Southern Modernisms: Zora Neale Hurston & William Faulkner

ENGL 4450.1

Tu/Th 3:30 – 4:50 PM

LANG 114

Prof. Stephanie L. Hawkins

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“Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.  It is a seeking that he who wishes may know the cosmic secrets of the world and they that dwell therein.”

--*Dust Tracks on a Road*, Hurston (1942)

Zora Neale Hurston

*Barracoon* (1927)

*Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)

*Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1941)

*Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick* (short stories, Ed. Genevieve West)

William Faulkner:

*As I Lay Dying* (1930)

*Light in August* (1932)

*Absalom, Absalom!* (1936)

**Course Objectives:**

* Acquire insight into the power of language to inform beliefs and actions.
* Acquire insight into how conscious or unconscious individual motives, combined with rigid, dogmatic scripts for belief, leads to action.
* Acquire insight into the ways in which words can and do literally kill.
* Acquire information literacy skills (know the difference between legitimate vs illegitimate sources of information).
* Develop and pursue an interpretative question or “dilemma” in a literary text and develop a critical essay, using secondary source materials.
* Learn strategies for ethical deployment of secondary sources for analytical essays.
* Learn strategies for ethical use of AI-assisted technologies.
* Learn best practices for oral and written communication in groups and in published writing.
* Learn how to understand complex problems, hypothesize possible solutions, and test outcomes.
* Develop oral presentation skills and strengthen capacity for communicating with and understanding others in a group setting.

**Important Dates**

Nov. 7 Last Day to Drop Courses with a W

Nov. 24 – 30 Thanksgiving Break

Dec. 3-4 Pre-finals Days

Dec. 4 Last Class

Dec. 6-12 Final Exams

Dec. 15 Grade Submission Deadline (4 p.m.)

Attendance/Participation: 15%

Informal writing & Quizzes: 15%

Panel Essay: 20%

Final Project: 25%

Final Exam: 25%

Total: 100%

**Attendance/Participation** 15%

* Participation is earned based on your preparedness to have an elevated conversation about the assigned readings; engagement with your peers’ insights and professor’s lectures or questions to prompt discussion. You must be in class physically to earn participation and attendance. If you are physically present, but otherwise mentally absent, your instructor will notice and dock your attendance as appropriate.

**Participation:** At a *minimum*, good participation means you arrive to class on time and stay for the 120 minutes of our class. It means you arrive prepared with a completed assignment (see “Assignments” on syllabus) or ready to collaborate with peers on an in-class activity. It means you arrive having completed the reading and equipped with notes, paper, pens, laptop, and access to the assigned reading so you can discuss it in class. It means you are present, both physically and intellectually (you are not texting or distracted by a screen). It means you are asking curious questions and listening attentively to your peers and engaging their ideas. If you anticipate that you will have any difficulties with any of the above minimum participation requirements, then please communicate those to me confidentially—via email, or in my office—so that we can work out a solution.

**Informal Writing / Quizzes:** 15%

* Accountability *may include any of the following* in-class activities: Quizzes (five questions) to test retention of assigned reading and reinforce skills; a writing prompt that requires you to demonstrate your understanding of how to identify and apply the literary terms, and/or cultural/historical concepts to a close reading; passage identification, the identification of historical or cultural concepts that appear in a literary work.

**Panel Essay** (3-4 pages, double-spaced)20%

**The Panel:** Your assigned Group # corresponds to the Panel # and the material that individual panel members will cover. Your presentation date corresponds to the last date we discuss the literary work under consideration. A few panels cover two authors, in which case the panelists should strive for an even distribution of papers. Plan to meet with your panel members in advance to establish the order in which each person will present and to be sure that there’s not too much overlap between papers. You want to provide a variety of possible interpretations and pursue questions that respond to a gap in the class conversation: what did we readers initially miss that your additional time with the text revealed to you? Maybe there’s a approach we hadn’t considered or a passage that sheds light on an interpretative dilemma we couldn’t resolve.)

