

**Introduction to American Literatures: The Civil War to the Present**  
ENGL 2040 [AM ST 2040]

spring 2011  
MW 10:10-11:00 132 Rockefeller Hall  
Th discussion 10:10-11:00 250 Caldwell Hall  
F discussion 10:10-11:00 B08 Lincoln Hall

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This course will introduce students to a wide range of authors and literary movements from the past century and a half while paying close attention to radical shifts in American life and culture in which they participated. The class will examine a variety of genres including poetry, fiction, drama, manifestos, and other forms of nonfictional writing. We will ask, what traditions do American authors inherit and what new ones do they produce? How does this writing engage central issues of modern American culture such as race, immigration, globalization, and technology?

The class will consist of two weekly lectures and one discussion section. Attendance is mandatory at all class meetings, and you should be prepared to pose and answer questions in lecture as well as discussion.

**required texts (available at the Cornell Store)**

Nina Baym, et al., eds., *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 7th edition  
(package 2, volumes C, D, and E) 978-0-393-92994-2  
Junot Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (Riverhead P) 9781594483295  
Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* (Theatre Communications Group) 9781559362313  
Harrlette Mullen, *Recyclopedia* (Graywolf) 1-55597-456-2  
Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (Harper Perennial) 9780060913076

**requirements:** four short (1-3 page) exercises; midterm paper (4-5 pages); final paper (5-7 pages); final exam; attendance, preparation, and participation.

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## **schedule of assignments**

(certain short assigned texts will be available on Blackboard; unless otherwise noted, all assignments will be from *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*)

- 24 January introduction. Marianne Moore, "Poetry"  
26 January Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," "Song of Myself"  
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- 31 January Whitman, "Song of Myself"; Emily Dickinson, poems (74-91)  
2 February Emily Dickinson, poems  
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- 7 February Frederick Jackson Turner, from "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1148-53); Native American Chants and Songs (371-87); Ghost Dance Songs and Wovoka's Messiah Letters (1140-47)  
9 February Henry Adams, from *The Education of Henry Adams* (347-59)  
< optional but recommended: Anna Julia Cooper, "Woman versus the Indian" (647-63) >  
**exercise 1 due in discussion section**  
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- 14 February Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (ch. 1-19)  
16 February Chopin, *The Awakening* (ch. 20-end)  
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- 21 February World War I and its Aftermath (1371-1388); Robert Frost, "Range Finding" [blackboard]; "The Oven Bird," "Out, Out—," "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," "Departmental," "Design" (1400-5) < other Frost poems optional >  
23 February Claude McKay, poems (1686-90); Countee Cullen, "Yet Do I Marvel," "Heritage," "From the Dark Tower"  
< optional, but recommended: W.E.B. Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" (895-901) >  
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- 28 February Langston Hughes, poems (2026-37); "Advertisement for the Waldorf Astoria" [blackboard]  
2 March Modernist Manifestos (1499-1513); Mina Loy, "Parturition"; Ezra Pound, "To Whistler, American," "A Pact," "In a Station of the Metro"; William Carlos Williams, "Spring and All," "To Elsie," "The Red Wheelbarrow"  
**exercise 2 due in discussion section**

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7 March snow

9 March T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* ("The Burial of the Dead," "A Game of Chess")

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14 March T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* ("The Burial of the Dead," "A Game of Chess")

16 March Eliot, *The Waste Land* ("The Fire Sermon," "Death By Water," "What the Thunder Said")

**midterm paper due in class**

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[spring break March 19-27]

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28 March William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (1860-1901)

30 March Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (1901-end)

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4 April Allen Ginsberg, "A Supermarket in California," "Howl"

6 April Ginsberg, "Howl"

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11 April Maxine Hong Kingston, "Trippers and Askers" (2874-2900)

13 April Leslie Marmon Silko, "Lullaby" (3083-90)

**exercise 3 due in discussion**

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18 April Kushner, *Angels in America* (part 1, Millennium Approaches)

20 April Kushner, *Angels in America* (part 2, Perestroika)

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25 April Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (ch. 1-3); Mike Davis, from *City of Quartz*  
[blackboard]

**exercise 4 due in class**

27 April Pynchon, *Crying of Lot 49* (ch. 4-end)

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2 May Junot Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (1-165)

4 May Díaz (167-end)  
**final paper due in discussion section**

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**final exam Friday 13 May 2:00-4:30 location tba**

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## **policies**

### **requirements**

- 4 short exercises (20%)
- 3-5 page midterm paper (15%)
- 5-7 page final paper (25%)
- final exam (25%)
- participation and contribution (15%)

**attendance:** Attendance is required in this course. You will be permitted two unexcused absences this semester, after which your grade will be affected.

Appropriate **participation** in this class requires that you be on time each day with all the reading completed, that you be ready to take part in discussion (both in lecture and discussion), and that all assignments be handed in on time.

**late policy:** I discourage extensions, but am more likely to approve an extension the earlier in advance I am asked, so please plan ahead. Unless you have prior permission from me, late papers will be lowered **one half grade** for each day that they are late.

**laptops:** I don't like laptops in the classroom, but I also understand that some people find them important for their study. If you plan to use a laptop during class, please see me to talk about your reasons for doing so.

**internet policy:** Surfing the internet, texting, chatting, and such things are **prohibited** in this class. Any abuse of this policy constitutes disruptive behavior and significantly jeopardizes your final grade.

**blackboard:** All materials found on Blackboard should be *printed out* and brought with you to class in hard copy.

## **some goals for the course**

Students who succeed in English 2040 will acquire disciplinary knowledge of English literary study in general and American literatures since the Civil War specifically. You will be able to understand the fundamental rules of narratology and prosody, and apply them to your own interpretative analyses. You will also learn critically to compare texts across several literary cultures and aesthetic forms.

You will read with critical understanding a wide range of literary writing, and formulate your own productive questions concerning these texts.

You will learn to write effective and original critical essays in which an interpretive argument is supported by the critical analysis of textual evidence.

We will study the texts on the syllabus, but will also learn to work with aesthetic forms "from the inside," composing poetic and fictional works of our own. Students in this class adopt aesthetic

strategies used (and sometimes invented) by the authors on the syllabus, and are asked to reflect critically on the meaning of their own creative work.

### **academic integrity**

Submitting a paper that you did not write, either entirely or in part, is plagiarism, regardless of how you came by the work. All the work you submit in this course must have been written for this course and not another. All contributory sources must be fully and specifically acknowledged, using MLA formatting guidelines. (These are posted on the library website.)

It is your responsibility to know and comply with Cornell University's policy on plagiarism. You can read The Code on Academic Integrity here: <http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html>.

The Code on Academic Integrity and Acknowledging the Work of Others is available in pdf form here: or here <http://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/pdfs/AIAckWorkRev90620.pdf>

And a helpful guide to recognizing instances of plagiarism and recognizing proper citation is here: <http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/>

I encourage you both to read these pages and to take the short quiz at the end.