TEXTS: Ernest Hemingway. *The Sun Also Rises* (Scribner)
John Updike. *Rabbit, Run* (Fawcett)
Ken Kesey. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Signet)
Kurt Vonnegut. *Cat's Cradle* (Delta)

NB: We will read and discuss these novels in the above order, so get started right away with Hemingway.

CONTENT & GOALS: This term our goals are to learn a few basics about the history of the American novel and something more particular about its development in roughly the first half of the 20th century, when, it can be argued, the American novel acquired a distinctively American voice. No single 15-week class in the American novel could hope to do justice to the many different styles, voices, and aesthetic agendas that have defined the American version of the novel form. So, among the many developments or possible “schools” of the novel in the 20th century, we will focus on five that have some kind of at least loose cause-effect relationship: The Lost Generation (Hemingway), The Beat Generation (Kerouac), Suburban Realism (Updike), the Psychedelic Generation (Kesey), and the Comic Apocalypse (Vonnegut). Along the way, we also will acquire a familiarity with some major interpretive tactics in literary study as well as a working knowledge of the major elements of fiction, especially as they operate within the sphere of the novel. What we learn together should enable you to read with greater insight and appreciation other novels from the rich history of American fiction that precedes as well as follows the period of time upon which we will focus this semester.

APPROACH: A combination of informal lecture, discussion, and small group work. My approach encourages, respects, and rewards active participation. If you prefer to sit silently and listen to formal lectures, this is probably not the class for you.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADE: An essay combining written and visual/aural elements (due roughly at the end of week 13); a presentation (individual or group; to be scheduled); short quizzes on the novels prior to our discussion of each; and a final exam. The five quizzes are worth 100 points total; the other assignments are worth 100 points each. Total=400 points.

***No make-ups for missed quizzes unless arrangements are made in advance. Generally, make-ups will be given only for University-approved absences. The final grade will be based on a combination of a curve and a standard percentage approach (A=92-100%, A/B=88-91%, B=82-87%, etc.). I will make any necessary adjustments in total point scores for cases of strong participation or poor attendance (see below). The exam will most likely be take-home and will be due Monday of Exam week, so please do not schedule early departure from campus at the end of the term.*
ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION: Both of these will affect your final grade. I will expect you to have read the assignments and to be willing to discuss them. I will take attendance regularly. If you come to class late, it is your responsibility to make sure I counted you as present. Chronic lateness will result in a reduction of 15 points from your total. You are entitled to three unexcused misses. Anything over that will lower your grade by fifteen points per miss. If you DO miss class, you must find out what is assigned for the next meeting. If you are having some kind of serious personal problem that affects your attendance and/or class participation, please inform me so that I at least will know what is going on and so that I will have the chance to offer some help.

READING LITERATURE: In general, reading literature requires a different kind of attention than does much of the reading you do for other classes. Literature has an aesthetic dimension and is much more dependent on interpretive strategies. Both of these characteristics make a novels course somewhat more difficult because of the relative open-endedness and the sheer amount of reading you have to do. I expect you to complete the reading on time and to be ready to enter into conversations about it. It is important for you to be sensitive to each novel’s “architecture” as well as to developing patterns of images, themes, and narrative strategies. Read carefully, not just for plot but also for the aesthetic properties of the prose that give novels their deeper resonant meanings.

BASIC SCHEDULE: While you are getting some reading done, we will spend roughly the first two to three class sessions dealing with the history of the genre and related issues as well as the technical aspects of fiction. On Wednesday of Week 2 (following the Labor Day break) we will start with Hemingway, then, roughly, Kerouac Monday of Week 5, Updike Monday of Week 7, Kesey Monday of Week 9, and Vonnegut Monday of Week 11. You will have a short quiz on each novel before we begin our discussion of it. After the Thanksgiving Break we will most likely do presentations and get ready for the Final Exam. NOTE: My teaching style is somewhat existential, so I offer this as a tentative schedule only, but it should serve to give you a good idea of when you will need to have finished reading each novel in order to be ready for quizzes and class discussion.

FINAL NOTE: MTU’s Affirmative Action Officer has asked that all faculty include the following statement on each course syllabus:

MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students, (2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action Office (3310).