**Purpose:** The paper’s purpose will be to deepen your audience’s engagement with the assigned reading and complicate (rather than simplify) the text’s meaning(s). Therefore, the essay should extend and complicate our understanding of the literary text rather than repurpose the professor’s lecture or rehash insights from class. If there’s a question or idea you’d like to develop, then do so by complicating what’s already been said and/or extending the insight by examining the idea in a new context. Try to give your audience new ideas about material we’ve already discussed; or, write about a passage, idea, or issue that we did not have the chance to discuss. Ideally, the members in your panel will each write on a different interpretative dilemma and/or develop a thematic interest different from your own.

**Panel Presentation Format:** Decide in advance the order in which papers will be presented and have a rationale for doing so (theme, chronology, etc). After each individual panelist has read their paper, I will open the floor for audience Q and A. An assigned student moderator will track whose hands are raised and call on people to pose their question. This way, class discussion of the text proceeds from your collective ideas; the ensuing class discussion may give you ideas for how you might develop this essay into the longer, essay. I will give the audience a chance to evaluate the overall quality of the panel; in turn, I will give individual panel members an opportunity to evaluate (anonymously) the preparedness and quality of the individual panel papers in their group and rate audience preparedness and participation. I will take these evaluations into consideration when I grade the short essays. To receive full credit for the essay, you must participate in your assigned panel and you must complete your evaluation of the audience.

**Panel Essay Guidelines:**

***Assignment:***

* Your job in this essay is to demonstrate your knowledge of the text by analyzing the details from significant passages to support a thesis (an interpretive argument).

***Requirements/Format:***

* **Title:** Papers should have a compelling title that gives readers a sense of what the paper is about. (*Hint*: the title of the literary work should appear in the title)
* **First paragraph:** The opening sentence of the essay should name the author, text, and interpretative dilemma your paper will address. Give readers a brief "snapshot" of what the interpretative dilemma is and why it is important. That is, how does one's interpretation of the situation potentially transform our understanding of the text overall.
* **Thesis:** The thesis statement is not the same as the topic. Rather, it is an argument about meaning and significance. The thesis should be original. That is, it should complicate, rather than simplify, our understanding of the text. Rather than rehash what's already been discussed in class, you should say something new. Make a point of calling our attention to "sneaky" patterns of meaning; forge new insights and interpret passages that have not already been discussed in class. Go for the "sneaky," rather than the obvious.
* **Avoid summarizing historical or cultural background: focus on identifying a pattern of meaning in passages and drawing conclusions based on your analysis of the details (see below)**
* **Evidence/Analysis**: The body of your paper should consist of several paragraphs that each analyze a short quotation (3 lines or less).
  + Opening sentences of paragraphs should frontload your conclusions about meaning; subsequent sentences introduce quotes as evidence and then proceed to "unpack" those quotes to show how they function as evidence to support your conclusions. Quotes should be introduced with a short "signal phrase" that also establishes context.
  + Next, do a close reading of the quotation, in which you interpret the significance or meaning of specific words, images, tone or other meaningful patterns within the quotation. You should not only tell *what* the words mean, but also *how* they make meaning and the significance of that meaning.
  + Your body paragraphs should specifically support your thesis. If your thesis says that your paper will focus on character, then your body should be about characters.
  + *The use of secondary materials, including electronic resources, is strictly prohibited.*
* **Conclusion:** Your last paragraph must not only remind your reader of your thesis, and briefly explain how your analysis proves the thesis, but it should also leave readers thinking differently about the text.
* **Readability:** Your paper should be clear and focused, written in your best grammatical English, with proper punctuation, and well-chosen words. Points will be deducted for spelling errors, use of slang, or informal speech, improper grammar, and overall sloppiness. Proofread your paper carefully before submitting it. Strive to write something you’d be proud to see in print in a published forum.
* **Format:** 3-4-pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point font, 1-inch margins.

