LIT 236
Modern American Literature
American Modernism and Postmodernism
Spring 2017
LA 308                    Professor David Gilcrest                    Office Hours:
MWF 10:00-10:50            Office: LA 218                    T&Th 1-2
david.gilcrest@umontana.edu         W 11-12

“On or about December 1910 human character changed”
– Virginia Woolf

“Make it new”
– Ezra Pound

“Is postmodernity the pastime of an old man who scrounges in the garbage-heap of finality looking for leftovers, who brandishes unconsciousnesses, lapses, limits, confines, goulags, parataxes, non-senses, or paradoxes, and who turns this into the glory of his novelty, into his promise of change?”
– Jean-François Lyotard

Course Description

LIT 236 American Modernism and Postmodernism explores through the lens of [mostly] American poetry and fiction the complex intellectual and aesthetic currents and crosscurrents of Modernism and Postmodernism. We will begin with Whitman and Dickinson, innovators who set the stage for the formal experiments and ideological trials of the 20th century. We turn next to Modernist poetry (and some fiction), a body of work that served to define key literary and cultural terms and preoccupations. The balance of the course traces the evolution of “postmodern” American fiction (and some poetry). Along the way we will rely on important theoretical statements, manifestoes, historical analysis, and literary criticism.

Course Goals

LIT 236 will introduce students to important aspects of our literary traditions. Students who successfully complete this course will demonstrate through class discussion, written essays, and examinations:

• familiarity with the social, intellectual, and aesthetic concerns of the literary periods under consideration
• command of relevant critical terms and concepts associated with these concerns
• familiarity with representative texts of the literary periods under consideration
• an understanding of the rhetorical strategies used by the authors under consideration
• the analytical skills required to be good readers of literature
• the essential connection between effective thinking and writing about literature

**LIT 236 and the Writing Competency Requirement**

As an approved course in partial satisfaction of the Writing Competency Requirement, LIT 236 is designed to give students the opportunity to develop the ability to write with clarity of thought and precision of language.

This course requires 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 (largely style conventions like APA or MLA)
- Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

This assessment in no way affects either your course grade or your progression at the university. Click on the link to access the [rubric](rubric) that will be used to score the papers.

**LIT 236 and the General Education Program**

As a course that satisfies the General Education Group V: Literary and Artistic Studies (L) requirement, LIT 236 is designed to develop familiarity with significant works of literature. Through this experience, students will enhance their analytical skills and explore the historical, aesthetic, philosophical, and cultural features of these literary texts.

Upon completion of LIT 236, students will be able to:
1. analyze works of art with respect to structure and significance within literary and artistic traditions, including emergent movements and forms; and
2. develop coherent arguments that critique these works from a variety of approaches, such as historical, aesthetic, cultural, psychological, political, and philosophical.

LIT 236 and the English Major

LIT 236 satisfies Literature and Literature & Environment 200-level core course requirements.

LIT 236 Requirements

- Regular class attendance and participation, steady preparation
- Quizzes
- Two Examinations
- Three Critical Essays; Revision of Essays #1 & #2
- A portfolio of your written work

Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examination #1</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Revised) Essay #1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Revised) Essay #2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revised Essay #3</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course Policies and Procedures, and Unsolicited Advice

- Students who fail to attend the first two classes of the term will be dropped.
- Attendance and Participation: Because I believe you can learn the material covered in this course only by being here, your attendance and ACTIVE participation are required. Your final grade will be dropped one full letter grade after five unexcused absences; a failing grade will be assigned after six unexcused absences. (An excused absence requires a pre-arranged scholastic or athletic commitment or a bona fide and substantiated medical emergency.)
- You are responsible for everything covered in class discussion, especially information that makes it on to the whiteboard. Taking good notes is crucial to your success in this class.
- If you miss a class, please make arrangements with a colleague to get notes. Also, please check with me to see if you missed any handouts or special instructions. (All handouts will be posted to Moodle, eventually.)
- Each class period requires two-three hours of preparation—that is, three hours of careful reading and critical thinking (and writing). If you cannot commit to this work, LIT 236 is probably not the class for you.
• If you get confused, or have a question, raise your hand. If your hand is not in the air, I can only assume you understand the texts and ideas under consideration **PERFECTLY**.

• Laptops and tablets may be used for note taking; **laptops and tablets (and cellphones) used for other purposes will be confiscated and given to wayward children.**

• Texts: The texts under consideration are central to our work in this class, especially during class time. You MUST purchase the texts for this class and **you MUST bring the relevant texts to class.** No exceptions, no excuses.

