

English 224, American Writers: 1900-Present
Course Policies, Spring 2011
Section 001, Tu/Th 2:00pm - 3:15pm
AUP, Rm 189

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Course Description & Learning Outcomes

English 224 (“American Writers: 1900-Present”) is a reading and writing intensive course that offers a survey of American novelists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As such, the syllabus focuses primarily on book length fiction; however at times students may also be required to read critical essays, or ancillary materials in other forms such as historical materials, short stories, or reviews, which in turn invite discussion of the various contexts that shape and reshape the value systems that these authors and their works present. We will look at two major theoretical concepts: Modernism and postmodernism as they span the twentieth century. Through extensive practice in reading and responding to these concepts in texts and discussions, students will be given the opportunity to build on existing interpretive skills and to elaborate on their knowledge of how texts operate—i.e., how they represent, construct, and imagine the world. Accordingly, students should come away with greater awareness and appreciation of their own roles and responsibilities as writers and readers in the discipline of English studies, as they gain confidence in their ability to think and communicate in complex forms with clarity, coherence and depth. Further, through critical engagement with the ways in which human values are created and maintained in the literary, aesthetic and intellectual media, the course provides students with a means to fulfill a General Education Requirement for the Humanities.

Prerequisites

To be eligible for this class you must have received a C or above in English 102 or equivalent transfer course, or EPT score of 637 or above; or achieved Graduate standing, or Special Student status through a 2nd degree, post-baccalaureate, or special certificate.

Required Course Texts

Students are expected to bring the appropriate books and materials to each class session, because discussions and exercises will frequently refer to specific passages. All textbooks are available at UWM Bookstore, 2200 E. Kenwood Blvd., 414-229-6988. For those students who would prefer to purchase books from another source, I have included the ISBN# so that you can make sure to obtain the correct edition.

The following books will be assigned as required reading:

Baldwin, James. *Giovanni's Room*. Delta, 1956. 176 pages.
ISBN-13: 978-0385334587; New \$13.95; used \$9.60

Carson, Anne. *Autobiography of Red*. Vintage, 1999. 160 pages.
ISBN-13: 978-0375701290; New \$15.00; used \$10.35

Hemingway, Ernest. *The Sun Also Rises*. Scribner, 1929. 251 pages
ISBN-13: 978-0743297332; New \$15.00; used \$10.35.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Jonah's Gourd Vine*. Harper Perennial, 1934. 288 pages
ISBN-13: 978-0061350191; New \$13.95; used \$9.60

Kimball, Michael. *Dear Everybody*. Alma Books, 2010. 256 pages.
ISBN-13: 978-1846880834; New \$15.00; used \$10.35

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. Vintage, 1987. 321 pages
ISBN-13: 978-1400033416; New \$15.00; used \$10.35

O'Connor, Flannery. *A Good Man Is Hard To Find*. Mariner Books, 1955. 276 pages.
ISBN-13: 978-0156364652; New \$13.95; used \$9.60

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse Five*. Dial Press, 1969. 288 pages
ISBN-13: 978-0385333849; New \$15.00; used \$10.35

All other readings will either be posted to D2L or distributed in class. In addition to the materials listed above, students will need such school supplies as will allow them to print out assignments away from class and to hand-write assignments during class. In general, students are strongly encouraged to plan for, develop and employ some system of organization that allows for ready access both to previously distributed course materials and their own accumulated writing. It is expected that all college-level work will be typed or printed out and that multi-paged assignments will be stapled.

Course Practices

Reading: Students will have a significant amount of reading to do before every class. Consequently, it is very important to keep up with the schedule. The success and vitality of each class period, including its activities and discussions, depends on how well students prepare for class. Student participation in class discussions, workshops, and online forums is integral not only to each individual's personal success but also to the success of the classroom community as a whole. Accordingly, it is your responsibility to make certain that you have read the material and come prepared to raise questions and share your insights.

- As incentive in this regard, there will be reading quizzes distributed at random during the semester worth 10% of your final grade.

Writing: To help you prepare for class, I will often ask you to write a response to readings and post your entries to a discussion forum on D2L. The D2L site is where you will find a place to explore your ideas and engage in your preliminary thinking and pre-writing for papers. It is a place to record observations and questions as well as first impressions. You are encouraged to use the space to raise questions, to record speculations, and to copy down significant passages without being inhibited by a need for “final” or “right” answers. I will provide more detail and specific instructions on these activities as we proceed in the course.

- D2L is intended as a precursor to class discussion; it is not busy work to be done in the last week of class. Posts are due before the class for which they are assigned at specific time. Late posts will receive 1/2 credit. *Posts that are more than two weeks late will receive no credit.*
- Your D2L participation will be regularly evaluated and graded for 20% of your final grade. To clarify: if you opt not to participate in D2L discussion, the highest possible grade you can receive in this course is a C+, assuming everything else is perfect.

Class Discussion: Both you and I will have distinct roles. Our class discussions will be based on the interpretative insights and questions that you prepare for class, along with specific questions and focal points that I will introduce into the discussion. My role will not be to provide “correct answers” or expose “hidden meanings” behind literary texts, but rather to help you to ask rewarding questions about individual texts and to provide you with a range of alternatives in understanding not only how texts have been interpreted historically but also how those interpretations are open to individual or contemporary revision. The class discussions are intended to enact the processes of critical inquiry that you will be attempting to carry out in your reading and writing. In that regard, students are required to treat others’ work and contributions with respect. Professional conduct means being attentive to the discussion (both on-line and in class) and striving toward the expression of new and deeper contexts for one’s own comments as well as those of others. Professionalism does not include arriving late, leaving in the middle, listening to music, or text messaging during class.

