

**ENGLISH 225:  
American Literature (1900-1960)  
Spring Semester 2010  
Tues/Thurs 11-12:15**

Robert Myers  
[rm33@aub.edu.lb](mailto:rm33@aub.edu.lb)  
College Hall, Room 452, x4197  
Office Hrs: Tuesday, 2:30-5pm, or by appt.

**Course Description**

In this course we will examine various literary works, principally, but not exclusively, novels, written by American authors in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We will begin with two canonical texts from the first third of the century, *A Farewell to Arms*, by Hemingway, and *The Great Gatsby*, by Fitzgerald. We will read Edith Wharton's *Age of Innocence*, which was written in the 1920s but set in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century; Steinbeck's Depression-era classic *Of Mice and Men*; Richard Wright's explication of racial and political divides in 1930s Chicago, *Native Son*; and *As I Lay Dying*, by Faulkner, and *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, by McCullers, two modernist novels by writers from the American South. We will also read stories by Ellison, Salinger, O'Connor and others, and perhaps poetic texts as well. In addition to analyzing the various genres, forms and idioms that American writers used between 1900 and 1960, we will also focus on the ways in which literature provides a window into specific historical moments—e.g. World War I, the Jazz Age, the Depression, etc.—and significant issues in American culture—e.g. urbanization, racial discrimination, disparities in wealth, gender relations, etc.

**Learning Outcomes**

1. Students will learn to analyze complex literary texts.
2. Students will learn narrative techniques such as point-of-view, methods of presenting dialogue and the use of a variety of rhetorical devices in descriptive language.
3. Students will learn figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, symbol, oxymoron, paradox and various of their functions in narrative writing.
4. Students will substantially enhance their writing skills in English by improving their punctuation, spelling, syntax and construction of paragraphs.
5. Students will improve their ability to clearly articulate complex ideas about novels and other literary texts.
6. Students will learn to write interpretive analyses of literary texts and to construct a comparative essay.
7. Students will learn about the culture of the U.S. in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century through the study of a number of the most significant canonical American novels and other texts of the period.

**Requirements**

**Assigned readings must be completed before class.** You should keep a journal with your responses to all of the novels and other texts we read and view (approximately 250 words per entry). Bring your journal responses and the text we are reading to class. (MAKE SURE TO ALLOW TIME TO PRINT YOUR JOURNAL ENTRIES BEFORE CLASS). All

journal entries must be typed, double-spaced, and at the top you must type your name, the date the entry was written and **the pages and title of the text** you are writing about. Either staple or clip pages together, and put your name on each page. Please give me a hard copy of the journal. Do not e-mail the journal unless it is an absolute emergency and you tell me in advance or you miss class for any reason and need to send it by the deadline. Late journals (ones that I receive after the due date) will receive half credit. Your entries should not be general, impressionistic responses (i.e. "I liked this novel. I thought it was good."). You should choose one passage in the reading (no more than seven pages), **citing specific lines in the text**, analyze the formal techniques employed in detail and write about how these formal elements and the thematic elements they express relate to the entire novel or text and other novels we have read. **DO NOT TURN IN PLOT SUMMARIES, CHARACTER ANALYSIS OR OTHER MATERIAL CULLED FROM WEBSITES AS YOUR JOURNAL ENTRY. IF YOU DO, YOU WILL RECEIVE A ZERO FOR THAT ASSIGNMENT.** Not only does such copying undermine one of the main aspects of the course, plagiarism is a serious violation and will be dealt with according to university regulations. **THE FOCUS IN THIS CLASS IS ON CLOSE READINGS OF SPECIFIC PASSAGES, FORMAL ELEMENTS OF WRITING—E.G. FIGURES OF SPEECH, SENTENCE STRUCTURE, DIALOGUE, IDIOM ETC.—AND HOW THEY RELATE TO THE THEMATIC MATERIAL.** You should write your journal assignments in **formal English** (avoid colloquial terms and incorrect constructions such as "mom and dad," "really weird," "stresses on this part," etc.) You will be graded for spelling and punctuation, so be certain that your work is properly punctuated and all words are properly spelled (do not confuse, for example, "its" and "it's," or "their," "there," and "they're"). You will have a mid-term exam, a joint presentation on a short story and a final essay. Class attendance is required, and you must arrive **on time**. You are allowed **two absences total**, for any reason you choose. No excuse is required or desired. If you miss class more than two times, your grade will be lowered each time you miss the class. **PLEASE DO NOT USE YOUR CELL PHONES FOR ANY PURPOSE IN THIS CLASS. THEY SHOULD BE TURNED OFF AND PLACED OUT OF SIGHT AT ALL TIMES. ALL ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE TURNED IN ON TIME.** Your grade will derive from the following formula: class attendance and participation (20%), journal (20%), mid-term (20%), final presentation (20%), final essay (20%).

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FOLLOWING READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE:**

February 16	Introduction to the Class
February 18	"The Hollow Men," by T. S. Eliot (HANDOUT) Farewell to Arms, by Hemingway (4-14)
February 23	<i>Farewell to Arms</i> , by Hemingway (15-78)
February 25	<i>Farewell to Arms</i> (81-159) Book Two
March 2	<i>Farewell to Arms</i> (163-285) Books Three & Four
March 4	<i>Farewell to Arms</i> (290-332) Book Five
March 9	Film <b>TBA</b>
March 11	<i>Great Gatsby</i> , Fitzgerald (7-66) Chapters 1-3
March 16	<i>Great Gatsby</i> (67-118) Chapter 4-Chapter 6
March 18	<i>Great Gatsby</i> (119-187) Chapter 7-Chapter 9
March 23	<i>Age of Innocence</i> , by Wharton
March 25	<i>Age of Innocence</i> (Film)
March 30	<i>Age of Innocence</i> (Film)
April 1	<b>No Class</b>
April 6	<i>Of Mice and Men</i> , by Steinbeck (1-63)
April 8	<i>Of Mice and Men</i> (64-119)
April 13	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>
April 15	<i>As I Lay Dying</i> , by Faulkner
April 20	<i>As I Lay Dying</i>
April 22	<i>As I Lay Dying</i>
April 27	<i>Native Son</i> , by Wright (Intro-93)
April 29	<i>Native Son</i> (94-219)
May 4	<i>Native Son</i> (220-330)
May 6	<i>Native Son</i> (331-430)
May 11	<i>Heart is a Lonely Hunter</i> , McCullers
May 13	<i>Heart is a Lonely Hunter</i>
May 18	<i>Heart is a Lonely Hunter</i> ( <b>First Draft final paper due</b> )
May 20	Presentations of Stories: Ellison, O'Connor, Salinger Chopin, etc.
May 25	Presentations of Stories
May 27	Presentations of Stories <b>(Final paper due. NO EXTENSIONS.)</b>

All texts can be purchased at the AUB Bookstore except for *Age of Innocence* and the short stories, which will be available at Ras Beirut Press, on Makhoul Street (located between St. Mary's School and Barometre Restaurant). Ask for Riad.