

ENGLISH 2326: AMERICAN LITERATURE

SPRING 2026 | UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

	<p>Instructor: Dr. Vastine (Dr. V)</p> <p>Class Times: M/W 11am-12:20pm</p> <p>Email: StephanieVastine@unt.edu</p> <p>Office Hours: M/W 9am-10am or <i>by appointment</i></p> <p>Office: Auditorium Building 106C (inside the FYW Suite)</p>
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will explore the dynamic tension between interior and exterior spaces in American literature. We will discover how writers use domestic interiors and natural or public exteriors to shape conversations surrounding identity, freedom, and constraint. Female authors often write from within the home, revealing the psychological, social, and cultural forces that confine or define women's lives, while male authors frequently turn to the outdoors as a site of liberation, existential struggle, or moral clarity. Other times, these tropes are subverted altogether. Through short stories, nonfiction, and poetry—from Emerson and Thoreau's transcendental visions to Gilman's domestic critique and Cheever's suburban surrealism—students will examine how American literature negotiates boundaries between inside and outside, private and public, freedom and enslavement, and the physical and spiritual worlds.

In addition to spatial themes, we will analyze how identity categories including race, gender, and class intersect with these spaces and shape literary expression. Students will consider how authors from diverse backgrounds represent social hierarchies, cultural tensions, and struggles for equality, and how these issues inform the meaning and impact of American literature.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Identify major movements, authors, and texts in American literary history.
- Explain how historical and cultural contexts shape literary works.
- Analyze the representation of interior and exterior spaces in selected texts.
- Evaluate how race, gender, and class intersect with spatial themes in American literature.
- Compare and contrast diverse perspectives on identity and freedom across genres and periods.
- Create written and oral arguments that demonstrate critical engagement with course themes.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Please be sure to purchase these **exact editions of the books so we can all be on the same page (literally). You can use the ISBN numbers provided to be sure, or just go through Voertman's or the on campus bookstore.*

- *Twelve Stories by American Women* (Penguin)
 - ISBN 13: 9780593512319
- *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (Penguin)
 - ISBN 13: 9780143107309
- *Selected Poems* by Emily Dickinson (Dover Thrift Edition)
 - ISBN 13: 9780486264660
- *Leaves of Grass: The Original 1855 Edition* (Dover Thrift Edition)
 - ISBN 13: 9780486456768
- Course Reader (provided by instructor)

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS & SKILLS

You'll need [a computer](#) with [internet access](#) and know the basic skills necessary to:

- Use [Outlook for UNT email](#)
- Use [Canvas](#)

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

**You can find more detailed descriptions of these assignments on our Canvas page.*

- Attendance and Participation: 20%
- Weekly Close Reading and Discussion Questions: 20%
- Reading Quizzes (6 total): 10%
- Midterm Exam: 25%
- Final Project: 25%

Total: 100%

GRADING

All major assignments must be turned in on Canvas and processed through Turnitin to be eligible to pass this course.

I encourage you to monitor your score and review feedback posted on Canvas; However, Canvas's gradebook is not always accurate. Some grades, such as attendance or extra credit, are not incorporated until *after* the last time the class meets. If you are concerned about your grades, please set up a meeting so we can discuss them.

COMMUNICATION EXPECTATIONS

Feedback

I strive to return all graded work promptly. For shorter assignments and discussions, I will generally post grades/feedback within seven days of the due date. For the larger projects, I aim for fourteen days, but with the rise in cheating and plagiarism, it occasionally takes longer to finish grading a set of papers. If it has been longer than the times mentioned, please feel free to ask me when to expect the grades and feedback, but not before then.

Office Hours

You can walk into my office during my hours, but I encourage you to make an appointment to ensure you get time to meet with me. Feel free to use my office hours as often as you'd like to chat with me, review an assignment, or discuss any questions/concerns you have. It's been my experience that a quick conversation is the most effective way to resolve any confusion.

Email

I will respond to all official correspondence addressed to my UNT email (StephanieVastine@unt.edu) in person or via email within three business days. All other communication methods—Canvas Messenger, assignment comments, personal emails, physical letters, etc.—are *unreliable* ways to contact me. I cannot guarantee that I will see your message on other platforms within any specific time frame, if ever.

Please check the syllabus and related assignment sheets before emailing me, and in your email, indicate where you looked for the information you are seeking before you emailed me. So that if something is unclear, I can fix it. Additionally, when you write to me, please include the subject of your email in the subject line and write your email with appropriate salutations and grammar. For a sample email, read this article, "[How to Email Your Professor](#)." Or, for a checklist on effective email communication between yourself and instructors, see <https://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>.

