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| LITR 2326: American Literature | Fall 2016: BB1218. 10-10:50 |
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Office Hours: Monday 11 – 2

# LITR 2326: American Literature

**AMERICAN BEAUTY**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introductory survey of American literature forms across three genres (fiction, personal narrative, lyric poetry) and prepares students for advanced study of American and other literatures. Over the course of the semester, students will learn how to appreciate and analyze a wide variety of texts, placing them in their social, historical, and cultural contexts. By paying special attention to the theme of “beauty” in each literary text, we will consider how descriptions of physical appearance – of the American landscape and of its people – has been as a site of negotiating what it means to be an American.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

* Demonstrate general **knowledge of the American literary tradition** and literary **genres**
* Demonstrate skills in **critical thinking and interpretive reading**, assessed by their ability to produce a **narrative**, a **rhetorical analysis,** a **close reading,** and an **argument** that relies on close reading for its evidence
* Demonstrate **competent writing skills**, assessed by their ability to produce convincing, original arguments, and to express their evidence in appropriate formal style.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

Informal Writing: 10 x 1% = 10%

Reading Reports: 10 x 1% = 10%

Presentations: 2 x 5% = 10%

Participation: 10%

Paper 1 (personal narrative) 20%

Paper 2 (poetry) 20%

Paper 3 (fiction) 20%

**REQUIRED MATERIALS**

Please buy *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison. Other texts will be on Blackboard, and may be printed out or read on a screen with a diagonal length greater than ten inches. To participate fully in this course, students must have a reliable connection to the internet, and a personal computer or adequate time in the UHCL computer labs.

**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

**Class Discussion** is a crucial part of your learning in this class, so your success in the course depends on your *active* reading (take notes!) and thinking hard about the assigned texts. The **participation grade** is determined by how well you engage with your classmates’ ideas—both quantity and quality are rewarded. I will assign a grade for your average daily participation achievement, and multiply that by the percentage of classes you attended. To achieve maximum participation points, you should attend every class, l**isten** closely to your peers, and when you speak, demonstrate accurate and deep **understanding of other points of view**. Raise your hand—even if you’re shy. I want to hear what you’re thinking. And I want the class to hear you, too.

**Informal Writing**: These responses address, clarify, and/or question a work or a passage from a work we read in class that week. Responses will receive full credit if they (a) address the prompt (b) develop a coherent, logical thought, (c) meet a word count of at least 250 words. The purpose of these informal reading responses is to practice discussing and analyzing literature (and using the new critical language we learn). Typically, I will require these to be brought to class in hard copy because they will be exchanged with your peers. However, if you **ask permission** first, I may allow you to send informal writing by email before it’s due. **Late informal writing cannot be accepted.**

**Reading Reports**:At least once a week, I’ll ask you to answer questions about the reading, and report on how much time you spent reading, how much of it you managed to complete, and what resources you used (dictionaries, historical background). The purposes of quizzes are: (a) to motivate you to read attentively (b) to jump start discussions and (c) indicate how well students are comprehending the reading, so that the professor can adjust lectures and class activities according to student needs. You will be **eligible to submit a reading report** only if you have brought with you either a printout or the text on a screen larger than 7” diagonal (i.e. not a phone). **If you are absent during a report, you’ll receive a zero regardless of your reason for being absent.**

**Presentations:** Twice during the semester, each student will be responsible for presenting on the historical context of the day’s reading. For this course, students must use **visual art,** i.e. paintings, lithographs, photographs, woodcarving, etc. of the period in order to illustrate information they consider important about the time period. You should assume that your audience (the class) has done the reading, but has not done much background reading. Tell us about events that will enrich our understanding of the text, and point out themes that appear in both visual and literary art.

**Attendance**: I expect everyone to be in class each day and to arrive on time. Absences prevent you from learning material that will allow you to succeed in the class. If you are absent, you should **ask a fellow student what you missed** first; come to your instructor for clarification only after you have sought help from your peers. If an illness is so severe you have to miss more than two weeks of class, you will fall so far behind, no amount of hard work can get you caught up completely, you should probably drop. Unfortunately, **students who miss two weeks of class are likely to FAIL.**

**Turning in your papers:** You are eligible for credit on a paper providing you turn it in as required (whether hard copy, blackboard or email) *on time.* I will accept late papers up to one week after the deadline, and you will lose **twenty points** from these. After that week, it’s a zero.

