

AJ15002 American Literature 1960-Present
Spring 2020, Tuesdays 12-13.40 and 16-17.40
instructor: Martina Horakova, office 3009, mhorakov@phil.muni.cz
office hours: Wednesday 14-15.30

Course description:

This course attempts to capture the diversity of American writing since the 1960s, including a variety of genres, literary generations, geographical regions and social and ethnic backgrounds.

Course objectives:

1. To appreciate the diversity of themes, genres and writers in contemporary American literature.
2. To refine critical thinking and achieve a deeper understanding of how literature affects us and how it may enrich our perception of the world.

Syllabus:

Week 1, Feb 18

Introduction to course policies and assignments

Unit I: Identity Politics

Week 2, Feb 25

Native American Storytelling and Orality:
Leslie Marmon Silko, "Yellow Woman" (1974) and N. Scott Momaday, from *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969)

Week 3, March 3

Asian American Ethno-autobiography:
Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (1976)

Week 4, March 10

African American Cultural Heritage:
Alice Walker, "Everyday Use" (1973)

Week 5, March 17

Growing Up Chicano/a:
Denise Chavez, "The Last of the Menu Girls" (1986) and Rudolfo Anaya, from *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972)

Unit II: Varieties of Place and Self

Week 6, March 24

Middle-class Suburban Family:
John Updike, "Separating" (1975)
John Cheever, "The Swimmer" (1964)

Week 7, March 31

History and Place:

David Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars* (1994)

Week 8, April 7

Nature Writing:

Barbara Kingsolver, Annie Dillard, Linda Hogan

Week 9, April 14

Reading week, no class

Unit III: Genres, Forms, Strategies

Week 10, April 21

Postmodernism and Intertextuality:
Michael Cunningham, *Hours* (1998)

Week 11, April 28

TBA

Week 12, May 5

Modern Drama:

Sam Shepard, *True West* (1980)

Week 13, May 12

Graphic Novels:

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home* (2006)

Week 14, May 19:

Research paper consultations (Tue 13-15)

Assessment:

class participation and discussions	10%
3x response papers	40%
final essay	50%

Evaluation: points out of 10 (response papers)/100 (final papers); 60% pass/fail line; A 100-85, B 84-80, C-79-75, D 74-70, E 69-60, F 59-0.

Attendance:

Since this course consists of literary seminars in which students' participation is crucial, attendance is compulsory and only one undocumented absence is allowed. Absences due to illness must be documented in the study department.

Assignment Guidelines:

Class participation and discussions:

Students are expected to come prepared, having read all assigned materials, including the secondary readings. They should participate actively in both group and class discussions. The performance in the class contributes to the final mark.

Response papers:

Objectives: to read primary texts critically and in detail: this activity facilitates a "focused" reading, it makes students notice details, underline key passage, think about the structure and composition of the text – simply "work with" the text rather than just "read" it; it also helps students prepare for class discussions; the format helps students write effectively, analytically, and to the point.

Form: a 2-3 double-spaced-page critical analysis of the primary readings; write coherent paragraphs analyzing the primary text(s): no research involved at this stage, only your own ideas; choose a specific and particular aspect of the text (e.g. a character development, function of a setting, a symbol, a particular narrative strategy, etc.) and analyze this aspect in depth; avoid plot summaries and descriptions, be analytical (always ask Why? What does this or that show us? What meaning or function does it have in the text?); choose ONE discussion question offered in ELF.

Deadlines: students are to write 3 response papers throughout the course, with ONE paper analyzing texts from EACH of the three units – it is their responsibility to choose for which session they will write a RP but it must be handed in BEFORE the class discussion so it's NOT possible to submit RP retrospectively; bring a hard copy to the class in which the text(s) are discussed; it is appreciated if you can print on both sides; no late RPs will be accepted unless it is negotiated with the teacher. Students who fail to submit and pass all 3 RPs before the end of the teaching period will be NOT able to submit the final essay.

Final essays:

Form: six full pages (excluding bibliography) of argumentative analysis; evidence of research (min. three solid secondary academic sources), textual evidence in the text (quotes, paraphrases, correct in-text references); developed paragraphs and coherent structure; a consistent argument.

Deadlines: during the exam period, deadlines will be set in the IS; submit a hard copy to the essay box in the Department AND electronically to Odevzdavarna/Vault in IS. The essays will be checked by the university software for plagiarism.

Note:

The **format** of ALL written assignments in this course must follow the MLA documentation style (see MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 8th edition and a shortened version uploaded in ELF): double-spacing, proper heading, references in the text and correct format of bibliography;

Plagiarism: Any attempt to plagiarize from whichever source and citing/paraphrasing unacknowledged sources will result in failing the assignment and/or the course.