- Once during the semester every student will be expected to make an oral presentation to the class based on historical or critical texts selected and intended to help the class make connections between the context in which a given author was writing and the work they produced. A sign-up sheet will be distributed in the first week of class and further instructions will be given at that time.
- Your in-class participation will be regularly evaluated and graded for 20% of your final grade. To clarify: if you opt not to participate in class discussion, the highest grade you can receive in this course is a C+, assuming everything else is perfect.

Course Attendance Policies

Any student who is not in the classroom at roll call will be marked tardy for the day. Three tardies equals one absence. Any student who misses more than twenty (20) minutes of a class will be marked absent for the day. Five (5) or more absences during the semester will result in a reduction of a student's final grade by 1/3 of a letter per absence. For example, a student who has five absences and who would otherwise have made a B in the class will instead receive a B- ... with 6 absences the grade would become a C+, and so on.

- **Eight (8) unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for the semester,** regardless of what other work has been done.
- Students who have to be absent or leave early should let me know in advance. Students who arrive late or miss class are expected to catch themselves up on missed work, including handouts and homework assignments. You are responsible for your D2L entries even if you are absent. To help in this regard, the course D2L site will provide convenient, 24 hour access to all past and present course materials. Please be advised, an absence is not an excuse for late work. The only excused absences will be for medical reasons, provided the student presents a signed and dated note from Norris Health Center or its equivalent.

Calendar of Due Dates

The course calendar will be discussed as a separate handout and can be found on D2L. The calendar describes what we'll be working on in class on any given day and what work you should have completed to prepare for the day's discussion.

Grading System

Final grades will be determined according to the following rubric:

Essay #1 ... 20%

Essay #2 ... 30%

Class Participation ... 20%

D2L Participation ... 20%

Reading Quizzes ... 10%

- Essays 1 & 2 ... 50%
 - These assignments will be graded for their thorough and thoughtful completion of the required objectives and timely submission of the work. In addition each essay will be graded holistically based on its argument, organization, development, clarity and correctness. Late assignments will be down-graded one third of a letter grade for each day that they are late (i.e. from a C to a C-). They are due at the beginning of the class on the day specified by the instructor and/or the syllabus. Students who have to miss class should submit work to the 'dropbox' on D2L before class on the day that it is due.

- Participation ... 40%
 - Students are expected to arrive on-time, to be prepared, and to engage in a focused discussion with their classmates about the readings and assignments. Regular and meaningful contributions to the discussion will constitute a significant part of a student's final grade. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful, courteous and professional manner at all times.
 - In addition to class discussion, participation evaluations will include: D2L posts, interstitial writing assignments, and oral presentations.
- Reading quizzes ... 10%
 - Reading quizzes will be distributed randomly 5 times throughout the semester. Each quiz will be worth 10 points and will cover basic comprehension for the day's assigned reading. No preparation should be necessary other than dutiful completion of the assigned homework.

Email and D2L

This class uses both email and the D2L online course system. If you have not already used these technologies, it is imperative that you become familiar with them as soon as possible. UWM provides all students, staff, and faculty with a Panthermail account that can be accessed with your ePanther ID and password at: <http://pantherlink.uwm.edu>. If you do not know your ePanther ID and password, please visit: <https://www-ssl.uwm.edu/uits/ePanther/pwhelp.html>.

- All course correspondence will be sent to your Panthermail account
- You should check your Panthermail regularly between class sessions
- If you choose, you may forward your Panthermail account to an outside email account of your choosing. To turn on mail forwarding and manage other features of your Panthermail account, visit <https://www-ssl.uwm.edu/IMT/ePanther/email>

Desire2Learn (D2L) is a UWM-hosted, on-line file sharing service. It can be a valuable resource for classes, instructors and students. This course will make regular use of the D2L online system. Frequently, students will be required to post responses to course materials and participate in threaded discussions. Anyone who is unfamiliar with D2L may refer to the handout provided on the first day and/or follow the help link below to learn more: <https://uwm.courses.wisconsin.edu/>.

Student Accessibility Center (SAC)

Students who work with an advisor at the SAC should bring their VISA statement to their instructor in the first week of class. Any student having questions or concerns about their unique learning abilities may visit the Center at UWM in 112 Mitchell Hall.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Plagiarism has serious consequences for writers at every level of their academic career. Plagiarism can involve actual copying, having someone else write your papers, or even unintentionally borrowing without proper documentation. Any student caught plagiarizing in this course will receive a failing grade and may be subject to further disciplinary action at the departmental or university level.

The UWM Writing Center

Students are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with The Writing Center. As a resource, UWM's Writing Center offers a wide range of reading and writing-related services free of charge. The highly trained staff maintains a close familiarity with the regulations and practices of the UWM English curriculum and offers a high degree of flexibility in scheduling one-on-one, peer-to-peer, confidential consultations for readers and writers at all levels of skill and experience in any stage of their writing process.

Locations: Curtin Hall Room 127, and Library East Wing

On-line: <http://www.writingcenter.uwm.edu>

Phone: 229-4339

Director: Margaret Mika, mmika@uwm.edu

Administrative Drop

Students who do not attend the first week of classes will be administratively dropped from the course.

Other University Policies:

For more information about the full range of UW-Milwaukee campus policies on-line, please visit: <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf>