

ENGL 3840.001 – American Literature 1870 - present

Fall 2025 - Th 2-3:20 / LANG 113

Inst: J. Foertsch

LANG 409-D / foertsch@unt.edu

Office Hours: W 1:30-4:30 (via Zoom or in person) and by appointment

Course Goals: In this course we will study major genres in American Literature from 1870 to the present day as well as the historical and cultural contexts that give them shape and meaning. We will consider major artistic movements of the period (realism, naturalism, modernism, and postmodernism) as well as themes of social class, race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, war, technology, religion, etc., as these bear upon the selected texts. **Students may be required to read up to 30 pages per night** when preparing the longer works on the syllabus and must attend class with the assignment complete on each occasion.

Required Text: *Norton Anthology of American Literature, Shorter 10th Edition.*

Papers/Requirements:

Essay #1 (5-7 pages) - 30%

Essay #2 (5-7 pages) - 30% (25% source-free / 5% source material)

Final Exam (take-home / essay format) - 20%

Class Participation - 20%

Please note how heavily weighted class participation will be in this course. By this I mean frequent, on-topic, spontaneous contribution to class discussion (either in the form of comment or questions); regular class attendance; and compliance with all course requirements. I give big points to students who take their roles as members of this class seriously, regardless of ability to speak or write at the “A” level. Be prepared, follow directions, pay attention in class, and you'll earn much credit. Office conferencing - especially over drafts of the essay assignments - is another way to maximize your class participation grade. E-conferencing is also an option for both earning participation points and improving one's essay drafts. A word, however, re: e-mail etiquette: please use courteous forms of address and signature, and correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation when writing.

Attendance/Technology Policy: Excessive absences (more than *two*) will lead to reduction in the final grade as follows:

3 classes (3 wks. of class): 10%

4-5 classes (4-5 wks. of class): 20%

6-7 classes (5-7 wks. of class): 40%

8-10 classes (8-10 wks. of class): 60%

11-13 classes (11-13 wks. of class): 80%

14-15 classes (14-15 wks. of class): 100%

UNT recognizes absences only for certain religious observances and authorized school activities; thus for other reasons (illness, job conflict) please do not approach me before or after class or via e-mail regarding your upcoming or recent absences, as these are your own business, your own decision, and your own funeral when they become excessive. Please also note: **mental as well as physical presence** is required. Lack of preparation (e.g., no book brought to class, repeated late arrival, late assignments, internet use/texting in class, getting up during class to take or make phone calls) will count as absences with reductions in final grade. **No laptops open in class** – pls. take notes, as need be, with paper and pencil. (Students with special needs requiring laptops, pls. see me.) **No AI for essay-writing.**

Students with Disabilities: I am happy to accommodate students with physical or learning disabilities with respect to room scheduling, seating arrangements, test time, tape recording, etc., once necessary documentation from the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) is produced. If you need to obtain these documents, or would like to be tested or counseled for a disability, please contact the ODA at Sage Hall, Ste. 167, 565-4323.

POLICIES RELATED TO COVI/FLU/RSV:

Face coverings: Face coverings – mouth and nose – are recommended in all UNT facilities whenever experiencing COVID or flu-related symptoms. Please consider using one of your four automatic absences if experiencing respiratory or GI distress.

Absences: While attendance is expected as outlined above, it is important for all of us to be mindful of the health and safety of everyone in our community, especially given concerns about COVID-19.

If you are experiencing cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, or any of the other possible symptoms of COVID-19 (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>) please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or askSHWC@unt.edu) or your health care provider. While attendance is an important part of succeeding in this class, your own health, and those of others in the community, is more important.

Live Recordings: Synchronous (live) sessions in this course will be streamed and recorded for students to refer to throughout the semester. Class recordings are reserved for use only by students in this class for educational purposes. The recordings should not be shared outside the class, or outside the Canvas LMS, in any form. Failing to follow this restriction is a violation of the UNT Code of Student Conduct and could lead to disciplinary action.

Final Examination: Due 11 December, 3:20 p.m.

Weekly Schedule of Readings:

- Aug. 19: American Cultural Context / “Fall of the House of Usher” and “Bartleby” (handouts)
26: Poems by Whitman and Dickinson
- Sept. 2: Twain, *Huckleberry Finn* (1884), ch. I - XXXI
9: Finish *Huckleberry Finn* / Wharton, Freeman (handout)
16: Chopin, Chesnutt, “The Wife of His Youth,” Cahane (handout)
23: Norris, “A Plea for Romantic Fiction,” S. Crane, London
30: Poems by Dunbar, Frost, McKay, Roethke (TBA)
Essay #1 Due
- Oct. 7: Glaspell, *Trifles*, and Eliot (“Prufrock” and *The Wasteland*)
14: Fitzgerald, “Babylon Revisited,” Faulkner, “Barn Burning”
21: Hurston “Sweat,” “Conscience of the Court” (handout)
28: Williams *A Streetcar Named Desire*
- Nov. 4: Miller, *Death of a Salesman*
11: O’Connor, Cheever, Carver
18: Poems by Brooks, Rich, Komunyakaa, Clifton, Dove (TBA)
Essay #2 (source-free) due
25: Fall break, no class
- Dec. 2: Walker, Cisneros, Danticat (handout)
Essay #2 (source-enhanced) due