English 3334.001: Contemporary American Literature
Department of English
Fall 2023
T/Th: 9:30-10:45
Ferguson 183

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Office Hours:
Monday: 8:30-10, 1:30-3
Tuesday: 2-3:30
Wednesday: 8:30-10, 1:30-3
Thursday: 2-3:30
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 “Contemporary 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, and race, all in the context of how the literature of this past 78 years has participated in or complicated notions of the American century. In terms of the different topics and themes that are explored, we will specifically look at the impact that the
postmodern moment—and questions of narrative play and construction—have had on literary responses. 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 overall success of this course will depend on student engagement and active reading/participation. In other words, your homework is not simply to have read the required pages for each meeting, but have critically engaged those pages. I expect you to come to class with questions and challenges.

**Delivery Format:** As designated by the university, this class is designated as face-to-face and will meet in the classroom.

**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 analyze works accurately through close reading.
2. The student will demonstrate the ability to conduct and apply effective textual research.
3. The student will demonstrate the ability to write clear, grammatically correct prose for a variety of purposes.

**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—specifically postmodernist thought and argument.

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, analytical discussion.
**Required Texts:**
Barth, John. *Lost in the Funhouse.*
Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*
Allen Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems*
Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*
Chester Himes, *Rage in Harlem*
Colson Whitehead, *Harlem Shuffle*
Tim O’Brien, *The Things They Carried*
Phil Klay, *Redeployment*

Throughout the semester, I will supply (via D2L) students with copies of additional primary pieces and secondary readings. 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.

**Major Course Assignments:**
*Short Essay One: Source Analysis: 20% of your Final Grade*
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: 20% of your final grade*
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 either O’Brien or Klay).

Unlike with the Source Analysis Paper that will be completed at the end of our discussion of a particular 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.

--Literature Review: 35% of your final grade
For your major project this semester, you will be completing an extensive literature review. Whereas an Annotated Bibliography is a collection of sources dealt with individually but all connected to, in some way, a single topic, a literature review does take on the structure of a paper. In a literature review, you are responsible for synthesizing the major voices/arguments on a topic and highlighting the evolution of said topic. In your work of summary and synthesis, though, you will be responsible for recognizing stronger and weaker voices and moments. When doing so, you will need to be able to display why you make such judgments. In your two shorter paper, you will be making arguments based on very specific readings and arguments. However, here, you will be studying how a (single) argument is made, how different points of view exist, and how an argument evolves; additionally, your own voice will find a home in your own discussion of these sources. We will discuss the specific requirements of this paper at a later date and full explanation of the project and requirements will be provided.

*Final Exam: 25% of your final grade*
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:**

The Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outlines the prohibited conduct by any student enrolled in a course at SFA. It is the responsibility of all members of all faculty, staff, and students to adhere to and uphold this policy.

Articles IV, VI, and VII of the new Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outline the violations and procedures concerning academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) Copying from the test paper (or other assignment) of another student, (2) Possession and/or use during a test of materials that are not authorized by the person giving the test, (3) Using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any means the whole or any part of a non-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program, or using a test that has been administered in prior classes or semesters without permission of the Faculty member, (4) Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for one’s self, to take a test, (5) Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other records or academic work offered for credit, (6) Using any sort of unauthorized resources or technology in completion of educational activities.

Plagiarism is the appropriation of material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source or the use of one’s own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously, without any indication of the original source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one’s own academic work being offered for credit or in conjunction with a program course or degree requirements.

Collusion is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any
provision of the rules on academic dishonesty, including disclosing and/or distributing the contents of an exam.

Misrepresentation is providing false grades or résumés; providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit for oneself or another individual or to injure another student academically or financially.

*Chat GPT/AI Programs:*

What is the rule on Chat GPT or other AI program for this course?

I understand that CHAT GPT can be used as a sort of tutor to help break down complex readings and ideas, and thus use of the program for tutorial purposes to help prepare you for class MAY be acceptable, ONLY if you acknowledge said use to myself and peers. However, in terms of your written assignments, all formal writing assignments will be centered on your own interactions with the poems—whether these are confusing or not—and thus use of CHAT GPT or other AI program is not allowed when completing formal written assignments (specifically your three major writing assignments).

*Class Debate and Discussion: See Article V.C in policy 10.4*

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.

*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, policy 10.4). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.

In the case of this course, disruptive behavior will include the following: consistent use of cell phones/texting during class, consistent 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/or completing homework assignments for another class. Students participating in such activities can be asked to leave the class and will be counted as absent.

*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

**Student Services**

*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

**Student Wellness and Well-Being**

SFA values students’ overall well-being, mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, emotional well-being, alcohol and other drugs, identities, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help, SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

On-campus Resources:
The Dean of Students Office (Rusk Building, 3rd floor lobby) [www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents](http://www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents)
936.468.7249
dos@sfasu.edu

SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic Human Services, Room 202 [www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp)
936.468.1041

The Health and Wellness Hub “The Hub” Location: corner of E. College and Raguet St.

To support the health and well-being of every Lumberjack, the Health and Wellness Hub offers comprehensive services that treat the whole person – mind, body and spirit. Services include:
• Health Services
• Counseling Services
• Student Outreach and Support
• Food Pantry
• Wellness Coaching
• Alcohol and Other Drug Education

www.sfasu.edu/thehub

936.468.4008 thehub@sfasu.edu

Crisis Resources:

• Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343
• National Suicide Crisis Prevention: 9-8-8
• Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255) • joh
• Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741