Race and Ethnicity in 20th Century American Literature
Th 4:00-5:40pm, Room 111
BA2: AN28005BA / AN3301OMA

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Office Hours: M 2:00-3:00 and Th 2:00-3:00 and by appointment
Office Location: Room 116/1
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Course Description
This seminar is designed to help students prepare for their end-of-term examination in 20th century American literature; it is a survey in multi-ethnic American literature. What does it mean to be an American writer? Native American? African American? Chicana/o? Indian American? Jewish American? How do, race and ethnicity, in connection with gender and sexuality, shape how these writers tell stories? We’ll read poetry and novels that explore the legal, political, spatial, psychic, cultural, and material life of multi-ethnic America. We’ll examine the ways in which our writers stretch the boundaries of American citizenship, culture and identity. Our authors struggle to envision a composite nation – rewriting and rupturing their narratives of self, nation, and belonging as the century wears on.

Coursework:

1. Class participation (15%)
Active participation means more than just coming to class. It means doing the reading/viewing assignments carefully, annotating your readings (write comments and questions down on the page, circle phrases or words that interest you), and contributing to class discussion. Always bring your texts to class with you. You will occasionally free-write in class. Free-writing will count toward your participation grade.
2. Leading Seminar (15%)
Each week a group of students (2-3) will lead seminar for 20 minutes. You will pick your topics on the first day of class. Groups will do a very brief (max. 5 minutes) exposition of their ideas on the materials for that week. In the remaining time, they will lead, and moderate dialogue through discussion questions.

3. Final exam (30%)
The course will conclude with a final exam intended to measure students’ comprehension and mastery of the material covered through the semester.

4. Critical paper (40%)
Students will compose a (5-7 page) critical paper. Since a good thesis is one of the tokens of a good essay, you are required to consult with me, either in my office hours or via email, regarding the topic of your essay.

Grade Breakdown:
Class Participation (15%)
Leading Seminar (15%)
Final Exam (30%)
Critical Paper (40%)

Course Requirements and Expectations:

Attendance/Lateness Policy—
This course has a strict attendance policy. More than three absences result in a failing grade. Full attendance is mandatory and will be factored into your final grade. Because the success of this class depends so much on the people within it, I expect you to attend all class meetings and to be on time. Excessive lateness will lower your class participation grade. Unexcused absences will lower your final grade. Except for sickness and emergencies, it is necessary that you see me well in advance of any absence to plan accordingly. Be aware that you are responsible for any assignments due in your absence. If you miss a class, you are expected to write a short response paper (2-3 pages) about the text discussed in class.

Academic Integrity—
Knowingly presenting someone else’s work as your own constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism is one of the most serious offenses in academia because it undermines the community of integrity that supports a scholarly community. As such, the penalties for plagiarism are harsh. Students who plagiarize will fail the course. Institute policy is that the cover sheet of your essay must contain your name, the title of the essay, the name and code of the course, the date of submission, and the following statement: Hereby, I certify that the essay conforms to international copyright and plagiarism rules and regulations. You must sign this statement.

Laptop/Phone Usage—
Social networking, web browsing, texting, or checking email is not permitted during class time. Failure to adhere to this policy will result in a class participation grade of ZERO.
Formatting Guidelines—
Written work should be typed in MS Word. Style requirements are double-spaced essays, with Times New Roman size twelve font with 1 inch margins. I expect you to edit and proofread all written work. Drafts that contain excessive typos, misspellings, grammar or formatting errors will be returned to the author for correction before I offer comments. Please give each piece of writing an original title, use page numbers on multi-page assignments, and include your name, assignment, and the due date in a header on the first page. Save the assignment using the following format: last name – due date.doc (e.g. Mozes – 8.26.17.doc). Sources must be cited within all of your written work. Your final paper and project will include a properly formatted list of Works Cited, following a standard citation format (MLA, APA, or Chicago).

Paper Submission—
Late papers will not be accepted. Don’t forget to proofread, and use a spell-checker! **Students are advised that the quality of their written and spoken performance will count significantly toward their final grade.**

Required texts—
All readings are available at the Institute library. Novels must be checked out from the library the week before they are due for discussion and returned after they have been discussed.

NOTE: If you anticipate a need for accommodations due to disability, please contact me as early in the semester as possible. All communication about disabilities will be kept confidential.

READING & DISCUSSION SCHEDULE

**February 15, Week 1 – Introduction**
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story”
https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story
Angela Davis at the Women’s March 2017
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTB-m2NxWzA
The 60s: The Years that Changed America
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVNiTuxEUBI

**February 22, Week 2 – Counterculture and collective resistance**
Allen Ginsberg, “Howl” (1955)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkNp56Uzax4
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrmw3Rr9SQM
William Burroughs & Antony Balch “Towers Open Fire”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjB--bgcBa0

**March 1, Week 3 – Afrofuturism**
Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man (1952) (Prologue-Ch. 7)
Timeline of African American history (at the Institute library)

**March 8, Week 4 – Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man (Ch. 8-16)**
March 15, Week 5 – No class

March 22, Week 6 – Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (Ch. 17-Epilogue)

March 29, Week 7 – Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (1977) (Foreword-Ch. 8)
Timeline of American Women Through Time
http://capone.mtsu.edu/kmiddlet/history/women/time/wh-recent.html

April 5, Week 8 – Consultation Week

April 12, Week 9 – Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (Ch. 9-15)

