ENGL 4395 “Independent Study” (3 credits) allows students to construct unique plans of study in situations where no appropriate course is currently offered, in cases where other constraints would prevent a student from graduating on schedule. Students work independently, according to the plan of the approved study proposal, under the direction of an instructor with expertise in that area. The student will meet regularly with the instructor throughout the semester, completing agreed-upon work to satisfy the course needs. Students are expected to produce 20-30 pages of formal writing. May be repeated up to three hours.

Course Description:
For this semester, we will 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 may look at such ideas as the suburb, race, war, rebellion, and reality, all in the context of how the literature has participated in or complicated notions of the American century. 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 this is an independent study, it will be an intensive, discussion based course. Our class meetings will center around primary texts and our avenue for discussing those texts will come from our own critical insights and those provided by additional source materials that we will read alongside certain authors. The expectation that I have is that students will stay on top of our readings and come to class not only having completed the readings for that period but with questions and points of discussion.

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: The chosen texts will include works by Steinbeck, Kerouac, Ginsberg, Metalious, Pizer, Carpenter, Franklin, etc.

Course Requirements:

Writing:
As this is an independent study and dependent on student engagement, the student will complete a 3-4 page paper prior to each discussion of a major work. In the end, this will constitute a total of 18-21 pages of writing. This writing will be formal and thus critical/academic in nature.
Exams:
While there are no formal exams, each meeting will be a version of an oral exam. The student will be expected to work through the primary and secondary/tertiary source material and provide the foundation for our weekly meetings and discussions. As such, each week will be a version of an oral exam.

Grading Standard:
A: Students earning the grade of an A for the course will have completed work that obviously demonstrates a more than average understanding of the course material and fulfills all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of an A is reserved for that work which expertly displays one’s ability to engage the ideas at hand, recognize and dialogue about the complications of such ideas, and translate such dialogue into clear, academic prose that is free of stigmatized errors.

B: Students earning the grade of a B for the course will have completed work that demonstrates a more than average understanding of the course material and fulfills all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of a B is reserved for that work which adeptly displays one’s ability to engage the ideas at hand, recognize and dialogue about the complications of such ideas, and translate such dialogue into clear, academic prose that is free of stigmatized errors. However, the level of thought, while still above average, may fluctuate in terms of analytic abilities and expression.

C: Students earning the grade of a C for the course will have completed work that demonstrates an average understanding of the course material and fulfills all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of a C is reserved for that work which displays one’s ability to engage the ideas at hand (more so through summary and response rather than analysis), recognize and dialogue about the complications of such ideas (however, the complications recognized will focus more on surface level issues rather than the greater whole), and translate such dialogue into clear, academic prose that is free of stigmatized errors. As can be seen from this description, the level of thought will be acceptable and display that a student has read the assignments, but his/her analytic abilities and level of expression will not be nearly as complicated nor developed. Instead, C work will display a student’s hold to traditional methods of expression (simpler construction of sentence and paragraph development) and a struggle to display complex, critical thinking skills.

D: Students earning the grade of a D for the course will have completed work that demonstrates a below average understanding of course material and may not fulfill all aspects and requirements of the assignment. The grade of a D is reserved for that work which may display either one’s struggle or refusal to engage the ideas at hand, or simply summarizes the work under study with no actual recognition of or dialogue about the complications of such ideas, or is delivered in such a convoluted manner that the audience will have difficulty following the conversation.

F: Students earning the grade of a F for the course will either (a) not have completed the required assignments, (b) will have completed the assignments but not followed the
guidelines, or (c) will have completed the assignments and demonstrated a total misunderstanding of the course material. In this case, it will be obvious that the student has either not completed the required reading and/or given him/herself enough time to develop the work. The grade of an F is reserved for that work which does not engage the issues at hand, offers a base (not complete) summary of the work at hand with no critical engagement, and the translation of ideas into writing is either incomplete or the audience will be unable to follow the conversation. It is important to remember that a student can receive 0 out of 100 points. In the case that a student only partially completes an assignment (in terms of page length, but not purpose), s/he may receive 0 points.

**Course Policies:**
*Attendance:* As this is an independent study course, there will be no excused absences. Any cancelled meeting will be made up at a later time.

*Academic Honesty:* **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. ([http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp))

*Free Speech and Class Conduct:* As noted already, it is my goal that a great deal of the class will center on some form of discussion. While at times this will focus on more of a Socratic method (specific question and answer), there will be more times when the conversation is to be open and exploratory. I do encourage students to pursue ideas and readings of texts, but it is important that we all recognize that not every reading can be considered a possible reading. In other words, our readings and responses should be informed and/or supported by the primary and secondary texts that are under consideration at that moment, or by the overall spectrum of the texts that we have read. Furthermore, it is my responsibility as an educator to problematize and question your readings as well as recognize the merit of your argument.

*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/course-grades-5.5.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf).

*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/policies/academic-accommodation-for-students-with-disabilities-6.1.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic-accommodation-for-students-with-disabilities-6.1.pdf).