

Spring 2008 Introductory Course Descriptions

167, Lec. 1 *Introduction to British and American Literature Before 1900*
11:00-11:50 TR + disc.

Zimmerman

The books and films in this course are preoccupied with ghosts, monsters, and paranormal phenomena. By studying these texts, which include poetry and plays and feature horror, science fiction, mystery, and over-the-top comedy, we will explore how authors over the last two centuries have used stories about ghosts, monsters, and demonic possession to ask profound questions about what it means to be human: What distinguishes us from other creatures and from machines that think and feel like us? What are our moral obligations to other creatures, human and non-human? In what ways does the past live on as a kind of ghostly presence in our lives? How do paranormal experiences shape our understanding of what--and who--counts as normal?

This course is designed to help prepare you for the rigors of university writing and reading by developing your analytical writing skills and your critical reading skills. We will study and discuss a variety of texts, including novels, short stories, poems, plays, and films. You will have frequent opportunities to practice your writing skills and share your ideas and work with your classmates. The course is also meant to be engaging and fun. Our hope is that you will enjoy not only reading the texts and seeing the movies but also learning how to think critically and carefully about them and the questions they explore.

REQUIRED TEXTS (at University Book Store):

Conor McPherson, Shining City

Mary Shelley, Frankenstein

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"

Emily Dickinson, Final Harvest

Henry James, The Turn of the Screw

Pauline Hopkins, Of One Blood

Stephen Crane, The Monster (in Course Reader, available at UBS, shelved with course books)

Required Films: Blade Runner (dir.cut), Safe, Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956)

168, Lec. 1
1:20-2:10 MW

Introduction to Modern Literature since 1900

Steele

English 168 focuses upon issues of psychic, social, and cultural invasion. Many of the writers in this course (such as Joseph Conrad, Ernest Hemingway, Pat Barker, and Leslie Marmon Silko) examine the impact of war or historical moments of cultural invasion, when one country is colonized by another. But such moments of cultural conflict also invade and transform the being and consciousness of those involved--both colonizer and colonized. A different, but related, form of invasion arises from existence in the increasing pervasive technological and media culture of the 20th century. Authors such as Margaret Atwood, Don DeLillo, and Jessica Hagedorn examine the expense of life in a world in which the boundaries between the self, technology, and the media become increasingly tenuous: a world in which individual motives and expectations are programmed by movies, advertising, and popular culture.

In the face of such cultural pressures, many of the texts in this course question whether any refuge can be found outside or beyond the war- and media-machines of modern society.

Throughout these books runs a pervasive sense of trauma--the key concept of the course. But, at the same time, many of these authors find sources of healing and refuge during the troubled times of the 20th century, whether in the consolation of cultural understanding, the construction of safe spaces, or the commitment to political resistance.

PROBABLE TEXTS (most, but not all, of the following books)

Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness & The Secret Sharer

Margaret Atwood, Surfacing

Ernest Hemingway, In Our Time

Pat Barker, Regeneration (may be replaced)

Toni Morrison, Beloved

Don DeLillo, White Noise

Jessica Hagedorn, Dogeaters (may be replaced)

Leslie Marmon Silko, Ceremony

J.M. Coetzee, Waiting for the Barbarians (might be added)

William Gibson, Pattern Recognition (might be added)

168, Lec. 3
2:25-3:15 TR

Introduction to Modern Literature since 1900

McBee

This introductory survey class will cover a wide range of authors, genres, and topics. It is by no means a complete picture of American, British, or Anglophone literature for this time period, as no survey class can be. During the semester we will see how the literature addresses the mundane, the global, and several items in between. Students are expected to read and think about the texts and idea put forth in the class, but should decide for themselves what they will want to continue to explore in their future studies.

169, Lec. 1
9:55-10:45 MW + disc.

*Home in 20th Century USA:
Theme and variations on a concept*

Schaub

English 169 is an introduction to American 20th century literature in several genres: novels, poetry, short stories and plays. The course aims to enhance appreciation for a range of literature by teaching concepts and skills basic to literary analysis and interpretation. Because writing fosters (requires) thinking, you will have the opportunity to develop your own ideas about the course material in a variety of writing assignments. Since much of your study at the University involves the reading of written texts, this course should have carry over value for your success in courses in other fields, even though this class is designed specifically as an introduction to the study of American literature.

Our lecture series and sections will focus on ideas and performances of "home" as place of origin, retreat, as well as destination and place of final rest, of region and nation, of nature and cosmos. Understood in these ways, "home" becomes a concept that is at once philosophical, and political. The texts selected for the course show how these ideas about "home" appear in culture, as an organizing device of plot, theme, and image, as motivation in character, and as significant background or scene. As this sketch suggests, home is the vital figure or "trope" for our lives and one in which each of us has a stake.

Requirements

- Assigned reading completed prior to lecture
- Regular attendance at lectures and section meetings
- Weekly lecture freewriting/response (on 3 x 5 cards)
- Two papers: one short, one longer
- Midterm
- Final Examination

Required texts include:

- Ernest Hemingway: *In Our Time*
- Eugene O'Neill: *Long Day's Journey Into Night*
- Richard Wright: *Native Son*
- Lorraine Hansberry: *Raisin in the Sun*
- Norman Mailer: *Armies of the Night*
- Marilynne Robinson: *Housekeeping*
- Fae Myenne Ng: *Bone*
- A Course Reader: *"HOME"* – available **online**

169, Lec. 2
8:50-9:40 MW

Introduction to Modern American Literature

Staff

Course Catalog Description: An introduction to selected fiction, prose, drama, and poetry written by Americans since about 1914.