

# FAULKNER

**MW 1:30 TO 2:45**

**ROBINSON A 248**

William Faulkner is indisputably one of the towering figures of world modernism, one of the most influential novelists who ever lived, and at the same time a fairly reclusive, retiring southerner from small-town Oxford, Mississippi. We'll read four of his major novels and some of his short fiction, along with some of the most interesting and provocative scholarly responses to this work. As we proceed, we'll also discuss recent developments in the rapidly-evolving field of southern literary studies, including ways in which southern studies is becoming more and more comparative, multiethnic, hemispheric, and global. Faulkner's reach extends to Haiti, Hollywood, New England, Canada, Paris, Indian Country, and more; your professor's own work connects Faulkner to Native Studies, environmental studies, and what he and his co-editors are calling "Undead Souths." We will consider what all this and more means for Faulkner Studies and for the South as we, perhaps, thought we knew it.

**PROFESSOR ERIC GARY ANDERSON**

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**OFFICE: ROBINSON A, ROOM 405C**

**OFFICE HOURS: M 3 TO 4, W 10:30 TO 11:30, AND BY APPOINTMENT/CHANCE.**

**I CAN USUALLY ALSO MEET RIGHT AFTER CLASS.**

## BOOKS FOR ENGLISH 441

William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (Norton Critical Edition). 2nd Edition. Norton, 1993.

William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying: The Corrected Text*. Vintage, 1991.

William Faulkner, *Light in August: The Corrected Text*. Vintage, 1991.

William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!: The Corrected Text*. Vintage, 1991

## FALL 2012 SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND WRITINGS

### August 27

Introductions. Read "Dry September" (Faulkner)

### August 29

Continue discussing "Dry September." Read "Seeing Through the South: Faulkner and the Life Work of Writing" (Matthews) and "Faulkner in the Twenty-First Century: Boundaries of Meaning, Boundaries of Mississippi" (Kreyling)

### September 3 WIKI WEEK

Labor Day Holiday

**September 5**

*The Sound and the Fury*

**September 10**

*The Sound and the Fury*

**September 12**

*The Sound and the Fury*

**September 17 WIKI WEEK**

*The Sound and the Fury*

**September 19**

*The Sound and the Fury*

**September 24**

*The Sound and the Fury*

**September 26**

*The Sound and the Fury*

**October 1 ESSAY #1 DUE THIS WEEK**

*As I Lay Dying*

**October 3**

*As I Lay Dying*

**October 8**

Fall Break

**Tuesday, October 9 (M classes)**

*As I Lay Dying*

**October 10**

*As I Lay Dying*

**October 15 WIKI WEEK**

*As I Lay Dying*

**October 17**

*As I Lay Dying*

**October 22**

*Light in August*

**October 24**

*Light in August*

**October 29 WIKI WEEK**

*Light in August*

**October 31**

*Light in August*

**November 5 ESSAY #2 DUE THIS WEEK**

*Light in August*

**November 7**

*Light in August*

**November 12 WIKI WEEK**

*Absalom, Absalom!*

**November 14**

*Absalom, Absalom!*

**November 19**

*Absalom, Absalom!*

**November 21**

Thanksgiving break

**November 26 FINAL PAPER TOPIC PARAGRAPH DUE THIS WEEK**

*Absalom, Absalom!*

**November 28**

*Absalom, Absalom!*

**December 3**

Wrap up *Absalom!* and/or work on Faulkner meme and talk about final essay

**December 5**

Finish and publish Faulkner meme; talk about final essay as needed;

**Researched Final Essay due during Finals Week (date and time TBA)**

n.b. Throughout the semester, we will also read a sampling of critical essays, very likely no more than one essay every other week or so. The timing of these reading assignments will depend on our pace as we work our way through the novels and will also depend on the particular topics and questions we develop an interest in as a class. I'll announce all reading assignments in class, and (as needed) over email.

