

ENGLISH 365/565*: STUDIES IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Cr. 3

Uehling: Fiction by American Women.

In this class we will attempt to gain some depth and breadth as we examine short fiction and novels written by American women from the late nineteenth century to the present day. We will focus on five individual texts--full-length novels and collections of short stories--that explore representations of women establishing a sense of identity at different ages, in various cultural and historical contexts. As a significant part of this self discovery/self definition, we will carefully define connections between self and place. We will identify and discuss the images, characters, and narrative techniques that American women writers have employed to represent the American experience(s) of women and men. Inevitably, we will consider generalized conceptions of gender roles that exist within particular cultures, at particular times. In addition to the "core" texts, we will read widely among writers of short fiction who address common issues in aesthetically provocative ways. My intent is that you will come away from this class with a list of at least a dozen writers that you want to pursue further on your own. Requirements: two critical papers of six to eight pages; a mid-term exam and a final, comprehensive exam.

Byrne: Regionalism in American Poetry .

Some of the most significant American poets have been associated with specific geographical locations. As one critic has noted, for American poets regionalism "is not, however, a vague pastel local-colorism or a taking on of local props, but a vigorous use of visual experiences in a particular place--what Richard Hugo called a 'triggering town'--that sets a poetic process going." Poets whose works will be read in this course include Robert Frost and Robert Lowell (New England), Theodore Roethke (Midwest), Richard Hugo and William Stafford (Northwest), James Wright and Rita Dove (Ohio), Cathy Song (Hawaii), Frank O'Hara and Allen Ginsberg (New York City), Carolyn Forché (El Salvador), and others. Course requirements include a midterm exam, a final exam, and a critical paper (twelve to fifteen pages).

Ruff: The Hudson River Valley as Site of American Literary and Cultural Origins.

We can trace the origins of American fiction, American landscape painting, American tourism, American environmentalism, even the American prison system, back to the same place and to the same period of time: the Hudson River Valley during the 1820s. Go back in time a bit further and we find the melting pot metaphor for American cultural assimilation coming out of this locale. Go back even further and we can trace certain key principles of our system of government to their origins in the culture of indigenous American peoples native to this area. So why these developments, in that place, and so many of them at that time? And what meaning do we find embedded in such stories, considered both in and of themselves and collectively? These and other questions we will put to primary and secondary texts, both literary and visual. Students enrolling in this class can expect to read and write about works by Crèvecoeur, Irving, Cooper, and Bryant, some of which we will consider alongside paintings by Thomas Cole, Asher Durand, Jasper

Cropsey and George Inness, plus works from the Brauer Museum of Art. We will also consider works that treat the evolution of tourism and prisons in the area, along with ethnological works on the Iroquois Confederation. Our task will finally be to see what a study of these origins tells us about our contemporary cultural situation as it exists more than a hundred and fifty years later. Students in this course will keep a daily reading journal, will write two shorter papers (four to six pages), will complete a longer research paper (ten to twelve papers), and will take a final exam.

Feaster: American Literary Realism.

In this course we will study the work of several nineteenth- and twentieth-century American writers who, because they have been regarded as functioning outside the mainstream of modernist literature, have received less critical attention. Recent emphasis on the social, historical, and cultural dimensions of literary works, however, has given us cause to regard these writers with renewed interest and enthusiasm. Writers covered will include Harold Frederic, William Dean Howells, Edith Wharton, Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris and Sinclair Lewis, among others.

Course requirements will include in-class reports on outside readings, written response to specific literary and/or social issues, an extended written analysis of a selected novel, a midterm, and a final examination.

Ruff: The Harlem Renaissance.

In this course we will explore one of the most important cultural movements to occur this century in America, the Harlem Renaissance, also called the New Negro Movement. Though our primary focus will be on the literature of the Harlem Renaissance, most of it produced during the 1920s by writers such as James Weldon Johnson, Claude McCay, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Zora Neale Hurston, we will also attend to the philosophers, musicians, and visual artists who made Harlem an African-American mecca of the arts up until the time of the Great Depression. Students in this course will keep a daily reading journal, write two shorter papers (four to six pages) and a longer paper (eight to twelve pages) which will incorporate scholarship and criticism, and take a final exam.

Byrne: American Environmental Literature.

Throughout American literature, there has been an honored tradition of nature writing, ranging from the essays of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson to the field studies of John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Mary Austin, John Burroughs, and Rachel Carson. However, contemporary authors have brought a new perspective to writing about nature and, consequently, sparked an increased interest in literature about the relationship between humans and their environment. This recent approach to nature writing has recognized that nature writing involves much more than the wilderness seen from a safe distance, but involves an active and interpretive role for the author and calls for writing which combines aesthetic, scientific, cultural, and political analysis. To accommodate this comprehensive viewing of nature, today's authors have begun to refer to themselves as writers of "environmental literature." Required texts might include the following: *Desert Solitaire*, by Edward Abbey; *The Ninemile Wolves* by Rick Bass; *Arctic Dreams* by Barry Lopez; *Land Circle* by Linda Hasselstrom; *Encounters with the Archdruid* by John McPhee; and *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson. In addition, recommended readings would include *Walden* (Thoreau), *Nature* (Emerson), *Sand County*

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Almanac (Leopold), *The Land of Little Rain* (Austin), *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (Dillard), *Mountains of California* (Muir), as well as *Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing* (Slovic) and *A Natural History of Nature Writing* (Stewart). An extensive bibliography of suggested readings will also be distributed in the first class session.

Written requirements would include a series of short essays and a term paper. There will also be a final examination.

Owens: The American Short Story

In this course, we will examine the growth and development of the short story as a genre of American literature from colonial times until the present. Issues and themes considered will include the impact of the changing American culture on short fiction, the development of the short story as a respected literary genre, the development of a uniquely American literature, craft differences between short stories and novels, how writers of short fiction influenced one another, and the short story cycle as a genre.

In addition to a mid-term and final exam, students will complete two short papers and one longer (12-20 pages) independent research project on a topic they develop.

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