It is your responsibility to check your UNT email during your 'business' hours each day to ensure you do not miss any time-sensitive information.

Syllabus Change Policy

I have made every attempt to provide an accurate syllabus for this course. However, if presently unanticipated circumstances arise that necessitate an amendment to the syllabus, advance notice will be given in writing via Canvas announcements of all changes.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance Policy ([UNT Policy 06.039](#))

Regular class attendance and participation are required. Excessive absences will affect your grade. Documented absences (e.g., religious holidays, university events) are automatically excused. Illness or undocumented absences are unexcused unless your instructor decides otherwise. Email your instructor within 24 hours of an absence for them to consider excusing it.

Attendance Guidelines (2x/week class):

- Attendance will be taken during every class period.
- With every absence, your roll call grade will drop.
- Two tardies equal one absence.
- At 7 unexcused absences, you cannot pass the course.
- Excused absences are at your instructor's discretion—stay in communication.

Excused Absences

Absences for the following reasons are considered excusable by the university based on [UNT policy 6.039](#), but you must obtain a note from the [Dean of Students](#) (or other appropriate university offices) to verify your absence(s): (1) religious holy day, including travel for that purpose; (2) participation in an official university function; (3) active military service, including travel for that purpose; (4) pregnancy and parenting under Title IX; and (6) when the University is officially closed.

Please inform me of any planned absences with at least 10 days' notice to minimize any potential negative impact on your grades.

No other absences are eligible to be excused. Unless the absence is an illness or an extenuating circumstance that exceeds five consecutive days, you may request documentation from the Dean of Students' office for an excuse. Examples include, but are not limited to: (1) temporary disability or injury; (2) extended medical absence or hospitalization; (3) illness of a dependent family member; or (4) major illness or death of a loved one.

If you miss a class:

You are responsible for finding out what you missed. *Before* the next time our class meets, review the Canvas page and ask a classmate for notes on what you missed, or make an appointment to meet with your instructor during office hours or email me to ensure you are on track and prepared for the next class.

READING EXPECTATIONS:

This is a reading intensive course. Students are expected to complete all assigned readings before each class session and come prepared to engage in discussion and activities. Because active participation depends on familiarity with the texts, arriving unprepared undermines the collaborative learning process. If a student comes to class without having completed the assigned reading, the instructor may mark the student as absent for that day. Consistent preparation is essential for success in this course.

LATE WORK

Work submitted late will automatically lose points unless you have been granted an extension.

Extensions

I will occasionally grant extensions for assignments if you request the extension at **least 24 hours before the deadline**. The sooner you come talk to me the better.

UNT POLICIES

Academic Integrity Standards and AI

According to [UNT Policy 06.003](#), Academic Integrity standards are violated when students engage in academic dishonesty behaviors, including, but not limited to, cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty and my decision on academic sanctions will be reported to the [Office of Academic Integrity](#).

Plagiarism can include copying a passage from a source verbatim without citing it, but it can also include improper or misleading citations. Please note that all source material must be acknowledged, even if the material is paraphrased or sourced from generative AI technologies. Be careful always to acknowledge the work of other writers and take the time to work out the distinction between your original thoughts and arguments and those of others.

During this class, students may be permitted to use Generative AI tools such as Copilot. You will be informed by your instructor as to when, where, and how these tools are permitted to be used, along with [guidance for attribution](#). *Any use of AI outside of these approved classroom activities will be considered academic dishonesty and is subject to the consequences of plagiarism.*

*Note: some applications such as Grammarly will flag your work as AI generated. If you have any questions about whether a writing tool is appropriate to use in this course, please consult with your instructor.

Acceptable Student Behavior

According to [UNT policy 07.012](#), student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be notified verbally or in writing and may be directed to leave the classroom. Additionally, the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct.

For additional information, refer to the [Dean of Students](#) website.

ADA Accommodations

According to UNT policy 16.001, UNT will make reasonable academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA). Then, the ODA will provide them with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty members detailing the students' accommodation needs. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours. Students may request reasonable accommodation 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 accommodation and meet with all faculty members prior to accommodation implementation every semester.

For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website.

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly provide students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

For additional information, refer to the Eagle Alert website.

