

LIT 314-01: The American Novel

Professor Harrison

Office: LA 114

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Office Hours: TuTh 12:30-2:00 and by appt.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Davis, Rebecca Harding. “Life in the Iron-Mills” in *Four Stories by American Women*.
- Díaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*.
- Faulkner, William. *As I Lay Dying*.
- Melville, Herman. *Moby-Dick*.
- Petry, Ann. *The Street*.
- Wharton, Edith. *The House of Mirth*.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

LIT 314 examines a limited number of extraordinary American novels in their historical, cultural, and especially literary contexts. We’ll explore literary movements such as romanticism, realism, regionalism, naturalism, modernism, and postmodernism, and trace the lineages and disjunctions between these movements. As the course progresses, we’ll also have opportunities to discuss different critical theories and apply them to the primary texts. The course aims to deepen your sense of American literary history and to deepen your interpretative skills.

COURSE OUTCOMES

1. Students will understand the historical, cultural, critical, and especially literary contexts of the American Novel.
2. Students will understand the major characteristics of American literary romanticism, realism, regionalism, naturalism, modernism, and postmodernism and will be able to utilize those characteristics to analyze individual American novels.
3. Students will be able—while drawing on appropriate critical terms and concepts—to state clearly the central themes, concepts, and ideas at play in individual works.

4. Students will be able to evaluate the literary and cultural importance and/or significance of individual American novels.
5. Students will be able to engage thoughtfully and openly with a range of critical and theoretical perspectives on literary and cultural (and even controversial) issues, including the ability to state clearly the assumptions and premises of their own positions.
6. Students will be able to perform a literary close reading (both in class discussions, exercises, and assignments and in out-of-class writing assignments), demonstrating an ability to read and interpret literary works by thoughtfully integrating quoted passages into larger argumentative claims.
7. Students will be able to write clear, grammatically correct, and rhetorically effective papers of literary analysis and interpretation (and perhaps even of critique), driven by a thesis and sustained by logic, textual and historical evidence, and a reasoned, ordered, and coherent argument.

GRADING

- Essay 1 (Proposal; 8-10+ pages): 20%
- Essay 2 (Proposal; 8-10+ pages): 20%
- Essay 3 (A Revision of either Essay 1 or Essay 2): 25%
- Final Exam: 25%
- Participation: 10%

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Please note that you must complete **ALL** written work to pass LIT 314. **You must, in other words, turn in all three essays and take the Final Exam.** Essays will be deducted ONE letter grade for EACH class period they are late.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Since the course involves informed discussions of the readings, attendance and participation are crucial: after THREE absences, your FINAL GRADE will be deducted ONE letter grade for each additional TWO absences.

E-mail correspondence: Please use your UM e-mail account for electronic correspondence with the instructor. Faculty are NOT allowed to reply to messages from other email servers or accounts.

Class Policy on Electronic Devices: Cell phone use is not permitted in class; you may, of course, use laptops during class for note-taking and other class-related work only.

DEPARTMENT AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Department Assessment: The Department of English's ongoing process of assessing its curriculum requires a committee of professors to read student papers (including exams) to learn how students in general are progressing through the program or course of studies. Thus, your professor may choose a copy of one of your papers or ask for an electronic version of it to use in this assessment process. (All identifying information—such as name or ID number—will be removed and no evaluation of student work outside the boundaries of the course will play any role in determining a student's grade.) If you do not want your work used in such a way, please inform your professor and she or he will not forward it to the Assessment Committee. Otherwise, the Department of English appreciates your tacit consent.

University Assessment: Students should also note that this course may require an electronic submission (via Moodle) of an assignment stripped of your personal information to be used for educational research and assessment of the university's writing program. Your paper will be stored in a database. A random selection of papers will be assessed by a group of faculty and staff using a rubric developed from the following writing learning outcomes:

- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
- Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
- Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
- Revise written work based on constructive feedback
- Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
- Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions (MLA)
- Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

This assessment in no way affects either your course grade or your progression at the university. Your work is used anonymously.

Plagiarism, Academic Integrity, and the Student Conduct Code: ***Plagiarism: the use of someone else's ideas or words as if they were your own.*** To avoid this contravention of the fundamental values of the academy, you ***must*** acknowledge, by citation of name, title, and page number, work that has influenced your thinking. For more on matters of Academic Integrity, see the Student Conduct Code available on the web:
http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php

Accommodation: Students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodation for coursework. To request accommodation, please contact the professor as soon as possible. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at <http://www.umt.edu/dss/> or call (406) 243-2243 (Voice/Text).

SYLLABUS

- Th Aug 31: Introduction
- Tu Sept 5: **Lecture: Realism and Naturalism: Historical/Cultural Contexts**
Essay 1: Assigned
- Th Sept 7: **Lecture: Realism and Naturalism (cont.)**
Davis 1-38
- Tu Sept 12: Davis 1-38 (cont.)
- Th Sept 14: **Lecture: American Romanticism: Historical/Cultural Contexts**
- Tu Sept 19: Melville 1-68
- Th Sept 21: Melville 68-136
- Tu Sept 26: Melville 136-214
- Th Sept 28: Melville 214-286
- Tu Oct 3: Melville 287-356
- Th Oct 5: Melville 356-427
- Tu Oct 10: Wharton 1-68
- Th Oct 12: Wharton 68-133
Essay 1: Due
- Tu Oct 17: Wharton 133-197
Essay 2: Assigned
- Th Oct 19: Wharton 197-256
- Tu Oct 24: **Lecture: Modernism: Historical/Cultural Contexts**
- Th Oct 26: Faulkner 1-64
- Tu Oct 31: Faulkner 65-136
- Th Nov 2: Faulkner 137-197
- Tu Nov 7: Faulkner 198-261
- Th Nov 9: **Lecture: Late Naturalism: Historical/Cultural Contexts**
Petry 1-112

Tu Nov 14: **Lecture: The Blues/The Blues Novel**
Petry 113-230
Essay 2 Due

Th Nov 16: Petry 231-326
Essay 3: Assigned

Tu Nov 21: Petry 327-436
Th Nov 23: **No Class: Thanksgiving Break**

Tu Nov 28: **Lecture: Postmodernism: Historical/Cultural Contexts**
Díaz epigraph-82

Th Nov 30: Díaz 82-165

Tu Dec 5: Díaz 166-251
Th Dec 7: Díaz 251-335

Tu Dec 12: **Review for Final Exam**
Essay 3: Due