

# Comprehensive Course Syllabus

## Literary Explorations II *American Literature, 1900-Present*

### Course Description:

*In this section of Literary Explorations II, you will discover many of the important texts in American literature, from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day. Your explorations will span time and genre, from poetry and short stories to novels and a play. You will also continue to work on the skills of writing, research, and written and spoken argument that you began in your Literary Explorations I course.*

### Extended Course Description:

*The last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed an optimistic America, steaming, full of hope, towards a new century. It was an America on the verge of celebrating the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its “discovery” at the biggest-ever world’s fair in Chicago in 1893, but it was also an America still irritating and recovering from old wounds: that world’s fair would ignore African Americans, and in 1890, American soldiers would massacre over 150 Sioux men, women and children at Wounded Knee. While writers like Black Elk tried to show the injustice of the treatment of Native Americans, W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington did the same for African Americans.*

*With railroads making transcontinental travel easier and less expensive than ever before, Americans became inquisitive about other regions of their country, a curiosity expressed by writers like Willa Cather and even a former Mississippi River boat pilot named Samuel Clemens...better known today as Mark Twain.*

*But the new century would be a violent one for America. The world’s first global war would produce a high point in American fiction, with writers like F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Nobel Prize winners Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner emerging. But it also left an entire generation physically and emotionally scarred – so much so that they would be labeled by one writer “Une génération perdue” – a lost generation.*

*In this postwar period, African American literature, guided by talented artists and poets like Claude McKay and Langston Hughes, would be enjoyed and appreciated by the entire nation for the first time.*

*Another World War would follow the first, forever changing the world with the science and scale of violence, and by the end, showing the world that a single bomb could destroy an entire city. Into this new, post-modern world, a new style of writing would emerge, led by authors like Kurt Vonnegut. But many of the same issues important before the war continued to be – family and equality, for example – and modern writers like Karl Iagnemma and Raymond Carver would continue to explore them.*

**Instructor:**

Dr. Kotlarczyk

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**Meeting Days, Time and Room(s)**

[As determined]

**Text(s) / Materials:**

McMichael, George, editor, et al. *Concise Anthology of American Literature*. Fifth Edition. (2001).

*Note: This text will **frequently** be supplemented with online readings. It is strongly recommended, though not required, that students download the “Kindle for PC” for supplemental readings.*

**Essential Content/SSLs and Outcomes:**

- *Students will understand conventions of poetry, drama, and fiction as genres and be able to explain their uses and effects [English A.1-3, B.2-4, E.1; SSL IV.A-D].*
- *Students will evaluate the influence of historical context on form, style, and point of view [English A.4, A.7-8; SSL II.A].*
- *Students will work collaboratively to come to an understanding of readings [English A.5-6, C. 1-2, E.2, E.5; SSL I.A-B].*
- *Students will develop greater autonomy as readers and writers by generating and responding to their own substantive questions about authors and literary works [English B.1, D.1-3, E.3; SSL I.B].*
- *Students will experience writing as an incremental and recursive process by drafting, critiquing, and revising creative and expository works [C.3-5; SSL I.A, II.A, III.A, IV.A-D].*
- *Students will reflect upon literacy learning as a lifelong endeavor and set goals for themselves as literacy learners based on their strengths, needs, and aspirations [English E.3; SSL II.A, III.B, V.C].*

**Instructional Design and Approach:**

*Literature is, at its core, an articulation of the history of ideas. As such, it is both part and product of history, philosophy, art, psychology, science, and other fields. Our examination of literature will thus examine it through these various lenses, while also fostering an appreciation for its aesthetic value and approach. We will explore literature through reading, writing, discussing, researching, and – sometimes – performing it. Activities and assignments will range from individual to small group to broad class discussion. With every reading, students should challenge themselves to consider three questions: do I like this, what does this mean, and why is it important today?*

**Student Expectations:**

*To succeed in this class, you must: arrive on time, be prepared by having read AND prepared to discuss or ask questions about the assigned materials (not just online summaries), be active in small group **and** classroom discussion, and demonstrate originality, thorough research, and comprehensive thought on papers and assignments. Being funny doesn't hurt, either.*

*Revision – You may revise two papers during the semester, and will have one additional required revision. To do so, you must first complete a “Plan for Revision” form (available on Moodle) and conference with me. The revised paper must be turned in no more than two weeks after your graded original is returned to you. Your revision grade is averaged with your original grade.*

**Assessment Practices, Procedures, and Processes:**

Papers	(60%)
Mid-Term Exam	(15%)
Final Exam	(15%)
Participation	(10%)

*Details of assessment will vary by assignment and be explained on individual prompts.*

**Participation**

My expectation is that, at least once per class, you voluntarily respond to a question or comment from your teacher or another student. I want this class to be based on your questions and discussions about them. As to why participation in class is important beyond your grade, consider these statements from some of today's business leaders:

*“We are routinely surprised at the difficulty some young people have in communicating: verbal skills, written skills, presentation skills. They have difficulty being clear and concise; it's hard for them to create focus, energy, and passion around the points they want to make.”*

-- Mike Summers, VP for Global Talent Management at Dell

*“I want people who can engage in good discussion—who can look me in the eye and have a give and take. All of our work is done in teams. You have to know how to work well with others. But you also have to know how to engage customers—to find out what their needs are. If you can't engage others, then you won't learn what you need to know.”*

-- Clay Parker, engineer and president of the Chemical Management Division of BOC Edwards

*“People who've learned to ask great questions and have learned to be inquisitive are the ones who move the fastest in our environment because they solve the biggest problems in ways that have the most impact on innovation.”*

-- Mike Summers, VP for Global Talent Management at Dell

*All quotations taken from “Rigor Redefined” (2008) by Tony Wagner of the Harvard Graduate School of Education.*

### **Notes...**

I expect you to take notes in this class. For every paper I assign in this class, you will have the option to propose your own topic. Think of your class and reading notes as massive brainstorms for your own unique papers.

### **...and Laptops**

**The default position for your laptop in this class is closed.** This means, from the moment class starts, unless I ask you to use it, I don't expect to see it open. We will use the laptops frequently for in-class work and research and even for online readings, but to the greatest extent possible, this will be a laptop-free class. Here's why:

Researchers have repeatedly found that students who use laptops in class learn less than their "disconnected" peers (see Cornell's 2003 study "The Laptop and the Lecture"). Studies at Princeton and the University of California have found students who take notes on laptops performed worse on evaluations such as quizzes than those who took notes by hand "even when laptops are used solely to take notes, they may still be impairing learning because their use results in shallower processing" ("The Pen is Mightier than the Keyboard," 2014).

But laptop use in class harms more than just the user – it also negatively impacts students seated nearby. Sana, Weston, et al (2013) found that:

participants who multitasked on a laptop during a lecture scored lower on a test compared to those who did not multitask, and participants who were in direct view of a multitasking peer scored lower on a test compared to those who were not. The results demonstrate that multitasking on a laptop poses a significant distraction to both users and fellow students and can be detrimental to comprehension of lecture content.

Therefore, I require that you please keep your laptop closed during class unless you have been specifically asked to use it, and I would encourage you to keep it closed in other classes, as well.

If you have a special need that requires accommodation in this area, please see me.

## **Sequence of Topics and Activities**

Reading due on date indicated by / / (usually A / B or C / D)

### **Transition to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Week One: Introduction / Twain "Advice to Youth," "A Salutation from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the 20<sup>th</sup>" / "To the Person Sitting in Darkness"

Week Two: "The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg" / Black Elk "The Butchering at Wounded Knee" / Dunbar selected poems.

### **Other Voices**

Week Three: Washington "The Atlanta Exposition Address" / DuBois "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others" / Angel Island Poetry

### **Naturalism**

Week Four: London "To Build A Fire" / Crane "The Open Boat"

### **Regionalism**

Week Five (short C): Cather *A Lost Lady*

Week Six (DIAD): Cather *A Lost Lady*

### **The Harlem Renaissance and Poetry from the Turn of the Century**

Week Seven: Hughes, McKay selected poems / Harlem Renaissance Poems / Frost selected poems

### **The Great American Novel?**

Week Eight (Clash): Sandburg selected poems / Fitzgerald *The Great Gatsby*

Week Nine (short D): Fitzgerald *The Great Gatsby*

## **MID-TERM**

### **Modernism: Poetry**

Week Ten: Eliot "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" / Williams "The Red Wheelbarrow," "The Fall of Icarus" / Cummings "in Just," "next to god of course America i,"

### **Modernism: Short Fiction**

Week Eleven: Faulkner "A Rose for Emily" / Hemingway "Hills Like White Elephants," "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" / Hemingway "The Big Two-Hearted River"

### **Hemingway**

Week Twelve: Hemingway *The Old Man and the Sea*

### **Drama**

Week Thirteen: Miller *Death of a Salesman*

Week Fourteen (Two Meetings): Miller *Death of a Salesman*

### **Postmodernism**

Week Fifteen: Vonnegut *Slaughterhouse Five*

Week Sixteen: Vonnegut *Slaughterhouse Five*

### **The Modern Short Story**

Week Seventeen: Iagnemma “Zilkowski’s Theorem” / Carver “Cathedral” / TBA

Week Eighteen (short C): TBA

FINAL

\*Items on syllabus are subject to change.