## POLICIES

**Academic Honesty and Plagiarism Policy:** All UHCL students are responsible for knowing the standards of academic honesty as detailed in the Student Life Handbook for the University Academic Honesty Policy. Briefly, plagiarism is using another person's **words** and **ideas** as though they were your own without naming a source. If you are paraphrasing from an outside source— explaining someone else’s ideas using your own words—*you must still acknowledge and cite the source*. Plagiarism is not restricted to the use of published work; the **passing of another student's work as your own**, turning in **any work that you submitted for another class**, or having another person write your paper is also a case of plagiarism. If I suspect unacknowledged dependence on outside sources, I will investigate it thoroughly. A paper found to contain any plagiarized material will receive a “0” and is sufficient grounds for failing the course.

**Disabilities**: The University of Houston System complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, pertaining to the provision of reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids for students with a disability. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines, each University within the System strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students who request and require them. If you have a disability and need a special accommodation, consult the Coordinator of Health Disabilities Services, SSB 1.301, telephone 281-283-2627, and then discuss the accommodation with me.

**Emergency Hotline Number for University Closures**: 281-283-2221

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

I have listed authors’ names for reference, and this schedule can be treated as a roadmap for the course. Students are responsible for finding on Blackboard the texts noted here.

**PART 1: PERSONAL NARRATIVE**

**Week 1.**

Monday, Aug 22. Introduction. What is American Literature?

Wednesday, Aug 24. Christopher Columbus (1493)

Friday, Aug 26. De Vaca (1542)

**Week 2.**

Monday, Aug 29. John Smith (1624)

Wednesday, Aug 31. Mary Rowlandson (1682)

Friday, Sept. 2. Captivity Narratives and Their Influence on American Literature

**Week 3**

Monday, Sept 5. NO CLASS

Wednesday, Sept 7. Crevecoeur. Letters from an American Farmer (1782)

Friday, Sept 9. Equiano (1789)

**Week 4**

Monday, Sept 12. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1836)

Wednesday, Sept 14. Henry Thoreau (1851)

Friday, Sept 16. Harriet Jacobs (1861)

**Paper 1:** Choose any text by one of the writers we read during this unit. Perform a rhetorical analysis. Also, write your own personal narrative and explain which rhetorical strategies you used.

**PART 2: POETRY**

**Week 5**

Monday, Sept 19th **Paper 1 due**. Read poems in class, teach things to look for in close reading.

Wed Sept 21. Walt Whitman (1855)

Fri Sept 23 NO CLASS (conferences)

**Week 6**

Monday, Sept 26 Emily Dickinson (1860)

Wednesday, Sept 28 Amy Lowell (1915). Marianne Moore “An Octopus” (1924)

Friday, Sept 30 NO CLASS (conferences)

**Week 7**

Monday, Oct 3 Langston Hughes (1926). Jessica Powers (1930)

Wednesday, Oct 5 Elizabeth Bishop (1955). Sylvia Plath (1960)

Friday, Oct 7 Lucille Clifton “Homage to My Hips” (1980)

Natalie Diaz “Ode to the Beloved’s Hips” (2013)

**Week 8**

Monday, Oct 10 Sharon Olds (2002). Lauren K. Alleyne (2014).

Wednesday, Oct 12 Patricia Spears Jones “What Beauty Does” (2015). Dorianne Laux “Men” 2011. Mark Doty “On ‘Archaic Torso of Apollo’” (2011)

**Paper 2: Choose one of the theoretical texts we’ve read so far, and show how its argument is illustrated by three poems. A close reading should provide evidence for your argument.**

**Week 9**

Monday, Oct 17 **Paper 2 Due.**

Wednesday, Oct 19 NO CLASS

**PART 3: FICTION**

Friday, Oct 21“Lygeia” (1838)

**Week 10**

Monday, Oct 24 “The Birth-Mark” (1843)

Wednesday, Oct 26 “Neighbor Rosicky”

Friday, Oct Oct 28 “The Beauty Treatment”

**Week 11**

Monday, Oct 31 Halloween-themed story.

Wednesday, Nov 2 *The Bluest Eye*

Friday, Nov 4 *The Bluest Eye*

**Week 12**

Monday, Nov 7 *The Bluest Eye*

Wednesday, Nov 9 *The Bluest Eye*

Friday, Nov 11 *The Bluest Eye*

**Week 13**

Monday, Nov 14 *The Bluest Eye*

Wednesday, Nov 16 *The Bluest Eye*

Friday, Nov 18 *The Bluest Eye*

**Week 14**

Monday, Nov 21 *The Bluest Eye*

**Week 15**

Monday, Nov 28 Peer Review of paper 3

Wednesday, Nov 30 Robin Coste Lewis “Voyage of the Sable Venus” (2015)

Friday, Dec 2 **Paper 3 due**

**Paper 3: choose some aspect of the theme of beauty and demonstrate how it developed over time in the history of American Literature**