**Feedback on essays:**

In a 4000-level English course, you are expected to be adept close readers of literary texts and good writers. I am happy to help you should you like additional guidance as you hone these skills. I will evaluate the quality of the essays based upon 1) how well it utilizes the literary text’s formal features (i.e. its language, structure, and poetic techniques; 2) the quality of the argument and use of textual evidence to support it; 3) clarity and concision of the exposition and analysis 4) accuracy of spelling and grammar 5) the degree to which the essay exhibits the obvious commitment of the author to producing their best work. Like a well-written poem, every sentence and every word in your essay should be working on behalf of supporting your insights and addressing the needs of your audience (the instructor and other students in the class).

**Final, Signature Project:**25%       self-selected due dates

You have a choice for your “signature” project. Choose from the following options:

* Create a website on a Hurston or Faulkner text, cultural concept, or literary device (examples: repurposing of folk stories or traditions, experimentalism, deployment of animals, stream-of-consciousness, free-indirect discourse—or others. You are not limited). You will debut the website in class on a date you choose.
* Write a research essay of 6-7 pages, with 4 peer-reviewed scholarly sources; double-spaced, 1-in margins, Times New Roman. You may use one idea from the panel essay that you did not get to address; the idea is the new essay should be new writing and a more complex idea *because* you have had time to deepen your thinking and possibly compare your original text with other texts in the course.
* Develop a lesson-plan on a specific course-related topic for language arts in middle school or high school. Provide the class with a 10-15 minute lecture or demonstration on a topic related to Hurston and/or Faulkner (examples: understanding symbols, use of animals, and “folk” literary forms, how to analyze a difficult passage--possibilities are endless) and give us a practice assignment in class. (Performed in class on a date of your choosing)
* Write a fable / parable in the style of Hurston or Faulkner (6-8 pages, your original work and read/perform in class)

**Final Exam:** 25%

Comprehensive exam will be three-parts: the first includes definition of terms; the second, passage identification/analysis; and the third, will be a written essay, based on prompts and passage excerpts provided in the exam. You will need to bring two bluebooks. The final will be held in class on the day/time determined by the registrar.

Grade distribution

A= 90-100

B= 80-89

C= 70-79

D= 60-69

F= 59 and below

Failure to turn in work results in a numeric score of “0”

**Semester Schedule:**

**Unit One: Historical Contexts – Slavery, the Civil War, and Anthropology**

**Week 1:**

T 8/19 Introductions – Syllabus Review

Th 8/21 Hurston in context; Franz Boas and *Barracoon* Chapters 1-5.

**Week 2:**

T 8/26 *Barracoon*, Chapters 6-12

Th 8/28 *Barracoon*, appendix of folk tales

“The Monkey and the Camel” (101-103)

“Story of Jonah” (103-107)

“The Lion Woman” (107-112)

**Assignment 8/28:** choose one of the parables and write about it 1 page (three paragraphs), double spaced. Characterize the style. What’s surprising, new, or unexpected? What needs explaining for a larger audience? Or, come up with your own set of questions and address them.

**Week 3:**

T 9/2 ***Barracoon* Panel: Group 1**

W 9/4 *As I Lay Dying* (Darl – Cash) “Cracker Culture” (Week 3 module)

**Week 4:**

T 9/9 *As I Lay Dying* (Vardaman – Cora)

Th 9/11 *As I Lay Dying* (Addie – Cash)

**Week 5:**

T 9/16 *As I Lay Dying* (Cash – End)

Th 9/18 ***As I Lay Dying* Panel: Group 2**

**Week 6:**

T 9/23 *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Du Bois, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” (Canvas)

Th 9/25 *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

**Week 7:**

T 9/30 *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Th 10/2 ***Their Eyes Were Watching God* Panel 3**

**Week 8:**

T 10/7 Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (Ch 1-3)

Th 10/9 *Absalom, Absalom!* (Ch 4-5)

**Week 9:**

T 10/14 ***Absalom, Absalom!* (Ch 6-7) Panel Group 4**

Th 10/16 *Absalom, Absalom!*(Ch 8-9)

**Week 10:**

T 10/21 ***Absalom, Absalom!* Panel Group 5**

Th 10/23 *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (Ch 1-10)

