

DR. KAITLYN SMITH  
ENG 224: SURVEY OF AMERICAN LIT SINCE CIVIL WAR  
[OFFICE HOURS AND LOCATION]  
[INSTITUTIONAL EMAIL]

# AMERICAN LITERATURES: 1865-PRESENT

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This survey course will explore the questions raised by American literature after the Civil War. How did American literature represent the schisms and healings that occurred in the late nineteenth century? How did the twentieth century imagine America? Are there particularly American methods of relating to the themes of land, labor, and love? Is there such a thing as a monolithic “American literature” at all? Using texts that both examine and construct national identity, this course will listen very carefully to the multitude of voices that make up the literature of the United States. We will examine poetry, prose, and drama, focusing primarily on the twentieth century but spending some time in the late nineteenth. Join class prepared to think, talk, write, and look carefully within and between the canon for our own idea of American literatures.

Students will be expected to:

1. Recognize the major movements within American literature since the Civil War.
2. Describe major thematic concerns of nineteenth and twentieth century American literatures.
3. Write 7 short responses and 3 formal essays about their own interpretations of course readings of their choice.
4. Recognize the contributions of historically marginalized groups to American culture and arts.

## ASSIGNMENTS

20% - 7 reading responses

Description: On 7 class days of your choice during the semester, you should turn in a 1-2 page singled spaced response on that day’s reading. You may choose the subject and date of the response, but you must be present on the day you turn it in.

20% - Voyant analysis

Description: Use *Voyant* to analyze a text of your choice (we will learn to use this program in class). Create a visualization or chart from your inquiry, and then turn in a 3-4 page MLA essay about the significance of your discovery and its impact on your interpretation of the text.

20% - close reading essay

Description: Craft a formal, 4-5 page MLA close reading of a text on the syllabus.

20% - thematic comparative essay

Description: Choose three texts from throughout the semester and write an essay tracing that theme. At least one of your texts should be from a different century than the others. Your thesis statement should contain some argument about the importance of that theme to American identity.

20% - final exam

Description: The final exam will contain short essay questions about the texts, themes, and concepts we have discussed over the semester.

---

## PART 1: THE CHARACTER OF A NATION

### WEEK 1

#### Day 1:

Walt Whitman, selections from *Memoranda During the War*

Douglass, Frederick. "My Escape from Slavery"

Paul Laurence Dunbar, "Emancipation"

#### Day 2:

Thomas Nelson Page, "Marse Chan"

Charles Chesnutt, "The Goophered Grapevine"

Mark Twain, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County"

### WEEK 2

#### Day 1:

Bret Harte, "The Outcasts of Poker Flat"

Stephen Crane, "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky"

**Day 2:**

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"

Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, "A Double Standard"

WEEK 3

**Day 1:**

Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, *Iola Leroy* chapters 1-8

Liliuokalani, Queen of Hawai'i: "Some Incidents of My Youth" and "My First Visit to the United States"

**Day 2:**

S. Alice Callahan, selections from *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*

Mary E Wilkins Freeman, "The Revolt of Mother"

WEEK 4

**Day 1:**

Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour," "The Storm," and "Désirée's Baby"

**Day 2:**

Zora Neale Hurston, "Sweat," "Story in Harlem Slang"

**By this date, please turn in at least one reading response so that you can have writing feedback before your first essay.**

WEEK 5

**Day 1:**

Charles Eastman, "The Love of Antelope," "The White Man's Errand," and "The War Maiden"

**Day 2:**

WEB DuBois, "The Sorrow Songs"

James Weldon Johnson, from *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*

**Voyant Analysis Due**

---

PART 2: LABOR AND POWER

WEEK 6

**Day 1:**

Langston Hughes, "Harlem" and "I, Too"

Jean Toomer, "Fern," and "Her Lips are Copper Wire"

**Day 2:**

Claude McKay, "If We Must Die"

Georgia Douglas Johnson, "My Little Dreams" and "The Measure"

Countee Cullen, "Threnody for a Brown Girl"

Angelina Weld Grimke, "The Black Finger"

WEEK 7

**Day 1:**

Eugene O'Neill, *The Hairy Ape* scenes 1-4

**Day 2:**

Eugene O'Neill, *The Hairy Ape* scenes 5-8

**Note: It's almost midterm break. Please review how many responses you have turned in and make a plan to complete all required responses.**

WEEK 8

**Day 1:**

John Steinbeck, selections from *Pastures of Heaven*

**Day 2:**

Sophie Treadwell, *Machinal*

**Close Reading Essay Due**

WEEK 9

**Day 1:**

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Cruise of the Rolling Junk*

**Day 2:**

Zelda Fitzgerald, "Southern Girl" and "A Millionaire's Girl"

WEEK 10

**Day 1:**

Eudora Welty, "Why I Live at the P.O." and "Death of a Traveling Salesman"

**Day 2:**

O'Connor, "A Good Man is Hard to Find" and "Everything that Rises Must Converge"

---

PART 3: CONTEMPORARY QUESTIONS

WEEK 11

**Day 1:**

Amiri Baraka, *Dutchman*

**Day 2:**

Alice Walker, "Everyday Use"

Eudora Welty, "Where is the Voice Coming From?"

WEEK 12

**Day 1:**

Richard Wright, "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow" and "Bright and Morning Star"

**Day 2:**

Alice Walker, "We Have a Beautiful Mother"

Gwendolyn Brooks, "A Bronzeville Mother Loiters in Mississippi. Meanwhile, a Mississippi Mother Burns Bacon"

Maya Angelou, "Still I Rise"

Audre Lorde, "Power"

WEEK 13

**Day 1:**

Louise Erdrich, *The Round House* chapters 1 and 2 (note: these chapters are lengthy, please reserve time to get through them before class)

**Day 2:**

Louise Erdrich, *The Round House* chapters 3-5

**Comparative Essay Due**

WEEK 14

**Day 1:**

Louise Erdrich, *The Round House* chapters 6-8

**Day 2:**

Louise Erdrich, *The Round House* chapters 9-11

WEEK 15

**Day 1:**

Novel Wrap-Up

**Day 2:**

Final Exam Prep: Come prepared to share and discuss the guiding theme of your comparative essay. The final exam will be distributed on the last day of class and is due on the date set in the university's final exam schedule.