

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

**English 226: Contemporary American Literature
Spring 2016
TR: 11:00-12:15—Fisk 337**

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Office Hours: T: 1:00-3:00
and by appointment

Course Description

This course focuses on the analysis of contemporary American texts and explores recent/current trends in American Literature, such as Absurdism, Minimalism, and Post-Modernism. In particular, it examines the manner in which writers with diverse backgrounds responded to or appropriated different types of language as part of their efforts to offer alternative expressions of the American experience. Special emphasis will be given to the study of American identity, multiculturalism, race, gender, religious belief, technology, and economic difference.

Course Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to:

1. Outline the contemporary literary history of America
2. Contrast the theoretical aspects of literary genres
3. Define major literary movements and schools
4. Compare the characteristics of major literary movements
5. Identify the connections between contemporary American literature and culture
6. Apply selected theories of American literature
7. Summarize an argument
8. Compare/Contrast the thematic and structural characteristics of literary texts
9. Interpret 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:

Beloved, Toni Morrison

Bless Me, Ultima, Rudolfo A. Anaya

The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts, Maxine Hong Kingston

On reserve (Jafet Library): “Selected Arab-American Poems”, selections from *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (N. Scott Momaday), and selected short stories (Saul Bellow and Raymond Carver)

Grading Criteria

Attendance and Class Participation (including including reading quizzes and discussion questions assignments)	20%
Midterm	25%
Research Paper (5-7 pages)	20%
Final Exam	35%

Schedule

Topic	Activities	Assignments
	Presentations Discussing course goals & syllabus	26/1 No Assignment
Social and Historical Background Contemporary American Literature	Lecture & Discussion	28/1 Contemporary American Literature: Texts and Contexts I 2/2 Contemporary American Literature: Texts and Contexts II S. Bellow, “Looking for Mr. Green” (total)
Ethnicity and Acts of Interpretation	Lecture & Discussion	4/2 S. Bellow, “Looking for Mr. Green” 11/2 S. Bellow, “Looking for Mr. Green”
Native American Literature	Lecture & Discussion	16/2 N. Scott Momaday, <i>The Way</i> 18/2 N. Scott Momaday, <i>The Way</i>
Modern U.S. Minimalism	Lecture & Discussion	23/2 U.S. Minimalism R. Carver, “Cathedral” (total)
Research Papers The Mexican American Bildungsroman	Lecture & Discussion	25/2 Finding and using critical sources/ electronic databases 1/3 R. Carver, “Cathedral” AND R. Anaya, <i>Bless Me, Ultima</i> (1/3)
Research Papers The Mexican American Bildungsroman	Lecture & Discussion	3/3 Writing the Course Paper 8/3 Mexican American Literature R. Anaya, <i>Bless Me, Ultima</i> (2/3)
Chinese-American Literature	Lecture & Discussion	10/3 R. Anaya, <i>Bless Me, Ultima</i> (3/3) 15/3 The Poetics and Politics of Magic Realism M. H. Kingston, <i>The Woman Warrior</i> (1/3)
Chinese-American Literature	Lecture & Discussion	17/3 MIDTERM 22/3 M. H. Kingston, <i>The Woman Warrior</i> (2/3) PAPER TOPICS DUE

	Chinese-American Literature	Lecture & Discussion	24/3 M. H. Kingston, <i>The Woman Warrior</i> (3/3) 29/3 M. H. Kingston, <i>The Woman Warrior</i>
	Neo-Slave Narratives	Lecture & Discussion	31/3 Hyphenated Subjects and Identities T. Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> (1/3) 5/4 T. Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> (2/3)
	Ethnicity and Race in the United States	Lecture & Discussion	7/4 Documentary Viewing and Discussion PAPER DUE 12/4 Documentary Viewing and Discussion
	Voice, Agency, and Narration	Lecture & Discussion	14/4 T. Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> (3/3) 19/4 The Question of Voice
	Arab-American Poetry	Lecture & Discussion	21/4 Selected Arab-American Poems 26/4 Selected Arab-American Poems
			28/4 Concluding Notes

Course Policy

Attendance, preparation, and class participation are a primary requirement. You are expected to attend all classes, be prepared to discuss the required readings and participate constructively. You are also expected to use the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (by Joseph Gibaldi) for writing and documenting your research papers.

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 11:00) 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 FAS Committee.