

**American University of Beirut  
Faculty of Arts and Sciences  
English Department**

**English 209: Survey of American Literature  
Spring 2017  
TR: 9:30-10:45 – Bliss Hall 206**

Professor: Dr. Sirène Harb  
Office: Fisk Hall 223  
Phone: 4125  
E-mail: sh03@aub.edu.lb  
Office Hours: T: 11:00-12:00 and by appointment

**Course Description**

This course is a survey of American Literature from 1492 to the present through the exploration of canonical as well as non-canonical voices/texts. Some of the topics that will be discussed in the course include, but are not limited to, American identity and individualism, American Exceptionalism, the cult of true womanhood and domesticity, Realism and Regionalism, and projections of racial and ethnic identity.

**Course Learning Outcomes**

Students should be able to:

1. Identify elements of literary genres
2. Identify the historical and social contexts of literary works
3. Demonstrate awareness of canonicity in light of the history of the discipline
4. Define major literary movements and schools
5. Compare the characteristics of major literary movements
6. Explain the connection between American literature and culture
7. Compare/Contrast the thematic and structural characteristics of literary texts
8. Produce critical arguments about major literary works

**Resources Available to Students**

The required texts are available at the AUB bookstore. You must purchase them, read them, and bring them to class for discussion.

**Required Texts:**

*Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Zora Neale Hurston  
*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain

On reserve (Jafet Library): selected short stories, poems and essays (Bartolomé de las Casas, William Bradford, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, William Faulkner, and Bharati Mukherjee)

### Grading Criteria

Attendance and Class Participation  
(including reading quizzes and  
discussion questions

assignments) 20%

Midterm 25%

Class Presentation

(5-7 minutes) 15%

Final Exam 40%

### Schedule

Topic	Activities	Assignments
American Literature and Culture	Presentations Discussing course goals & syllabus	24/01 <b>No Assignment</b>
The Literature of Discovery  The Pilgrims	Lecture & Discussion	26/01 <b>The United States: Literature and History</b> B. de las Casas, selections from <i>The Very Brief Relation</i> 31/01 W. Bradford, <i>Of Plymouth Plantation</i> , selections from Book I (Chaps I, IV, and VII)
Early Slave Narratives	Lecture & Discussion	2/02 <b>Library Session: Using Electronic Databases– Jafet Lib., Antoun Ghattas Karam Electronic Classroom)</b> 7/02 <b>Presentations: Guidelines and Requirements</b> F. Douglass, <i>Narrative</i> (1/2)
Early Slave Narratives	Lecture & Discussion	14/02 F. Douglass, <i>Narrative</i> (2/2) 16/02 F. Douglass, <i>Narrative</i>
Poetry: The Private and the Public Selves	Lecture & Discussion	21/02 W. Whitman, <i>Song of Myself</i> (1881, 1/2) <b>Selection of Presentation Topics</b> 23/02 W. Whitman, <i>Song of Myself</i> (1881, 2/2)
Ethnicity and Race in the United States	Lecture & Discussion	<b>25/02 Documentary Viewing and Discussion, 2hrs 30 mns</b> 28/02 and 2/03 No Class
American Realism and Regionalism	Lecture & Discussion	7/03 <b>American Realism and Regionalism</b> M. Twain, <i>The Adventures</i> (Chaps. 1-7) <b>9/03 MIDTERM, 9:30-10:45, Bliss 206</b>
American Realism and Regionalism	Lecture & Discussion	14/03 M. Twain, <i>The Adventures</i> (Chaps. 8-17) 16/03 M. Twain, <i>The Adventures</i> (Chaps. 18-23)
Literature and Gender	Lecture & Discussion	<b>18/03 Gender, Power, and Representation</b> C. P. Gilman, “Why I Wrote ‘The Yellow Wall-paper?’” * and “The Yellow Wall-

		<u>paper” (total), 2hrs 30 mns</u>
African American Literature and The Harlem Renaissance	Lecture & Discussion Group Presentations	<b>21/03 Presentations (Topics 1, 2, 3&amp;4)</b> 23/03 Z.N. Hurston, <i>Their Eyes</i> (1/3)
	Lecture & Discussion Group Presentations	28/03 <b>Presentations (Topics 5, 6, 7&amp;8)</b> 30/03 <b>Presentations (Topics 9 &amp; 10)</b>
African American Literature and The Harlem Renaissance	Lecture & Discussion Group Presentations	4/04 Z.N. Hurston, <i>Their Eyes</i> (2/3) 6/04 Z.N. Hurston, <i>Their Eyes</i> (3/3)
American Modernism	Lecture & Discussion	11/04 <b>American Modernism</b> W. Faulkner, “Barn Burning” (total) 13/04 W. Faulkner, “Barn Burning”
Ethnic Interventions: Asian-American Literature	Lecture & Discussion	18/04 B. Mukherjee, “Loose Ends” (total) 20/04 B. Mukherjee, “Loose Ends”
		<b>25/04 Concluding Session</b> <b>2/05 FINAL EXAM, 9:30-10:45, , Bliss 206</b>