**WRITTEN WORK**

**Two Critical Essays (4-5 pages/1200-1600 words each):**

Critical Essay #1: Close Reading/Textual Analysis. Due the week of September 24

Critical Essay #2: Faulkner and Faulkner Criticism. Due the week of November 5.

**Essay #1** will be a "traditional" close reading of one or more particular elements of a single Faulkner novel: *The Sound and the Fury*. For this essay, I would like you to construct close interpretive readings of specific passages and connect these readings of passages to larger patterns (whether these be motifs, techniques, issues, or something else). In other words, it's important to strike productive balances between telling details and bigger critical pictures.

In **Essay #2**, you'll write about either *As I Lay Dying* or *Light in August* in relation to one recent critical article about the text, chosen from a menu I will provide. I want you to foreground your interpretation of the novel, but for this essay, you will engage actively with both the critic and the novel, demonstrating your understanding of both.

Getting started: you can of course use the critical article to help you come up with a topic of your own. But you can also begin by developing your own ideas and interpretations of the novel, then choosing the article that best allows you to set forth your own interpretations. (You might find a critical article that is really compatible with your own thinking; it's also possible that you'll develop your ideas by arguing *against* the critic.)

However you proceed, you should plan to dedicate part of your paper to an analysis of the critical article's persuasiveness. To do this, you'll want to consider specific evidence from the literary text: in your view, does the Faulkner novel bear out the critic's conclusions about it? You might well find yourself writing about critical articles that are mixed bags: persuasive some of the time and not-so-persuasive some of the time. If this is the case, plan to discuss both the more compelling and the less compelling elements of the piece. But be sure to avoid the language and manner of book or film reviews.

Your essay should present and support a sharply-focused thesis, and it seems likely that you will be considering additional evidence (beyond what the critic herself puts forth) that supports or refutes or otherwise complicates the critic's position.

Obviously, you don't want (or need) simply to replicate the critic's argument. Your aim here is not to reinvent the wheel but to present *your* take on the critic and the course text. Again, the centerpiece of your essay will be your own interpretation of the Faulkner novel. But I want you to use the critical article as leverage, the better to help you lay out your own argument.

### **One Researched Essay (8-10 pages):**

The goal of this longer (8-10 page) essay is to begin to pull the course together by identifying a reasonably large and complicated issue or question and exploring this topic by working with one or two course texts as well as by involving yourself in research in secondary sources (historical and/or critical). Your essay should present, develop, explore, and support a sharply-focused contestable claim about the text/s you are studying. As in the shorter papers, you'll have plenty of space for close, specific examination of particular texts and/or issues. Here, though, you'll be able to develop your interpretations further, situate them in relation to the ideas of practicing Faulknerians, think more deeply about various kinds of connections and interrelationships, reflect on the various issues and questions we've raised in class discussion—and just basically show me and tell me what you've learned in this course. In this essay, you might find yourself returning to an issue or question that has interested you this semester; your final project, however, should be a new piece of writing.

Your primary focus should be on the critical argument you make about the Faulkner text/s you've chosen to explore. Secondary sources will help you frame and hone your argument, but bear in mind that secondary sources should indeed be secondary: they should never crowd out or silence your own interpretations and claims. As for the quantity of sources, you should draw support from at least 2 sources in addition to the Faulkner text/s you are specializing in.

We will dedicate as much class time as possible to talking about how to go about doing this work. **I'll ask you to post a 1-2 paragraph description of your topic to the wiki during the week of November 26, and I invite you to join me in posting comments and suggestions in response to these preliminary topic descriptions. The project itself comes due approximately two weeks later, during Finals Week.**

**Wiki Posts (approximately 300 words each):** The wiki posts give you the chance to gather your thoughts and write concise, provocative, creative critical responses to particular course texts. You'll also be able to reply to classmates' posts. The wiki will work much like our class discussions, except that you'll have more time to craft your comments. We'll do five wiki posts this fall. For each post, approximately five students will act as "wiki leaders," so that each of you does one (and no more than one) turn as leader. Leaders will be responsible for starting the wiki conversation, identifying topics, questions, and issues and inviting the rest of the class to explore them. Leaders will also do a second round of posting in which they respond to each other's opening posts and prepare the way for everyone else to step in. Here's the way each wiki week will be structured:

First round of leaders' posts due by midnight on Monday of wiki week.

