

**AJ15002 American Literature 1960-Present  
Spring 2020**

**Guidelines for final essays:**

Format: full six pages minimum (excluding works cited), double-spacing, 12 size font, Times New Roman; include a header, title, page numbers, works cited at the end; the format of bibliography and all references in the text must conform to MLA documentation style; all essays will be checked by the university plagiarism software and any attempt to plagiarize from whichever source and citing/paraphrasing unacknowledged sources will result in failing the course; deadlines are set up in the IS; please submit an electronic version in Odevzdavarna in the Information System.

Research and Sources: For their final essays, students must do research and work with relevant, reliable academic sources (three solid secondary sources—books, chapter/essays and/or academic articles—will be a minimum); apart from critical essays about the primary texts themselves, you may also want to use relevant sources about certain concepts (e.g. history books to provide context(s), literary dictionaries and lexicons to define particular narrative strategies, literary histories to explain development of a certain literary stream, etc.); Wikipedia is NOT accepted as an academic source, neither are various online dictionaries to provide definitions (use reliable literary encyclopedias or dictionaries of literary terms to define!) and various student webpages providing summaries and essays for free.

Note: In order to pass the course, you must pass ALL activities in the continuous assessment during the course by at least 60% (i.e. 3 x response papers, final essay).

If you decide to write about a topic/text that has not been covered in any discussion question or class discussion, please email a short essay proposal beforehand to the teacher. It is possible to extend one of your response papers in the final essay.

**Discussion questions:**

1. The act of writing seems to be an empowering tool for many contemporary authors: through writing, memory can be recovered, voices heard, visions re-imagined, power re-gained. Choose **two** texts from the course and discuss how writing (in both literal and figurative sense) can be significant for healing and survival of a particular individual/community.
2. American suburbia has played a complex role in literary imagination. Discuss the ways in which American middle-class values, including whiteness, material affluence, and suburban environment are represented in **two** literary texts covered in the course.
3. Several texts studied the course seem to be concerned with re-defining and re-writing American history. Comparing and contrasting, elaborate on the ways in which **two** texts from the course are engaged in this process and what strategies they employ to do that.
4. Analyze various ways in which gender and/or racial aspects are depicted in **two** texts from the course (in the broadest sense, gender aspects may include men-women relationships, mother-daughter and father-son relationships, women's/men's position in the society, etc.; racial aspects may involve literary depictions of racial prejudices and stereotypes, position of racial/ethnic minorities within American dominant society, representation of whiteness, etc.).
5. Compare and contrast the ways in which **two** contemporary literary text(s) covered by the course make use of postmodern narrative strategies, such as: genre mixing; fiction and fact blending; multiple perspectives and narrators; fragmentation and a sense of randomness, forms of pastiche; problematizing and/or rewriting certain concepts such as language, identity, nation, history, etc.; textual constructedness and self-reflexivity, metafiction, intertextuality, etc.;

6. Analyze the roles and functions that nature/ environment/ natural or urban setting play in **two** texts from the course (e.g. how does the writer/narrator/character(s) interact with a given environment? how does a particular locality/region/place shape the narrative?, etc.)
7. Many literary texts support the idea that it has become increasingly difficult to define the concept of American (national) identity. The questions of who is/becomes/counts as American and what is a “truly American” experience have pervaded much of the literary production in the USA. Discuss how the concept of a unified, fixed and easily defined American identity is problematized, challenged and/or undermined in **two** texts from the course.
8. Discuss how **two** texts from the course rewrite certain myths (e.g. the mythology of a particular place, particular genre, or particular dominant narrative).
9. Analyze how form (genre, narrative strategy, visual aspect, etc.) and/or linguistic environment of the given text resonate in **two** texts covered by the course.