

Spring 1-15-2014

ENG 3703-001: American Literature: 1900-1950

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other times by appointment

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We will read great poetry and
fiction, with one eye toward what
is “modern” (or “modernist”) and
“American” about what we’re
reading, and another eye toward
the distinctive qualities of the
work under discussion. We’ll read
poems by Edwin Denby, H. D., T. S.
Eliot, Robert Frost, Langston
Hughes, Marianne Moore, Lorine
Niedecker, Ezra Pound, Charles
Reznikoff, David Schubert, Wallace
Stevens, William Carlos Williams,
Louis Zukofsky (making the course,
among other things, an experience
in how to really read poetry and
get something from it). We’ll read
fiction by Djuna Barnes, Willa
Cather, William Faulkner, and Zora
Neale Hurston.

TEXTS

Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood*
Willa Cather, *The Professor’s House*
William Faulkner, *Light in August*
Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes
Were Watching God*
Jahan Ramazani, et al., eds.,
*Norton Anthology of Modern
Poetry*
William Carlos Williams, *Collected
Poems*, v. 1

Michael Harvey’s *The Nuts and
Bolts of College Writing* is a
supplement to our work, a great
book for student-writers.

You should have access to a
hardcover collegiate (college-level)
dictionary when reading.

The works we’re reading contain
material that some readers may
find offensive or disturbing
(language, sex, violence). In such

ENGLISH 3703
AMERICAN LITERATURE:
1900–1950
PROFESSOR M. LEDDY
SPRING 2014



cases, please consider taking
another course.

REQUIREMENTS

Requirements: As with any
worthwhile endeavor, “the effort is
the prize,” as the jurist Benjamin
Cardozo said. The course will
require dedicated daily work
(reading and talking), occasional
writing (in-class and out-of-class),
and a final examination.

ATTENDANCE

Be here, on time, every time.
You’re responsible for all
assignments, whether or not
you’re here when they’re
announced.

Frequent absences will affect your
grade, not through a system of
points and deductions but simply
because not being here will make
it difficult to do the work that the
course is meant to involve. If you
must miss a class, you should get
in touch with me beforehand to
find out what you will miss.

Photocopied pages to go with our
reading will be available from an
envelope on my office door.

LATE WORK, MAKE-UP WORK

Missed work cannot be made up.
Late work is acceptable only if you
have my approval in advance.

DISABILITIES

If you have a documented
disability and wish to receive
academic accommodations,
contact the coordinator of the

Office of Disability Services (581-
6583).

OFFICE HOURS

Talking to professors is one of the
smartest things a college student
can do. Please, come in to ask
questions and talk about your
work in the class. If office hours
don’t work for you, make an
appointment. And if you feel
uneasy about talking to professors,
read “How to talk to a professor”
for potentially helpful advice:
goo.gl/VYSkv.

E-MAIL

Before you e-mail me, please read
and follow the guidelines in “How
to e-mail a professor”: goo.gl/4n6EH. These guidelines are read
all over the world and will serve
you well in e-mailing any professor
(assuming that your professor
answers e-mail).

One guideline that you don’t need
to follow: you need not add your
class number and meeting time to
your signature. I’ll know who you
are.

DECORUM

The atmosphere in our class
should be serious—not somber or
pretentious, but collegiate and
genuinely intellectual. No eating,
sleeping, talking, texting, or doing
work for other classes. No
headphones, hoods, iPods, or
phones. Electronic devices should
be off and out of sight before class
begins. Please show proper respect
for our community of learning.

DISCUSSION

Consider what the writer Thomas
Merton says about a teacher he
admired (Mark Van Doren,
Columbia University):

Most of the time he asked
questions. His questions were
very good, and if you tried to
answer them intelligently, you
found yourself saying excellent

things that you did not know you knew, and that you had not, in fact, known before.

I like to ask questions that invite thinking. I also like it when students ask me such questions. Try to think of an in-class question not as having an answer you're already supposed to know but as an invitation to think. I know that this suggestion might go against the grain of much of your experience in classrooms. You should be asking relevant questions too, of me and perhaps of one another. That helps to make the class less like a quiz show and more like a conversation.

One more observation on discussion, from the cultural critic Randolph Bourne:

A good discussion increases the dimensions of every one who takes part. Being rather self-consciously a mind in a group of minds means becoming more of a person.

As you can see, I'm optimistic about discussion. For more on questions and discussion, read "How to answer a question": goo.gl/DIzaG.

GRADING

Your grade will be based on your writing (60%), class participation (20%), and final exam (20%).

Longer writing assignments receive letter grades. Shorter ones get numerical grades. Missing work receives a zero. Participation receives a numerical grade, an overall evaluation of the extent to which you're prepared and contributing: 100 (always), 85 (frequently), 75 (usually), 50 (sometimes), 0 (rarely or never).

To calculate semester grades, I use numerical equivalents for letter grades:

A	95	A-	92	B+	87	B	85
B-	82	C+	77	C	75	C-	72
D+	67	D	65	D-	62	F	55

Sometimes when I grade writing I'll give a grade that falls between two grades—e.g., B+/A- (89.5).

For semester grades, 90 or above is an A; 80 or above, a B; 70 or above, a C; 60 or above, a D; below 60, an F.

EWP

You may include work from the course in your Electronic Writing Portfolio. Please make sure that you understand the requirements for the EWP and that you fulfill them in a timely way. For more information: www.eiu.edu/assess/ewpmain.php.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The English Department's statement on plagiarism:

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and the representation of them as one's original work" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course.

And my statement concerning academic integrity:

Any breach of academic integrity—from a single sentence cut and pasted into a dinky little assignment to a stretch of "reworded" prose to a wholly unoriginal essay—is a serious matter and will get you a serious penalty. The Student Standards office recommends an F for the course. You will also be required to take a course in ethics

administered by Student Standards, whose staff will keep your misconduct on record and notify your other professors that one of their students has violated academic integrity.

You should be familiar with Eastern's statement on academic integrity and should ask if you have any questions about quoting from and/or documenting sources. But because the work of the course is to be an expression of *your ideas in your words*, aside from words and ideas from properly acknowledged sources, questions of plagiarism and collusion should never arise.

Do not "borrow" work or give your work to anyone (allowing someone else to make use of your work is also a breach of academic integrity and will also get you a serious penalty, up to and including an F for the course).

PROVISIONAL OUTLINE

(numbers = weeks)

- 1: Introduction to the course
- 2: Robert Frost
- 3: H. D., T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound
- 4: William Carlos Williams
- 5: Lorine Niedecker, Charles Reznikoff, Louis Zukofsky
- 6: Langston Hughes
- 7: Marianne Moore
- 8: Wallace Stevens
- 9: Edwin Denby, David Schubert
- 10-11: William Faulkner
- 11-12: Willa Cather
- 13-14: Djuna Barnes
- 14-15: Zora Neale Hurston

Tentative due dates for longer essays: February 21, April 14, April 30

Final exam: May 7, 10:15–12:15