

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo
Department of English
ENGL 347: American Literature Since 1945
T/TH, 1:00-2:20, SJ2 2007, Fall 2019

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Calendar Description:

This course is a study of the movements of American literature following the second world war. The course will consider the formal and cultural diversity of writing in this period, with attention to topics such as avant-garde experiment, the persistence of realism, counter-cultural politics, feminism and literature, postmodernism, and the emergence of minority writers in the mainstream.

Course Overview and Objectives:

In this course we will study American fiction and poetry written between the end of World War II and the present day. We will consider how topics such as the civil rights movement, environmentalism, and feminism are represented in contemporary American literature *and* how key literary works have been used to sustain and revise how we think about various movements and ideas. We will also explore ways that postmodern and contemplative styles of writing are being used to remember and confront circumstances such as the Vietnam War, colonization and diaspora, the complexity of place and home, and the universal anxiety of human mortality. Each text on our list will be studied individually, but we will also work comparatively, as we consider how and why these isolated literary engagements with time, place, and memory seem to get fractured and melded together into complex narratives of intertextual meaning.

Required Texts:

James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953)
Sylvia Plath, *Ariel: The Restored Edition* (1965, restored ed., 2004)
Gary Snyder, *Turtle Island* (1974)
Louise Erdrich, *Love Medicine* (1984)
Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (1990) and "The Magic Show" (1991)
Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead* (2004)
Materials on course reserve

Suggested /Recommended Materials for the Long Essay:

Critical essays, book chapters, and interviews available through Course Reserve

Assignments and Due Dates:

Participation	10%	Due: Ongoing, see syllabus
Short Essay (5-6 pages)	30%	Due: Week Six (Thursday, 10/10)
Close Reading Exercise (3 pages)	20%	Due: Week Eleven (Tuesday, 11/19)
Long Essay with Sources (9-10 pages)	40%	Due: End of Term, Monday, 12/9, by 4:00 pm in my dropbox in Sweeney Hall

There will be no final exam in this course.

General Instructions for Assignments:

As the course progresses, instructions and expectations will be distributed for the short essay, the close reading exercise, and the long essay. Generally speaking, the **short essay** will be 5-6 pages in length and will ask you to develop a close reading of a particular passage or idea from *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, *Ariel*, or *Turtle Island*. This essay will not require the use of outside critical sources, but will still be written in proper MLA style. You will also do a **close reading exercise** on Erdrich or O'Brien. This short paper (3 pages) will provide an opportunity for you to explore the intratextual and/or intertextual nuances of a particular word, phrase, or statement in a highly compressed format. The **long essay**, also written in MLA style, will be approximately 9-10 pages in length and written on a different text than the short essay (and preferably than the close reading exercise). It will be crafted from an argumentative thesis and a well thought out interpretive methodology. It will be sustained by close analysis of the primary text(s) and careful engagement with at least three secondary sources. I have placed a number of secondary sources on course reserve (accessible via the main library website and through the course link in LEARN). Most of these sources are available electronically and others are reserved in hard copy and are available at the SJU library circulation desk.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week One

TH- 9/5 Introduction: overview of syllabus, assignments, and reading schedule
In class: brief discussion of religion, jazz, and the “music” of the civil rights movement: Martin Luther King, Jr., “But If Not” (live recording 1967); Daniel Chapter 3; and Cannonball Adderley, “Mercy, Mercy, Mercy” (live recording, 1966); Aretha Franklin, “Amazing Grace” (live recording, 1972)

Week Two

UNIT I SPEAKING AGAINST THE MAINSTREAM: VARIATIONS OF PERSONAL AND PUBLIC RESISTANCE

Moving Toward the Civil Rights Movement: James Baldwin’s *Go Tell It on the Mountain*

T- 9/10 Baldwin, 1-56 (Part One, “The Seventh Day”); in class, selections from *The Fire Next Time* (1963), scenes from *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket* (1990); Langston Hughes, “The Weary Blues” (1926, Handout)

TH- 9/12 Baldwin, 57-150 (Part Two, “Florence’s Prayer” and “Gabriel’s Prayer”)

Week Three

- T- 9/17 Baldwin, 151-192 (Part Two, “Elizabeth’s Prayer”)
- TH- 9/19 Baldwin, 193-226 (Part Three, “The Threshing Floor”); Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream” (1963, available online); selection from “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” (1968, in class)

**Confessional Poetry, Textual Criticism, and the Feminist Movement:
Sylvia Plath’s *Ariel***

Week Four

- T- 9/24 F. Hughes, Foreword to *Ariel*, xi-xxi; Plath, 1-31
- TH- 9/26 Plath, 33-73; 175-188 (and corresponding facsimile/notes)

Week Five

- T- 10/1 Plath, 74-90 (and corresponding facsimile/notes); Denise Levertov, “Anne Sexton: Light Up the Cave” (1974, course reserve)

**Bioregional Politics and the Environmental Movement:
Gary Snyder’s *Turtle Island***

- TH- 10/3 Jim Dodge, “Living by Life: Some Bioregional Theory and Practice,” (1981, course reserve); Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann, “Reinhabiting California,” *Ecologist* 7.10 (1977, available online at *Ecologist* website); Snyder, *Turtle Island*, 1-28

