be a clearly objective essay; you are not making your own argument over the primary text but are summarizing and evaluating the argument made by another. In working with this outside source, you should read the work several times, study the argument being made, and study how and when the author employs outside resources to support his/her argument and when s/he depends on a close reading of the text. After taking all this into consideration, you will develop your paper. First, summarize the overall argument, then provide your analysis (supporting your conclusions by clearly breaking down the critic’s construction of his/her own essay). This paper will be no more than four pages in length; you will include a fifth page that will be a Works Cited page. Finally, you will attach to your Source Analysis Paper the copy of the source that I provided; I am asking you to do this so I can follow along your reading and marking strategies.

Short Essay Two: Critical Lens Paper
During the second part of the semester, every student will complete his/her second short essay, the Lens Paper. In the case of the Lens Paper, we will begin the unit on Postmodernism and the unit on African American voices with a tertiary source that sets up a cultural/historical/theoretical discussion of a particular type of writing (in our case, postmodern fiction and crime/African-American literature). Then, each group will be assigned to write an essay on a particular text (two groups will be assigned to write on Barth’s Lost in the Funhouse and one group will be assigned to Rage in Harlem).

Unlike with the Source Analysis Paper that will be completed at the end of our discussion of a particular primary text, the Lens Paper will be turned in at the start of our discussion of a particular primary text. In this paper, you will be responsible for using that tertiary source as the lens through which you read and interpret the set primary text. In the case of this paper, again unlike in the Source Analysis Paper, you will be making your own argument. The paper will be no more than four pages (again with a 5th page that is your Works Cited) in length and make use ONLY of the source that is provided in class.

Seminar Paper: At the end of the semester, every student will be required to turn in a seminar paper that is 7-9 pages in length. This paper will be due on Monday, April 16th. I will provide a list of guided topics on Tuesday, September 8th. You will then have 10 days to look over the topics, meet with me to ask questions, look into the texts/topics, and make an informed decision as to which topic you will choose. You must email which topic you have chosen by 12:00 PM (noon) on Friday, September 18th. Once you have chosen your topic and sent me the email, you cannot change topics. If I do not receive an email from you on February 5th, I will assign you one of the topics. Then, you will spend time throughout the semester reading the additional text, conducting your research, and outlining your argument. I am still working on a drafting process for the class to follow. You will be required to draft and respond to one another’s work, but at this time, the exact process for this is still being worked out.
As noted, this paper will be 7-9 pages in length. The 7-page minimum does not include the Works Cited. The paper will be formal and argumentative; you will have a clear thesis and your paper will make use of outside research. In completing this paper, you are required to make use of at least 5 academic sources beyond your primary text(s). You will make of MLA 8th edition for in-text citation and quoting and your Works Cited page. Overall, this paper will count twice; so, whatever grade you earn, it will be earned twice.

Final Exam:
This class will include a final exam. This will be a cumulative final exam and will consist of a series of essay questions. You will be required to answer a series of questions that cover the primary and secondary texts that we cover throughout the semester.

Course Policies:
Attendance and Late Work:
I have found, and studies have shown, that students who attend class and are regular participants in activities will show improvement in the areas of critical thinking and writing and thus are more likely to earn better grades. As such, I do hold to an attendance policy. This being said, you will be allowed three absences without penalty. An absence will be counted on any day that you are not in class (for those days that your group is to be in attendance in the classroom) or that you do not attend via ZOOM (for those days that your group is to attend the session via ZOOM). For those days that you are to attend via ZOOM, those are synchronous meeting times; in other words, you will be in your ZOOM session from 11-1215—class sessions will not be recorded for you to attend at later times. I will take attendance at the start of every class period by taking roll in class and checking the classroom monitor to see that everyone else has logged in. This being said, should you have more than three absences, you may suffer a penalty. With four absences, your final grade may be no higher than a C; with five absences, your final grade may be no higher than a D; finally, with six absences, you may fail the course.

As for late work, I do my best to return all work in a prompt manner. In order to do so, I must have all assignments turned in on time. This being said, any assignment that is turned in late will be dropped 5 points for each day that it is late. Assignments will be turned in at the start of class. An assignment will be considered late if it is turned in more than 15 minutes after class has begun. As you will know of due dates in advance, I will not accept such excuses as my printer broke, the library printer did not work, something happened to my computer, etc. Plan ahead!

The only absences that will count as excused absences will be DOCUMENTED family emergencies, university sanctioned events (this only includes sport/team events and will only count if I have documentation from the “coach”), extreme medical issues, and (for your ZOOM days) lost internet connections due to inclement weather. An excused absence does not include absences due to doctor appointments, personal illness (a cold, the flu, etc.), work, etc., but will include documentation due to COVID. In the case of any excused absence, you must remember that any work that is due that day is still due that day unless you have contacted me in advance and I have agreed to other arrangements.
**Academic Integrity (A-9.1):**
Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Stephen F. Austin State University defines academic dishonesty as:

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty**
Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at: [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp)

In terms of this class, any student caught blatantly and purposely plagiarizing or cheating will automatically receive 0 points for the assignment. Furthermore, the incident may be reported.