“John Redding Goes to Sea” (stories 1-18)

**Week 11:**

T 10/28 *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (Ch 11-21)

Th 10/30 *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (Ch 22-32)

**Week 12:**

T 11/4 *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (Ch 32-End)

Th 11/6 ***Moses, Man of the Mountain* Panel Group 6**

**Week 13:**

T 11/11 Faulkner, *Light in August* (Ch 1-6)

Th 11/13 Faulkner, *Light in August* (Ch 7-10)

**Week 14:**

T 11/18  Faulkner, *Light in August* (Ch 11-16)

Th 11/20 **Faulkner, *Light in August* (Ch 17-End**) **Panel Group 7**

**11/24 – 11/30 Thanksgiving Break**

**Week 15:**

T 12/2  Exam Review

Th 12/4 Exam Review

**Final Exam: Date TBD - Registrar**

**Course Policies**

**Absences:**They happen for all kinds of expected and unexpected reasons. It is your responsibility to get notes or materials from the class you missed. Exchange numbers with a classmate for this purpose. If you have documentation concerning an authorized absence--see [UNT 06.039, rev. 2025](https://policy.unt.edu/sites/policy.unt.edu/files/06.039%20Student%20Attendance%20and%20Authorized%20Absences.pdf)), I will excuse the absence and allow you to make up any missed work. Otherwise: *excessive* absences will lower your overall course grade: 5-6 absences, lowers your grade by one letter grade; 7-8 lowers your grade by two letter grades; absences of 9-10, earns you a D; absences of 11 or more, lead to failure of the course.

**Academic Freedom and Academic Responsibility:** [**UNT 06.035**](https://policy.unt.edu/sites/policy.unt.edu/files/06.035%20Academic%20Freedom%20and%20Academic%20Responsibility_0.pdf)

**Student Academic Integrity:**[**UNT 06.003**](https://policy.unt.edu/sites/policy.unt.edu/files/06.003%20Student%20Academic%20Integrity.pdf)

**Grade Appeals:** [**UNT 06.040**](https://policy.unt.edu/sites/policy.unt.edu/files/06.035%20Academic%20Freedom%20and%20Academic%20Responsibility_0.pdf)

**Artificial Intelligence & Writing:**

*Unless specified by the instructor for a specific assignment and after a thorough discussion with the entire class about best practices* **-** The use of generative AI writing tools (such as ChatGPT, GrammarlyGO, GPT-3, GPT-4, BERT, or others) is prohibited in this class. Assignments for the course have been designed to help you develop as a writer without the use of these technologies. You will generate ideas, read, revise, and write on your own and/or in consultation with peers, me, or Writing Center tutors, and you will not use AI at any stage of your writing process. You are the author of your work for the course and authorship means you take responsibility for your words and claims. Any use of AI technologies in your work will be considered an [violation of UNT's academic integrity policy](https://policy.unt.edu/sites/default/files/06.003%20Student%20Academic%20Integrity.pdf) and addressed accordingly. \*Statement composed by Annette Vee, under CC-BY-NC (Creative Commons By-Noncommercial license)

**Communication with the Instructor:**Connect with me through email and/or by attending office hours. During busy times, my inbox becomes rather full, so if you contact me and do not receive a response within two business days, please send a follow up email. A gentle nudge is always appreciated.

You will typically receive a faster response if you email me during regular business hours (8:00 AM to 5:00 PM at [stephanie.hawkins@unt.edu](mailto:stephanie.hawkins@unt.edu) rather than through Canvas. Since calling your professors by their hard-earned title communicates your respect for their expertise, please refer to me as “Dr. Hawkins” or “Professor Hawkins” in both your written and spoken communications. I teach multiple courses, so to avoid confusion include your full name and the course number in in your email. For clarity’s sake, your e-mail should indicate the course and section. If you require particular accommodations per Students with Disabilities (see below), please communicate them to me as soon as possible, and please provide the appropriate documentation. If you have any other concerns or special circumstances that I should be aware of please don’t hesitate to speak to me confidentially.

