ENGL 376-500, Fall 2012  The AMERICAN NOVEL SINCE 1900
Tuesdays, Thursdays, 2:20 – 3:35  ZACH 119-C
Professor David McWhirter  d-mcwhirter@tamu.edu
Phone: 845-4564, Office: LAH 5XX  Office Hrs: T 9:15 – 10:45, TH 3:45 – 5:15

Course Catalogue ENGL 376: Representative novels of twentieth- and twenty-first century American writers; emphasis on varied literary movements and on thematic and formal innovations as reflections of/responses to social transformations in American society since 1900.

Course Description: This course is a survey of the American novel from 1900 to the present, with an emphasis on its rich variety. Our main focus will be on exploring the narrative and stylistic strategies through which each writer creates his or her unique fictional world, but we will also consider each text’s relation to broader literary, cultural and historical developments, and will pay particular attention to changing concepts of identity and subjectivity, as shaped, constrained and/or enabled by historical determinants, and as related to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, family, community and social class.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Identify and interpret major literary traditions and aesthetic movements that have shaped the development of the American novel since 1900.

2. Explain the connection between individual works and broader social, political, economic, and cultural contexts.

3. Identify and analyze the literary styles and narrative strategies specific to each text.

4. Explain how gender, region, ethnicity, and class shape the literary sensibilities and humanistic concerns of American novelists since 1900.

Core Curriculum Objectives

Critical Thinking Skills (CTS): The course will enhance critical thinking skills through consistent reading and class discussion of the American novel from 1900 to the present.

Communication Skills (CS): The course enhances communication skills through small and large group discussion, writing and visual texts of ideas, issues, questions, and themes central to course reading.

Personal Responsibility (PR): The course will enhance personal responsibility through engagement with moral and thorny ethical issues that arise in class readings.

Social Responsibility (SR): The course enhances social responsibility by providing students with a cross cultural understanding of how history, region, and broader social forces have shaped the distinctive literary traditions of the American novel from 1900 to the present.
Evaluation of Core Objectives

CTS: The evaluation of critical thinking skills will be based on exams and class participation and may include written work. Exams will be designed to allow students to demonstrate their ability to evaluate and synthesize key ideas from the assigned reading. Classroom discussion will focus on helping students better understand the nuances and complexities of the American novel from 1900 to the present.

CS: The course will help students learn how to develop a greater understanding of the American novel from 1900 to the present that may involve guided writing assignments in which they will receive feedback, exams in which students will be expected to effectively convey key ideas from the course succinctly and clearly, and classroom discussion in which students will learn how to express questions and thoughts about the subtleties of each text under examination. Material from this course will include written texts and such visual representations as photographs, illustrations, films, or theatrical performances.

PR: The course material throughout the semester will offer students an opportunity to reflect upon personal responsibility through such topics as the legacy of American slavery and racism, tensions between desire for independence and duty to family, personal fulfillment and broader societal obligations, and responsibilities of authorship and of reading.

SR: The evaluation of social responsibility will be based upon an end-of-the-semester short writing assignment in which students will be expected to demonstrate how key insights from the course have helped broaden their understanding of how history, culture, and philosophical outlooks have shaped the literary traditions of the American novel from 1900 to the present.

Texts

Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth* (Signet Classics/NAL Penguin) [1905]
Willa Cather, *My Ántonia* (Signet Classics/Penguin) [1918]
Endora Welty, *Delta Wedding* (Harvest/HBJ) [1946]
Don DeLillo, *Max II* (Penguin) [1991]

Schedule of Readings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Introductory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>The House of Mirth</em> (1-90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>The House of Mirth</em> (91-189)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The House of Mirth</em> (190-269)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Week 3  
*The House of Mirth* (270-end)  
*My Ántonia* (27-132)  
*My Ántonia* (133-236)  
Week 4  
*My Ántonia* (237-end)  
*Aïsalom, Aïsalom!* (1-106)  
Week 5  
*Aïsalom, Aïsalom!* (107-234)  
*Aïsalom, Aïsalom!* (235-287)  
Week 6  
*Aïsalom, Aïsalom!* (288-end)  
*Delta Wedding* (1-117)  
Week 7  
*Delta Wedding* (118-197)  
*Delta Wedding* (198-end)  
**Paper #1 due**  
Week 8  
MIDTERM EXAM  
*Pale Fire* (1-148)  
Week 9  
*Pale Fire* (148-222)  
*Pale Fire* (222-end)  
Week 10  
*Song of Solomon* (1-151)  
*Song of Solomon* (152-216)  
Week 11  
*Song of Solomon* (217-end)  
*Mao II* (1-103)  
Week 12  
*Mao II* (104-172).  
*Mao II* (173-end)  
**NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING**  
Week 13  
*The Namesake*  
*The Namesake*  
Week 14  
Concluding;  
*The Namesake*  
**Paper #2 due**

**FINAL EXAM.** On the final essay test students will be expected to demonstrate how key insights from the course have helped broaden their understanding of how history, culture, and philosophical outlooks have shaped the literary traditions of the American novel from 1900 to the present.

**Requirements**

**Attendance & Class participation**  
(Students are expected to come to class having done the reading and prepared to share questions and observations.)  
10%

**Two 7-8 page papers (25% each)**  
(Interpretation and analysis of a specific theme or topic of interest to the student.  
Instructor will also provide a range of topics from which students can choose.)  
50%

**Midterm Exam (Short questions and long essay questions)**  
15%

**Final Exam**  
25%

(On the final essay exam students will be given a writing assignment in which they will be asked to reflect upon how their knowledge of literatures from previous historical periods and cultures outside of their own has changed in light of the new information that they now possess. They will be expected to demonstrate how key insights from the course have helped broaden their understanding of how history, culture, and
philosophical outlooks have shaped the literary traditions of the American novel from 1900 to the present.)

**Attendance Policy**

The University views class attendance as the responsibility of an individual student. Attendance is essential to complete the course successfully. University rules related to excused and unexcused absences are located on-line at [http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07](http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07).

**Grading Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>80-89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70-79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Statement**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal antidiscrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Room B118 of Cain Hall, or call 845-1637. For additional information visit [http://disability.tamu.edu](http://disability.tamu.edu).

**Academic Integrity**

*For additional information please visit: [http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu](http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu) "An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do. "*