**Class Debate and Discussion:**
In order to help improve our critical thinking and writing skills, we will regularly engage in class discussions and writings. The purpose of such work will be to recognize that while many of the students in the class may be similar in terms of age or year, there are different academic abilities in the classroom and different ways to look at an issue or piece of writing. In other words, one can always learn from his/her peers. In order for this to happen, we must respect one another. Therefore, while I will encourage students to share different opinions and will not stop individuals from disagreeing with one another, **I will not allow** any student to engage in the use of sexist, racist, or homophobic speech or any threatening action. Also, I will not allow any student to simply try to roll over or silence his/her peers.

Of course as there will always be a group attending class via ZOOM, it will be difficult for those attending remotely to participate as fully in class discussion/conversation. Since there is always a delay in ZOOM and we only have 50 minutes (minus the quiz time) to work through a class session, I will ask that direct class discussion be limited to those in physical attendance. I will open the chat function in the ZOOM session and will occasionally be able to check the chat for questions. Furthermore, for those who are not in physical attendance but attending via ZOOM, I will open a discussion forum in D2L where you can go and share your thoughts. Should you post thoughts in the discussion forum, I will respond to your points. Furthermore, I encourage your peers to at least read and, if they wish, respond to your points. This will allow for those not in physical attendance to still have room to participate in discussion.
Acceptable Student Behavior

Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, Article II: B-6). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to penalties.

In the case of this course, disruptive behavior will include the following: consistent use of cell phones/texting during class, consistent participation in side discussions that are not part of classroom dialogue, referring to your teacher or peers in an inappropriate way, physically threatening your teacher or peers, and completing homework assignments for another class. Students participating in such activities can be asked to leave the class and will be counted as absent. Furthermore, class will begin on time each day and run the entire period. It is your responsibility to arrive on time (if you are late and we are taking a quiz, you will not be given extra time) and to remain engaged until class has been completed.

At this time, the university has also put into place certain COVID based requirements. For example, students are required to wear a face covering in particular areas. For our specific case, students are required to wear a face covering in classrooms and in academic buildings. This requirement can be found at http://www.sfasu.edu/fall2020. Should you come to class without a face covering, I will ask you to put one on. Should you not have a face covering with you, you will be asked to leave the class and be counted as absent. As I know that it is new for us to have to carry a face mask, I will make the following caveat. The first time that a student comes to class without a face mask, he/she will be asked to leave but will be allowed to attend the session via ZOOM and not be counted as absent. However, each student will only have this opportunity once. Any time after that a student comes to class without a facemask, s/he will be asked to leave and counted as absent. If a student refuses to leave due to a failure to have a face covering, this will be considered “unacceptable student behavior” and University Police will be contacted.

Finally, as stipulated by the university

Masks (cloth face coverings) must be worn over the nose and mouth at all times in this class and appropriate physical distancing must be observed. Students not wearing a mask and/or not observing appropriate physical distancing will be asked to leave the class. All incidents of not wearing a mask and/or not observing appropriate physical distancing will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Students who are reported for multiple infractions of not wearing a mask and/or not observing appropriate physical distancing may be subject to disciplinary actions.

Zoom Procedures

As has been made clear, we will not all be allowed to be in the classroom at the same time. In an effort to provide you with a safe classroom, the university has stipulated that classrooms can only accommodate a certain number of students while allowing for social distancing guidelines. Therefore, the class will be broken into three groups, Group A, Group B, and Group C (each group will have up to 10 students). As you can see from the course calendar, each group will be designated to meet in the classroom on alternating days. On those days when your group is not slated to meet in the classroom, you are still REQUIRED to attend the class, but you will do so via ZOOM (if you do not do so, you will be counted absent).

When attending class via ZOOM, the following expectations are to be met:

1) The class will start at 11 AM. So, that means you should be logging into ZOOM by about 1055, as it takes some time to get in. If you have another class from 930-1045 and thus may need some time getting back to your room and logging in, please let me know.
2) You will need to stay in the ZOOM session until I dismiss the whole class.
3) I will automatically have your microphone silenced when you enter the ZOOM session. Please keep it silenced. As for how we will run class conversation, see the above policy on “Free Speech and Class Conduct.”
4) At the start of class, you must have your camera on so that I can see your face and see that it is you who has logged in. After that, I would like you to keep your camera on during class. While I understand the tendency to turn off our cameras, I have found that when one literally knows that no one else can see or hear him/her, the tendency to stay focused is lost. In a class such as this, focus is a very important aspect of critical thinking which then leads to critical speaking and writing. Should you not have a camera on your device or have a specific reason for not wanting your camera to remain on, please speak with me and we will see what we can work out.

Withheld Grades:
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.”
For the complete policy, http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/semester_grds.asp

Students with Disabilities:
To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building
Room 325, 468-3004/468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices

_Homework and Written Assignments:_
During the semester, you will be expected to complete essays outside of the classroom environment. Each of these essays is to be typed, use 12-point font, and ONLY the essay should be double-spaced (DO NOT DOUBLE SPACE THE HEADER). The header of your essay must include your name, my name, the date, and the class number.

In the case of certain essays, you will be expected to make use of outside resources. When writing your essay, you are to display correct citation of any and all sources that are used. In other words, you are to recognize outside sources when either using direct quotes or summarizing the ideas of another. Furthermore, since you will show in-text citation, your essays must also include a Works Cited page.

Finally, each of your essays should be viewed as academic writing. As such, it should be written in the academic voice (avoid the use of the first person unless instructed otherwise, avoid contractions, colloquialisms, text speak, etc.), be clean of stigmatized errors, display a clear thesis/supporting paragraphs/conclusion, and recognize all sources. Essays that do not comply with such standards will be graded accordingly.