

I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

- A. Department Information:
Division: Humanities
Department: English
Course ID: ENGL 261
Course Title: American Literature: From the mid-1800s to the Present
Units: 3
Lecture: 3 Hours
Prerequisite: English 101
- B. Catalog and Schedule Description:
Reading of representative literary works of significant writers to illustrate the development of literary and intellectual development of American thought from the mid-1800's to the present.

II. NUMBER OF TIMES THE COURSE MAY BE TAKEN: One

III. EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS:

Upon completion of this course a student will be able to:

- A. Read, discuss, and write about the poetry, drama, and fiction in 19th and 20th century American Literature.
- B. Research literary works in relationship to their historical contexts.
- C. Read and analyze critical essays on individual authors and works.
- D. Identify literary forms and elements in reading selections, e.g. flat and round characters, point of view, character motivation, conflict, and irony.
- E. Write essays that analyze the literary forms and elements (e.g. plot, character, theme) of specific literary selections and that compare and contrast writers and their works.

IV. CONTENT:

- A. Literary periods
1. Conflict and Celebration (1855-1880)
 - a) Civil War as America's first "modern" war
 - b) Lincoln's reconstruction plan
 - c) Mexican-American War
 - d) California Gold Rush
 2. Regionalism and Realism (1880-1910)
 - a) Realist and Naturalist writers and every day life and working people
 - b) The Origins of the New South
 - c) Modern life and the loss of regional distinctions
 3. New Directions (1910-1930)
 - a) Modernist innovations
 - b) Modernist writers
 - c) Modernist writers write about small pieces of everyday life
 4. Mid-century Voices (1930-1960)
 - a) The Great Depression
 - b) The WPA and artists and writers
 - c) World War II
- B. Literary types and concepts
1. Literary genres: poetry, drama, fiction, and essays.
 2. Period ideas: Age of Reason, ideas about liberty and natural rights, the privacy of the poet, the meaning of art, nature as teacher, the individual and self reliance, Regionalism, Naturalism, Realism, Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance, the American voice.

- C. Literary forms and elements:
 - 1. Narrative: Autobiography, short story, novel, character description, description of a setting, editorials, and extended personification.
 - 2. Poetry: Sonnet, sestina, free verse, epic, repetition and refrain, stanza, alliteration, internal rhyme, rhyme and rhythm, personification and theme, scansion, meter, and irregular rhythm.
 - 3. Drama: Naturalism, realism, modernism, social comedy, character problem plays, dramas of social protest, tragedy in classical form, symbolic drama, experimental drama.
 - 4. Literary elements: Flat and round characters, character motivation, point of view, conflict, irony, plot development, theme, symbol.
- D. Composition skills:
 - 1. Develop vocabulary skills and an appreciation of words by examining diction and style.
 - 2. Write compositions that analyze literary elements.
 - 3. React creatively to reading selections by writing journal entries and descriptions, or explanations of an abstract idea.

V. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. Lecture/discussion – Reading selections will be examined both formally and historically. Students will be asked to discuss period concepts and specific literary forms and devices in selected works.
- B. Audio Visual – Many major novels have been made into successful films (e.g. Farewell to Arms, Great Gatsby, and Grapes of Wrath). Hence, films and videos are useful tools that not only make the literary work more visual, but also lead to discussion concerning the relationship of film to novel.

VI. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

- A. After reading about the author and the historical period and discussing selections in terms of literary forms and elements, students will be asked to write about the writers times or works. For example, assignments will range from citing evidence defending or attacking a literary opinion to analyzing a character based on his/her actions. Also, students will be asked to compare and contrast a specific theme in two or more author's works. For example, the work of two poets may be examined for facts that reveal a similar or different attitude towards art and life. Also, students will determine how a literary device might be used to match the point of view or the state of mind of the narrator in a work of fiction. In a research project, students will have to consider the critical estimates that have established the literary reputation of a given writer and identify subsequent writers where work has been directly influenced.
 - 1. Reading – In two or three paragraphs state what attitude Emily Dickinson reveals about herself and her poetry in "Letter to the World."
 - 2. Writing - In six to eight paragraphs, show how Steinbeck uses characters to reveal theme in "The Leader of the People."
 - 3. Research - Study the various critical estimates of Eliot's "The Waste Land." Also identify the American poets who were influenced by Eliot's poetry of diverse ideas and fragmentary meditations on myth.

VII. EVALUATION(S):

- A. Weekly assignments will be given requiring students to summarize the main idea of specific reading selections.
- B. Reading quizzes will be given for factual information.
- C. Unit exams are primarily essay and will be given at the end of each unit to determine the student's ability to interpret the author's intent, to extend the meaning of the literary work, and to establish one's viewpoint.

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- D. Term papers will be evaluated primarily on the student's ability to support or develop his/her thesis. For example, read Thoreau's essay on "Civil Disobedience" and research its influence on Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

VIII. TYPICAL TEXT(S):

The American Tradition of Literature, Bradley, et al., W. W. Norton and Co, 1992.
The American Tradition in Literature 8th ed., George Perkins, McGraw Hill, 1994.
The Heath Anthology of American Literature 3rd ed., Paul Lanter, Houghton Mufflin Co., 1998.

IX. OTHER SUPPLIES REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: None