Week Six

- T- 10/8 Snyder, 29-69; in class, passages from Shunryu Suzuki’s *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind* (1970, handout)
- TH- 10/10 Snyder, 71-88, 91-102
Due: Short Essay

Thanksgiving and Reading Break (10/14 - 10/18)

Week Seven

UNIT II
NARRATING TRAUMA AND GENRE:
REVISIONIST HISTORIES, COMMUNAL IDENTITIES, AND STORY CYCLES

Story Weaving and Mythic Histories:
Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*

T- 10/22 Erdrich, 1-101

TH- 10/24 Erdrich, 102-162

Week Eight

T- 10/29 Erdrich, 163-225

TH- 10/31 Erdrich, 226-333

Week Nine

T- 11/5 No Class: Away at a Conference

Ghosts of the Vietnam War:
Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*

TH- 11/7 O'Brien, 1-81

Week Ten

T- 11/12 O'Brien, 82-130

TH- 11/14 O'Brien, 131-179; "The Magic Show" (1991, course reserve)

Week Eleven

T- 11/19 O'Brien, 180-233
Due: Close Reading Exercise

**UNIT III
METAPHYSICAL FICTION ON PLACE, THE MIND, AND HOME:
MARILYNNE ROBINSON'S *GILEAD***

TH-11/21 Robinson, 1-57

Week Twelve

T-11/26 Robinson, 58-139

TH- 11/28 Robinson, 140-216

Week Thirteen

T- 12/3 Robinson, 217-247

Long Essay (Due: Monday, 12/9, in my Sweeney Hall dropbox, by 4:00 pm. The dropbox is located at the entrance to Sweeney Hall)

ADDITIONAL DETAILS AND PROCEDURES

LATE ASSIGNMENTS AND PARTICIPATION

- Short Essay, Close Reading Exercise, and Long Essay:
All essays and assignments are to be handed in (as hardcopy) at the start of class on the due date. **Late assignments will be penalized 2% per day late, including weekends.** Late assignments must be submitted to me as an email attachment (so I know when they came in) and then submitted in hard copy to my dropbox located at the entrance of Sweeney Hall).
- Attendance and Participation:
It should go without saying that I expect that you will attend class on a regular basis. I also expect that you will have read the material for each day in thoughtful and critical ways. In addition, I also expect that you will have something to say about the readings, meaning that you should attempt to contribute to class discussion on a regular basis. In terms of participation marking, you should expect the following: if you do not attend class on a regular basis, your participation mark will be assessed at 0-50; if you attend class but do not contribute to course discussion on a regular basis, expect a mark between 60-70; if you attend class regularly and participate in meaningful ways, you should expect a participation mark ranging from 75-100.

EMAIL COMMUNICATION AND OFFICE HOURS

Students using email to contact me should include their first and last names, as well as the course in which they are enrolled in the email subject line. Feel free to contact me about the course through email, but please keep the following in mind:

- I am unable to provide in-depth responses about assignments, readings, and proofreading. If you wish to discuss these matters, please stop by during office hours.

- I am unable to provide in-depth responses about materials and lectures that you missed due to an absence.
- I am unable to answer last-minute emails about assignments, formatting, or editing. For questions about MLA formatting, you may want to consult Purdue University's Online Writing Lab. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES

I am committed to establishing a face-to-face classroom environment that is conversational and relational. For this reason, please be respectful to others and their ideas, and please, do not text or be distracted with your phone during class.

UW POLICY REGARDING ILLNESS AND MISSED TESTS

The University of Waterloo Examination Regulations (www.registrar.uwaterloo.ca/exams/ExamRegs.pdf) states that:

- A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the "University of Waterloo Verification of Illness" form or it will not be accepted. This form can be obtained from Health Services or at www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health_Services/verification.html.
- If a student has a test/examination deferred due to acceptable medical evidence, he/she normally will write the test/examination at a mutually convenient time, to be determined by the course instructor.
- The University acknowledges that, due to the pluralistic nature of the University community, some students may on religious grounds require alternative times to write tests and examinations.
- Elective arrangements (such as travel plans) are not considered acceptable grounds for granting an alternative examination time.

THE WRITING CENTRE

The Writing Centre works across all faculties to help students clarify their ideas, develop their voices, and communicate in the style appropriate to their disciplines. Writing Centre staff offer one-on-one support in planning assignments, using and documenting research, organizing papers and reports, designing presentations and e-portfolios, and revising for clarity and coherence.

You can make multiple appointments throughout the term, or drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit www.uwaterloo.ca/writing-centre. Group appointments for team-based projects, presentations, and papers are also available. Communication specialists guide you to see your work as readers would. They can teach you revising skills and strategies, but will not change or correct your work for you. Please bring hard copies of your assignment instructions and any notes or drafts to your appointment.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.]

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. [Read the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/upload_file/PLCY_AOM_Student-Petitions-and-Grievances_20151211-SJUSCapproved.pdf.](#) When in doubt, please be certain to contact the St. Jerome's Advising Specialist, Student Affairs Office, who will provide further assistance.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Discipline_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf.](#) For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo Policy 71, Student Discipline, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm. For typical penalties, check the Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under the [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances](#) (other than a petition) or the [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline](#) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to the [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Appeals, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Appeals_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf.](#)

Note for students with disabilities: [AccessAbility Services](#), located in Needles Hall (Room 1401) at the University of Waterloo, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term, www.uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/.