THE AMERICAN NOVEL - HU3510.R01
Fall 2008, Fisher 125, MWF 9:05-9:55

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the historical, cultural, and personal contexts within which American novelists explore issues of class, gender, race, religion, sex, violence, and the nature of success and failure in America.

REQUIRED TEXTS


INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

M. Bartley Seigel
Assistant Professor of Diverse Literatures and Creative Writing
Editor, *PANK*
Office: 342 Walker Arts and Humanities Center, MTU
Email: mbseigel@mtu.edu
URL: http://www.hu.mtu.edu/~mbseigel
Phone: 906.487.2016
Office hours: MWF 8-9am, 1-2pm, or by appointment

EXPECTATIONS AND GRADING

First, simple and straightforward, fulfill your responsibilities, seldom early and never late. Attend class and visit office hours, complete all assignments in and out of class on deadline, read, take notes, participate, be engaged and be engaging. Late assignments will not be accepted and no coursework can be made up without written documentation from the Dean of Students Office.

Second, please bear in mind that integrity and ethics are central components of a student’s education and the ethical conduct maintained in an academic context will be taken eventually into a student’s life both professional and personal. Integrity and ethics are essential in any community searching for truth and are, some might argue, central to any social system claiming civilization as its own. Anything less than total commitment to integrity and ethics undermines the efforts of the entire community. Every member is responsible. Every member is culpable. Be kind. Be honest. Be curious. Be adventurous. Work hard. Leave the campground better than you found it. Those who cannot keep the compact will be asked to leave the building.

Third, in terms of access, Michigan Tech encourages ALL qualified persons to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please contact Prof. Seigel as soon as possible and/or visit the Office of Student Affairs or phone 487-2951.
Fourth, concerning grading, students can expect the following:

A (4) = Excellent. Student exceeded all course expectations.
A/B (3.5) = Very good. Student exceeded most course expectations, but not all.
B (3) = Good. Student met all course expectations, exceeding many.
B/C (2.5) = Above average. Student met all course expectations, exceeding some.
C (2) = Average. Student met all course expectations.
C/D (1.5) = Below average. Student met some, but not all course expectations.
D (1) = Inferior. Student met few course expectations.
F (0) = Failure. Student met very few to none of the course expectations.

COURSEWORK

Attendance and Participation (25%): Engage. Come to class every day, prepared, and take part thoughtfully and conscientiously. I reserve the right to fail students who amass more than three unexcused absences (only excuses documented through the Dean of Students Office are accepted). Meet your deadlines, all of which are final and cannot be made up unless accompanied by documentation from the Dean of Students Office. Read daily, in small bites and stay current. Write daily in your journals and stay current. Come to class with observations to make; come with questions (classes in which students participate are significantly more interesting than those in which the professor drones on and on). Visit office hours.

Reading Quizzes (25%): Conscientious and attentive reading is absolutely necessary for a literature class to function. As a gentle reminder of this, there will be six reading quizzes, one for each novel, covering content.

Group Presentation (25%): Students will be assigned to groups whose presentation should help broaden the class’s understanding of the larger cultural context of the assigned novel/author. Presentations should include: Relevant biographical information about the author; historical, sociological, or personal context of the novel; review of critical reception of the novel and subsequent scholarly attention; review of the author/novel’s broader cultural import; etc. Presentations should be no more than 15 minutes total and should be well researched, well prepared, fluid, coherent, relevant, and thought provoking. Test your technology before you present!

Novel Responses (25%): Students will write six 1000-word responses, one for each of the novels read in class. Each response should illustrate the student’s understanding of each novel, its author, its cultural and historical context including both its critical reception and any subsequent scholarly attention it may have received. Venture an idea or pose a question and HAVE A THESIS!

TENTATIVE COURSE CALENDAR, FALL 2008

Week 1

Wed 09.03: Matt Presents Syllabus and Opens Class Discussion.
Fri 09.05: Matt Presents on the American Novel.

Week 2

Mon 09.08: Matt Presents on Ellison; Class Discusses Ellison; Reading Due TBA.
Wed 09.10: Class Discusses Ellison; Reading Due TBA.
Fri 09.12: Class Discusses Ellison; Reading Due TBA.

Week 3

Mon 09.15: Class Discusses Ellison; Reading Due TBA.
Wed 09.17: Discuss Ellison; Reading Due TBA.
Fri 09.19: Class Discusses Ellison; Ellison Quiz; Reading Due TBA.
Week 4

Mon 09.22: Ellison Novel Response Due; Group 1 Presents on Walker; Class Discusses Walker; Reading Due TBA.
Wed 09.24: Class Discusses Walker; Reading Due TBA.
Fri 09.26: Class Discusses Walker; Reading Due TBA.

Week 5

Mon 09.29: Class Discusses Walker; Walker Quiz; Reading Due TBA.
Wed 10.01: Film: *The Color Purple.*
Fri 10.03: Film: *The Color Purple.*

Week 6

Mon 10.06: Walker Response Due; Group 2 Presents on Updike; Class Discusses Updike; Reading Due TBA.
Wed 10.08: Class Discusses Updike; Reading Due TBA.
Fri 10.10: Class Discusses Updike; Reading Due TBA.

Week 7

Mon 10.13: Class Discusses Updike; Reading Due TBA.
Wed 10.15: Class Discusses Updike; Reading Due TBA.
Fri 10.17: Class Discusses Updike; Updike Quiz; Reading Due TBA.

Week 8

Mon 10.20: Updike Response Due; Group 3 Presents on McCarthy; Class Discusses McCarthy; Reading Due TBA.
Wed 10.22: Class Discusses McCarthy; Reading Due TBA.
Fri 10.24: Class Discusses McCarthy; Reading Due TBA.

Week 9

Mon 10.27: Class Discusses McCarthy; McCarthy Quiz; Reading Due TBA.
Wed 10.29: Film: *No Country for Old Men.*
Fri 10.31: Film: *No Country for Old Men.*

Week 10

Mon 11.03: McCarthy Response Due; Group 4 Presents on Cisneros; Class Discusses Cisneros; Reading Due TBA.
Wed 11.05: Class Discusses Cisneros; Reading Due TBA.
Fri 11.07: Class Discusses Cisneros; Reading Due TBA.

Week 11

Mon 11.10: Class Discusses Cisneros; Reading Due TBA.
Wed 11.12: Class Discusses Cisneros; Reading Due TBA.
Fri 11.14: Class Discusses Cisneros; Cisneros Quiz; Reading Due TBA.
Week 12

Mon 11.17: Cisneros Response Due; Group 5 Presents on Nabokov; Class Discusses Nabokov; Reading Due TBA.
Wed 11.19: Class Discusses Nabokov; Reading Due TBA.
Fri 11.21: Class Discusses Nabokov; Reading Due TBA.

Week 13

Mon 12.01: Class Discusses Nabokov; Nabokov Quiz; Reading Due TBA.
Wed 12.03: Film: Lolita.
Fri 12.05: Film: Lolita.

Week 14

Mon 12.08: Nabokov Response Due; Closing Discussion.
Wed 12.10: Closing Discussion.
Fri 12.12: Closing Discussion.