• Quizzes: I will be giving randomly-scheduled quizzes throughout the term. These quizzes constitute 10% of your final grade. **No make-ups will be offered.** So as not to penalize students with legitimate reasons to miss a few classes, I will drop the three lowest quiz scores.

• Deadlines: All work is due in class on the assigned date. **NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

• Presentation: Essays must be printed. Black ink. 10 or 12 pt. font. Either Cambria or Times New Roman, e.g., is sufficient. Please, no funky fonts. I would like you to follow the MLA citation and documentation guidelines in this class. Make sure you include on your work your name, the title and draft number, this class and section number, my name, and the date.

• Revision: Because true revision is an essential part of serious writing, **you are required to revise your first two essays.** A final grade will only be recorded after I receive, and evaluate, your revision. Please follow the **Guidelines for Revision** that I will give you.

• Please make hard copies of all your work and keep them in a safe place.

• I do not accept work in electronic form. Recycled paper saves trees. Printing on two sides is usually fine.

• The instructor and the University reserve the right to modify, amend, or change the syllabus (course requirements, grading policy, etc.) as needed.

**Scholarship**

**All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course.** The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrase) must be properly documented. Students who plagiarize face serious consequences that may range from receiving a failing grade on a given assignment to failing the course. Students who plagiarize also face additional University sanctions.

**Accommodations**

If you have a disability (physical or learning) that you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first week of the term so we can discuss whatever accommodations may be necessary.
Required Texts

Course Packets, via Moodle
Lawrence Cahoone, ed. *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*
Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*
Allen Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems*
William S. Burroughs, *Nova Express*
Don DeLillo, *White Noise*
Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

Also, a two-pocket folder for your portfolio

Syllabus

{Historical, critical, theoretical essays will be found in *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology* unless otherwise indicated}

(M) = Document found on Moodle

| M   | 1/22 | Introduction: Pre/Post/Modernity                      |
| W   | 1/24 | Whitman (M)                                          |
| F   | 1/26 | Enlightenment: Descartes (19-26); Condorcet (63-69)  |
| M   | 1/29 | Skepticism: Hume (27-31); Kant (45-53)               |
| W   | 1/31 | Dickinson (M)                                        |
| F   | 2/2  | End of the World I: Marx and Engels (75-81); Darwin (88-95) |
| M   | 2/5  | End of the World II: Nietzsche (109-117); Freud (M) |
| W   | 2/7  | Writing About Literature Bootcamp                   |
| F   | 2/9  | 3 Isms: Marinetti (118-121); Vorticism (M); Imagism (M) |
| M   | 2/12 | Sassoon and Owen (M); DADA (M)                       |
| W   | 2/14 | Eliot I “The Waste Land” (M)                         |
| F   | 2/16 | Eliot II (M); Pound (M)                              |
| M   | 2/19 | Presidents Day—NO CLASS                              |
| W   | 2/21 | Stein (M); cummings (M)                              |
| F   | 2/23 | Frost (M)                                            |
| M   | 2/26 | Stevens (M)                                          |
| W   | 2/28 | Williams (M)                                         |
| F   | 3/2  | *The Sun Also Rises* (11-71)                         |
| M   | 3/5  | *The Sun Also Rises* (75-173)                        |
| W   | 3/7  | *The Sun Also Rises* (174-250)                       |
| F   | 3/9  | Freud (144-148); Sartre (169-173); Jeffers (M)       |
**Midterm Examination**

**Howl** ("Howl" and "Footnote to Howl")

**Howl** ("Other Poems")

**Nova Express** ("Last Words" through "Crab Nebula"

**Nova Express** (From a Land of Grass Without Mirrors” through “Gave Proof Through the Night”)

**Spring Break**

**ESSAY #2 DUE**

**Hassan** (410-420)

**Saussure** (122-126); **Derrida** (225-240)

**L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Poetry II (M)**

**L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Poetry II (M)**

**White Noise (3-104)**

**White Noise (107-156)**

**White Noise (159-310)**

**West “The Dilemma of the Black Intellectual”**

**Beloved (3-86)**

**Beloved (87-173)**

**Beloved (175-247)**

**Beloved (248-324)**

**hooks I (M); hooks II (M)**

**Wallace “E Unibus Pluram” (M)**

**Loose Ends & Evaluations**

**Final Examination 10:10-12:10**

**Essay #3, Completed Portfolio DUE by 5pm**