

Fall 8-15-1998

ENG 3702-001: American Realism

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3702-001

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AMERICAN REALISM (3702-001)
FALL 1998

Purpose

The course offers a literary-historical study of works associated with the development of American Realism, a literary movement that flourished from 1865 to 1900 and that continues to this day. Among other things, you will examine ways in which writers like Twain, James, Jewett, and Chopin sought to elucidate reality through literary representation (fiction, poetry, etc.). As you do so, you will also consider how social and intellectual changes influenced the writers' literary techniques and concepts of reality. You will have the opportunity to read a wide range of outstanding works reflecting ethical complications that accompanied America's transition from a predominantly traditional, agrarian society to an increasingly modern, commercial, pluralistic one.

Scope

Because the American Realists excelled at writing stories and novels, most of the works fit into those genres. But there is plenty of variety. Realism is by no means a monochromatic movement. There is the Realism of local color, the Realism of extraordinary experiences, the Realism of psychological analysis, the Realism of biological and economic determinism – in short, a rich field for study.

Your final grade will be based on the following components:

Written Responses to Study Questions: 35%

Once a week you will write a 125-150 word response to a question I ask about upcoming reading. Your score for each response will depend on directness in addressing the question, depth of analysis, and relationship between evidence and reasoning. Late responses will not be accepted.

Critical Essay: 40%

At the last of our class meetings before the final examination, you will turn in an essay of 8-10 pages (not including endnotes and/or works cited) in twelve-point type. The essay will provide an extended answer to a critical question about a novel, a range of stories, a range of poems, or a combination thereof. To work on a

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project, you must gain approval through a brief prospectus indicating the work(s) you will examine and the question you will pose. Essays will be evaluated for content (clarity and depth of thesis, coherence of evidence, reasoning) and, to a lesser extent, composition. However, it is possible for an essay with a great number drastic sentence errors (fragments, splices, disagreements, dangling modifiers, etc.) to fail. I will hand out the departmental guidelines on writing to provide more detail. In addition, I will provide my own sheet about "Guidelines for Critical Essays."

Final Examination:

25%

The final will include two parts. Part I will require you to write two paragraph responses (125-150 words each) based on two of four items; Part II will require you to write an essay of about 500 words based on one of three items. You will be graded by content (clarity and depth of thesis, coherence of evidence and reasoning supporting thesis).

Note: When I evaluate critical essay and final examination, I use a simple 10-point scale linked to letter grades. That is, an 87% is a B+, an 85% is a B, an 82% is a B-. When I evaluate your weekly responses, I will do so on a high pass (100%), pass (80%), low pass (70%), fail (0% for non completion, 59% for non-passing performance).

Attendance

If you have a verifiable excuse from a doctor, the Health Service, or an appropriate University official, I will gladly help you catch up and will not count late written responses against you. If you do not have an excused absence, you may not make up any weekly response you may have missed.

Information for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

NOTES

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

1. Week of August 24

- Introduction to Course
- Lecture: Literary-Historical Background
- Discussion of Poems from Melville's *Battle-Pieces* (handout) and Whitman's "The Wound-Dresser" (83-84)

2. Week of August 31

- Poems by Dickinson: "These are the days when Birds come back" (131), "The Robin's my Criterion for Tune" (133), "A Bird came down the Walk" (135), "I like a look of Agony" (133)
- Bret Harte: "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" (609); George Washington Cable: "Belles Demoiselles Plantation" (620)
- Twain: From *Life on the Mississippi* (171-88)

3. Week of September 7

- NO CLASSES**
- Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (188-217)
- Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (217-258)

4. Week of September 14

- Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (258-325)
- Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (325-361)
- Chesnutt: "The Passing of Grandison" (760-772)

5. Week of September 21

- Howells: *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (3-87)
- The Rise of Silas Lapham* (87-141)
- The Rise of Silas Lapham* (141-190)

6. Week of September 28

- The Rise of Silas Lapham* (190-299)
- James: "Daisy Miller" (414-35)
- "Daisy Miller" (435-56)

7. Week of October 5

- Freeman: "A White Heron" (652-660); Freeman: "The Revolt of Mother" (748-760)
- The Portrait of a Lady* (3-110)
- The Portrait of a Lady* (110-224)

8. Week of October 12

- The Portrait of a Lady* (224-375)
- The Portrait of a Lady* (375-472)
- The Portrait of a Lady* (472-591)

9. Week of October 19

- Chopin: *The Awakening* (660-709)
- The Awakening* (709-48)
- NO Classes**

10. Week of October 26

- James: "The Turn of the Screw" (473-507); **Proposals for Critical Essays Due**
- "The Turn of the Screw" (507-541)
- Bierce: "The Boarded Window" (616-620); Frost: "The Witch of Coos" (977-80)

11. Week of November 2

- Crane: *Red Badge of Courage* (115-174)
- Red Badge of Courage* (174-231)
- "The Blue Hotel" (251-278)

12. Week of November 9

- Crane: *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (798-839)
- Conferences Concerning Critical Essays (Bring written proposals.)
- Conferences Concerning Critical Essays (Bring written proposals.)

13. Week of November 16

- Dreiser: *Sister Carrie* (3-93)
- Sister Carrie* (93-182)
- Sister Carrie* (183-241)

THANKSGIVING BREAK

14. November 30

- Sister Carrie* (241-395)
- Sister Carrie* (395-454)
- Critical Essays Due**

15. Week of December 7

- Robinson: Poems (895-906): In-Class Bonus Question on Robinson's Poetry
- Orientation for Final; Student Evaluation of Instruction