UNT RESOURCES

Technical Assistance:

[Information Technology Help Desk | University of North Texas](#)

Email: helpdesk@unt.edu

Phone: 940-565-2324

In Person: Sage Hall, Room 130

Writing Assistance:

[Writing Center | University of North Texas](#)

Email: WritingCenter@unt.edu

Phone: 940-565-2563

In Person: Sage Hall, Room 150

ENGL 2326 COURSE SCHEDULE

Week/ Date/ Day of Week	Readings	Activities	Assignments/ TO DO
1 1/12 M	Course Syllabus	Introductions and Orienting to the Course	Read through course policies on Canvas, make sure you are getting announcements and notifications
1 1/14 W	"The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin (reader)	Discuss the Course Theme and Chopin short story	Post introduction on Canvas discussion board by Friday
2 1/19 M MLK HOLIDAY	NA	NA	
2 1/21 W	Introduction to Transcendentalism and American Literary Movements (links on Canvas in Week 2 Module)	Discuss Transcendentalism and Literary Movement timeline *see example discussion board post and discuss this assignment and expectations	
3 1/26 M	Selections from "Nature" by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1836) (reader)	Discuss Emerson	
3 1/28 W	"Walking" by Henry David Thoreau (1862) (reader)	Discuss Thoreau and Emerson's philosophy	Week 3 discussion board post (see Canvas for details) Reading Quiz 1: Emerson and Thoreau
4 2/2 M	"Selected Poems" (1890) by Emily Dickinson (pg. 1-23)	Discuss poetry and Dickinson	
4 2/4 W	"Selected Poems" (1890) by Emily Dickinson (pg. 24-49)	Discuss poetry and Dickinson	Week 4 discussion board post (see Canvas for details)
5 2/9 M	"Leaves of Grass" (1855) by Walt Whitman (pg. 21-68)	Discuss Whitman	
5 2/11 W	"Leaves of Grass" (1855) by Walt Whitman (pg. 69-83)	Discuss Whitman	Week 5 discussion board post (see Canvas for details)

	Selected Poems by Langston Hughes (reader)		Reading Quiz 2: Whitman and Dickinson
6 2/16 M	<i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave</i> (1845) Ch. I-VII (pg. 1-50)	Discuss Douglass	
6 2/18 W	<i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave</i> (1845) Ch. VIII-XI (pg. 51- 107)	Discuss Douglass	Week 6 discussion board post (see Canvas for details)
7 2/23 M	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> Chapters VII-IX by Harriet Beecher Stowe (reader)	Discuss Stowe	
7 2/25 W	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> Chapter XIII by Harriet Beecher Stowe (reader)	Discuss Stowe	Week 7 discussion board post (see Canvas for details) Reading Quiz 3: Douglass and Stowe
8 3/2 M	Make-up reading day (details TDB)	Prep for Midterm Exam	
8 3/4 W	---	In class midterm exam	In Class Midterm Exam
9 SPRING BREAK	---	---	---
10 3/16 M	"A White Heron" by Sarah Orne Jewett (1886)	Discuss Jewett	
10 3/18 W	"To Build a Fire" by Jack London (1908)	Discuss London	Week 10 discussion board post (see Canvas for details)
11 3/23 M	"The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1892) (reader)	Discuss Gilman	
11 3/25 W	"The Swimmer" by John Cheever (1964) (reader)	Discuss Cheever	Week 11 discussion board post (see Canvas for details)

			Reading Quiz 4: Short Stories (Jewett, London, Gilman, Cheever)
12 3/30 M	"Good Country People" by Flannery O'Connor (1955) (reader)	Discuss O'Connor	
12 4/1 W	"A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner (1930) (PDF on Canvas)	Discuss Faulkner	Week 12 discussion board post (see Canvas for details)
13 4/6 M	"Life in the Iron Mills" by Rebecca Harding Davis (1861)	Discuss Davis	
13 4/8 W	"The Open Boat" by Stephen Crane (1897)	Discuss Crane	Week 13 discussion board post (see Canvas for details) Reading Quiz 5: O'Connor, Faulkner, Davis, and Crane
14 4/13 M	<i>Passing</i> by Nella Larsen (pages TBD)	Discuss Larsen's Novel	
14 4/15 W	<i>Passing</i> by Nella Larsen (pages TBD)	Discuss Larsen's Novel	Week 14 discussion board post (see Canvas for details)
15 4/20 M	<i>Passing</i> by Nella Larsen (pages TBD)	Discuss Larsen's Novel	
15 4/22 W	---	Final Project Preparation	Week 15 discussion board post (see Canvas for details) Reading Quiz 6: <i>Passing</i>
16 4/27 M	---	Final Project Preparation	
16 4/29 W	---	Wrapping Up	
FINALS WEEK			Final Exam Details TBD

*Note: The readings and class scheduling outlined on the above table are *tentative and subject to change at the instructor's discretion*. Be sure to check Canvas announcements frequently for any schedule changes or new readings.