Second round of leaders' posts due by midnight on Wednesday of wiki week

Responses from all other members of our class due by Sunday of wiki week

Each wiki leader emails a post-mortem/discussion analysis paragraph to Dr. Anderson by Wednesday of the following week. In this paragraph, you'll reflect on how this round of wiki posts went, focusing on what went well, what this batch of posts accomplished, and following one thread in the discussion. (For example, what was the fate of something you introduced in your first post as leader? How was this idea developed, challenged, complicated, etc.?)

## GRADING

Two Critical Essays (4-5 pages each)—15% each, 30% total  
Researched Critical Essay Topic (1-2 paragraphs, posted to the wiki)—5%  
Researched Critical Essay (8-10 pages)—30%  
Four Wiki Posts (approx. 300 words each)—20% total  
Wiki Leading—10%  
Faulkner Meme Collaborative Project—5%

### For Written Work

A+ (100), A (96), A- (92)  
B+ (88), B (85), B- (82)  
C+ (78), C (75), C- (72)  
D+ (68), D (65), D- (62)  
F (50), No essay (0)

### For Final Grades

94-100=A	86-89=B+	76-79=C+	60-69=D
90-93=A-	83-85=B	73-75=C	0-59=F
	80-82=B-	70-72=C-	

## POLICIES: REVISIONS, LATE WORK, ATTENDANCE

**Revisions.** If either you or I feel that a given essay does not represent you at your best, I'll be happy to talk with you about revising.

**Late Work.** I will accept late papers up to four calendar days (not class meetings) after the due date, but will dock late work one full letter grade for each day the paper is late. For example, an "A" paper turned in two calendar days late will receive a "C." Even so, keep in mind that an "F" paper still counts for 50 points; better to hand in the paper anyway than to take a zero. I reserve the right to make exceptions to this rule, at my discretion, for students facing serious difficulties.

If you have been taken seriously ill or beset by some other unavoidable and disruptive situation, you may arrange with me to hand in your paper after the due date without penalty.

**Attendance** is expected and strongly encouraged. I don't anticipate any problems, but if you do run into difficulties that I should know about, please let me know in advance (if possible) or contact me by e-mail or telephone during, and we'll do our best to work something out.

### **ACADEMIC HONESTY AND THE GMU HONOR CODE**

All work done for this class must be your own. Period. Please keep in mind that plagiarism is a violation of the GMU Honor Code. *Plagiarism means using words, ideas, opinions, or factual information from another person or source without giving due credit.* This includes Internet sources. In other words, plagiarism is a form of fraudulently claiming someone else's work as your own, and as such is the equivalent of cheating on an exam—a serious academic offense. Plagiarism is grounds for failing at least the assignment, if not the course. If you are not 100% clear about what you should document, consult with me. When in doubt, document. (Adapted from the English Department Statement on Plagiarism)

Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes; a simple listing of books and articles consulted is not sufficient. Nor does rearrangement of another person's phrasing (paraphrase) release one from the obligation to document one's sources.

To review the English Department Statement on Plagiarism, please go to the Writing Center website:

[writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu)

Like you, I am bound by the honor code to report suspected plagiarism to the Honor Committee. For a description of the code and the committee, please consult the GMU Catalog. The relevant section is available online at:

<http://catalog.gmu.edu/content.php?catoid=15&navoid=1039#Honor>

### **GMU INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITY POLICY**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services at (703) 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. Their website is [ods.gmu.edu](http://ods.gmu.edu)