April 19, Week 10 – Searching for Home
Timeline of U.S. Settler Colonialism (scroll down; only the Timeline required)
https://nycstandswithstandingrock.wordpress.com/standingrocksyllabus

April 26, Week 11 – Borderlands

May 3, Week 12 – Traversing borders

May 10, Week 13 – Final exam

May 17, Week 14 – Evaluation and Assessment

*Instructor reserves right to amend syllabus as needed.
A) Required reading for the end-of-semester examination

Novels

1. NON-CONFORMIST, BEAT, COUNTERCULTURE FICTION:

   J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951),

   or Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (1957),

   or Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1962)

2. EXISTENTIALIST FICTION

   Saul Bellow, *Seize the Day* (1956) + ANY relevant novel or short story covered in the seminar

3. CHANGING PARADIGMS OF ETHICS AND MORALITY:


4. AFRICAN-AMERICAN FICTION:

   Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952),

   or Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (1977)

5. MODERNIST FICTION:


6. POSTMODERNIST FICTION:

   Donald Barthelme, *The Dead Father* (1975)

7. FEMINISM, WOMEN’S EXPERIENCE FICTION:

   Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (1984),

   or Bharati Mukherjee, *Jasmine* (1989)

8. CULTURE AS INTERPRETIVE SPACE

   Rudolfo Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972)

   or N. Scott Momaday, *House Made of Dawn* (1968)

   + ANY relevant novel or short story covered in the seminar
**Short Fiction**

Zora Neale Hurston, “The Gilded Six Bits”

Ernest Hemingway, “The Killers”; “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber”

Flannery O’Connor, “Good Country People”


Ernest J. Gaines, “The Sky is Grey”

John Barth, “Life-Story”; “Lost in the Funhouse”

Raymond Carver, “A Serious Talk”;

Bobbie Ann Mason, “Nancy Culpepper”

Ann Beattie, “In the White Night”

**Poetry**


**Drama**


3. Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (1949)


B) Recommended reading for the examination

No single book will do. Your best bet is to attend the classes. Among IEAS library possessions—and in inadequate copies—we have items that cover only part of the period, or, full literary histories that carry chapters on post-1945 American literature. The same may apply to thematic, ethnic, and genre monographs. Here are a few basic suggestions, containing only comprehensive, period, genre, or gender titles—not all of them available in our library. Explore libraries and bibliographies for more.


---. Cf. Országh.

Subject divisions for the oral examination in
Literary History of the United States in the 20th Century

2. Rebel protagonists in American fiction in the 1950s and early 1960s. Discuss the literary representation of non-conformism in one novel of your choice.
3. Existentialism in American fiction: forerunners of existentialist thought (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky); Jean-Paul Sartre’s philosophy; existentialism in American literature (Salinger, Ellison, Bellow, Roth, Carver). Demonstrate how existentialist themes appear in Saul Bellow’s *Seize the Day* + a work of your own choice.  
4. Stages and themes in African American literary expressiveness. The interrelatedness of geography and identity; Black American quests for selfhood; countering black stereotypes (Zora Neale Hurston and Ernest J. Gaines)
5. The trope of journey in African American literature. (Ralph Ellison’s *The Invisible Man* or Toni Morison’s *Song of Solomon*)
6. Paradigm shifts in ethics and morality: paradigms of ethics in moral philosophy; literary representations. Demonstrate how ethics and morality are problematized in Bret Easton Ellis’ *Less Than Zero* + a work of your own choice.
7. Cultural Studies and American Fiction: the place of literature within Cultural Studies; different conceptions of culture (Matthew Arnold, Clifford Geertz); the concept of Multiculturalism; literary representations (Momaday, Anaya, Hong-Kingston, Mukherjee). Demonstrate the central significance of cultural identity EITHER in N. Scott Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn* OR in Rudolfo Anaya’s *Bless Me, Ultima* + a work of your own choice.
8. Modernism: general outlook (literature and the other arts); the central importance of narrative technique. Demonstrate how William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* qualifies as a modernist literary text.
9. Postmodernism 1: (Mis)conceptions of postmodernism; postmodernism as anti-metaphysics; simulacrum and hyperreality (Baudrillard); the decline of (grand) metanarratives (Lyotard). Use either Donald Barthelme’s *The Dead Father* (*DF*) or John Barth’s *Lost in the Funhouse* (*LF*) as illustrations of postmodern philosophical tendencies.
10. Postmodernism 2: Modernism vs. postmodernism (language, literature and the other arts); distinctive techniques and genres in postmodernism (with examples); theoretical considerations (Barth, Federman, Sukenick). Discuss how *DF* or *LF* qualifies as a postmodernist rather than a modernist text.
11. Replacing the modernists: the poetic scene after World War II. Poetic schools; themes and sensibilities.

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1 The work of your own choice can be another text (novel, short, story, play) from the reading list for the examination, or one that you have covered in the American Literature 2 seminar. ANY text can be chosen as long as you can demonstrate its relevance to the topic in question.

2 With special attention to the representatives of the formalist, the beat, the confessionalist, the New York School of poets, and ethnic voices. Relevant poems will be provided.
14. The American Dream and Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*.

Dr. Németh Lenke  
Dr. Csató Péter

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1 Cf.: Chapter 7: Drama and Theater in the Age of the Modernist Revolution in *The Modernists and Others: The American Literary Culture in the Age of the Modernist Revolution* (Debrecen. IEAS, 2006) by Zsolt Virágos.