**Distraction-Free Classroom:**My role is to hold space for learning and discovery. Therefore, I strive to maintain a distraction-free classroom. Speaking while others are talking, texting, engaging with social media, or doing work for another course, are prohibited distractions during class time and will result in an absence. Unless you have an urgent need or a documented (ODA) medical reason for leaving class, you are expected to keep your attention focused on the course and its objectives for the full 80-minutes allocated.

**Electronic Devices:**I have a zero-tolerance policy for texting during class. If you text during class, you will be counted absent for the duration of the class. Cell phones and laptops should be stowed and turned off for the duration of class. Students wishing to take notes on a laptop must seek the instructor’s approval. When you are not taking notes, laptops should be closed. Those violating this policy shall be counted absent for the class.

**Group Me & other Social Media Apps:**Group Me is appropriate for communicating to classmates about important deadlines. It can also be abused. Please do not use Group Me in ways that violates the code of student conduct. For all questions concerning your grade, or questions regarding instructor expectations for assignments or any other course-related issues, please communicate directly with me. Communications with the instructor are held in strictest confidence.

**Late papers & Incompletes:**Late assignments drop by *one letter grade* for each day they are past due and do not receive written comments. Incompletes are only granted in emergency situations, and to students who have maintained good attendance and who have successfully completed a majority of the requirements.

**Plagiarism:**The unattributed use of another’s words and ideas, regardless of the source (your own work in another course, work by another student, others’ scholarly work or internet resources) is prohibited. Repurposing your own work from another course constitutes cheating and is grounds for failing the assignment. See Library Guide to Types of Plagiarism: [https://guides.library.unt.edu/plagiarism/typesLinks to an external site.](https://guides.library.unt.edu/plagiarism/types)

**Students with Disabilities:**The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability AccessLinks to an external site.](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access) website ([https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-accessLinks to an external site.](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access)). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

**Tardiness:**Please arrive before class begins to find a seat, prepare your materials, and connect with your peers. A late arrival to class is sometimes inevitable, and if you have concerns or particular needs concerning lateness, take them up with me during my office hours. I want to support your success in the course. If you arrive late, know that you are welcome to join the class, but please do so without distracting others. More than two instances of tardiness (10-15 minutes late) will result in an absence from class.

Academic Support & Student Services:

**Student Support Services**

*Mental Health*

UNT provides mental health resources to students to help ensure there are numerous outlets to turn to that wholeheartedly care for and are there for students in need, regardless of the nature of an issue or its severity. Listed below are several resources on campus that can support your academic success and mental well-being:

* [Student Health and Wellness CenterLinks to an external site.](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center)
* [Counseling and Testing ServicesLinks to an external site.](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services)
* [UNT Care TeamLinks to an external site.](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care)
* [UNT Psychiatric ServicesLinks to an external site.](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness-center/services/psychiatry)
* [Individual CounselingLinks to an external site.](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services/services/individual-counseling)

*Additional Student Support Services*

* Registrar (https://registrar.unt.edu/registration)
* [Financial AidLinks to an external site.](https://financialaid.unt.edu/) (https://financialaid.unt.edu/)
* [Student Legal ServicesLinks to an external site.](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/student-legal-services)
* [Career CenterLinks to an external site.](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/career-center)
* [Counseling and Testing ServicesLinks to an external site.](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services) (https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services
* [UNT Food PantryLinks to an external site.](https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry) (https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources/food-pantry)

Academic Support Services

* [Academic Resource CenterLinks to an external site.](https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources) (https://clear.unt.edu/canvas/student-resources)
* [Academic Success CenterLinks to an external site.](https://success.unt.edu/asc) (https://success.unt.edu/asc)
* [UNT LibrariesLinks to an external site.](https://library.unt.edu/) (https://library.unt.edu/)
* [Writing LabLinks to an external site.](http://writingcenter.unt.edu/) ([http://writingcenter.unt.edu/Links to an external site.](http://writingcenter.unt.edu/))