\* C. P. Gilman, “Why I Wrote ‘The Yellow Wall-paper?’” is available from <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/railton/enam312/cpghp.html> )

### **Course Policy**

Attendance, preparation, and class participation are a primary requirement. You are expected to attend all classes, bring the assigned reading to class, be prepared to discuss the required texts, and participate constructively. You are also expected to use the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (by Joseph Gibaldi) for documenting the sources used in your presentation.

In normal circumstances, absences can be excused only for medical reasons, documented by a note from an AUB doctor. Every three late arrivals (after the beginning of the class session at 9:30) will be counted as one absence. If you miss more than one-fifth of the class sessions of the first ten weeks, you will be required to withdraw from the course.

Academic integrity and honesty are central components of a student’s education. Ethical conduct maintained in an academic context will be taken eventually into a student’s professional career. Anything less than total commitment to honesty undermines the efforts of the entire academic community. Both students and faculty are responsible for ensuring the academic integrity of the University (*AUB Student Handbook*).

For definitions of cheating and plagiarism as well as the consequences for such, see the AUB “Student Code of Conduct” as found in the *Student Handbook* and on the AUB website. At minimum, anyone caught in violation of academic integrity will receive, as per the “Student Code of Conduct,” a failing grade of forty points for the assignment in question. Should the violation deserve greater punishment, it will be referred to the Dean and the appropriate Committee.

AUB strives to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers due to a disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please inform me immediately so that we can privately discuss options. In order to help establish reasonable accommodations and facilitate a

smooth accommodations process, you are encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Office: [accessibility@aub.edu.lb](mailto:accessibility@aub.edu.lb); +961-1-350000, x3246; West Hall, 314

## PRESENTATION TOPICS

- 1- Emily Dickinson: Introduce the author, locate her work in the context of the course, and select two main themes in her work, analyze and illustrate using examples.
- 2- Margaret Fuller and American Transcendentalism: Introduce the author, locate her work in the context of the course, and select two main “transcendentalist” themes in her work to analyze and illustrate using examples.
- 3- Harriet Jacobs and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*: Introduce the author and the work, locate in the context of the course and in relation to Douglass’ slave narrative. Select two main themes in her work, analyze and illustrate using examples.
- 4- The Trickster Figure and Its Tradition: Identify different types of tricksters in the African-American tradition and explain their origins and forms as well as social and political role.
- 5- The Harlem Renaissance: Introduce the period, its main characteristics and figures, with special emphasis on Alain Locke.
- 6- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*: Discuss the reception and audience perceptions of the book. How was the book received? How did this reception change from one state to another and over time? Identify one major controversy about this book and explain its nature and causes.
- 7- W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington: Introduce these two figures and their work and explain similarities as well as differences in their attitude vis-à-vis strategies for the social and economic progress of the black people.
- 8-Toni Morrison’s *Playing in the Dark*: Discuss Chapter One, “Black Matters”, and explain Morrison’s main argument as well as her supporting points.
- 9- Arab-American Literature: Trace the different stages of the development of Arab-American literature and briefly introduce some of the major figures in each period.
- 10- Mexican-American Literature: Discuss chapter 7 (“la conciencia de la mestiza”) of Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* and explain the concept of the Borderland.

### **Please note:**

- Your presentation should be 7 minutes in length, followed by a short discussion period which you will facilitate. The presentation time should be divided equally between both presenters. If 3 students are presenting, the presentation should be 11 minutes in length.
- Provide an outline of your presentation for each member of the class. In this outline, make sure to have your thesis statement and the main supporting ideas. The outline should also include a short bibliography of the works you used to prepare the presentation (MLA Style, 3-5 sources).
- As you prepare the presentation, assume that we will be interested in following up on the work you will present to us. Where appropriate, make reference to specific critics and identify your sources.
- Your questions to the presenters count towards your final presentation grade.
- Please time yourself carefully; the time limit is strict.