

English 316K:
Masterworks of American Literature
Spring 2010

Professor Gretchen Murphy
Office: Calhoun 311
Office Hours: T 9:30-10:30, Th 12:30-1:30

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Lecture: Tu/Th 11-12:15, ART 1.102

Required Texts:

The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien. Broadway Press 978-0767902892
Classic American Autobiographies. William L. Andrews, editor. Signet Classics 978-0451529152

Masterworks of American Literature: Selected Readings. Pearson Custom Library
978-0-558528724

Course Goals:

In this class we will read a few influential and powerful pieces of American writing. Put simply, our goal is to deepen your understanding and appreciation of these works. Some of this understanding will come with interpreting the works in historical context, so we'll ask questions like why these works were written, who comprised their intended audience, and how they spoke to those readers. To sharpen your perception of these works, you'll also practice describing literary effects. As we read literary works from three different genres -- autobiography, fiction and poetry -- you'll learn relevant terms to describe the formal components of each. In this way you'll accumulate over the course of the semester a kind of toolbox of methods and frameworks for interpreting literature. Overall, the class will encourage attentive reading and using writing to reflect on what you read. We will read slowly and carefully, with close attention to language and detail. Learning to notice, describe and analyze details in a text will make you a more thoughtful reader both of these few important works and, hopefully, of books that you encounter in the future.

Course Requirements

- Five out of seven close reading exercises 60% (12% each), one optional revision
- Three quizzes on each genre (autobiography, fiction, poetry) 30% (10% each)
- Participation, attendance, homework 10%

Close reading exercises (CREs) are short essays about material we have already read and discussed in class. I will distribute directions for each exercise a week prior to its due date. CREs will be due in lecture. There will be seven of these over semester, but only the top five scores will count toward your final grade. Close reading exercises must be turned in at the beginning of class and will not be accepted late without a documented excuse (see policy below).

At midterm, you will have the opportunity to revise one submitted and graded CRE to replace the grade. Because this assignment is designed as an opportunity to deepen close reading skills by incorporating feedback and applying ongoing learning, you cannot replace a missed CRE (one that was not completed or turned in by the deadline) with the revision. Each student participating in the

revision assignment will be required to have a conference with his or her TA to discuss strategies for revision.

The **three in-class quizzes** will test your understanding of the literary terminology and relevant historical context introduced in lecture and your ability to apply this terminology and information to the works we have read. Each quiz will cover one of the three genres we are studying: autobiography, fiction and poetry. Quizzes will be mostly short answer with some occasional multiple choice, matching, fill in the blank or long essay. There will be no make-ups for the quizzes except in the event of a documented excuse.

Class participation constitutes a significant portion of your final grade. I will try to devote some part of each lecture to discussion, and your TA will encourage active participation in each section meeting. Bringing your book to class is essential because in both lecture and discussion we will look closely at and respond to particular passages. No cell phones, laptops, or text messaging in lecture or section, and non-course related reading material should be put away during class.

Additional descriptions of all assignments will be available on Blackboard.

Course Policies

Grading

Quizzes will be graded as percentages on a 100 point scale. Papers will receive letter grades equaling the numerical grades listed below. Final grades will also be determined on the basis of the following rubric, with the exception of the A+ grade, which is not recognized by the university. For final grades, all scores 94 to 100 will count as A's. To ensure fairness, final grades will not be rounded, so that for example, all grades between 87.0 and 89.999 will count as B+'s

A+ = 97-100

A = 94-96

A- = 90-93

B+ = 87-89

B = 84-86

B- = 80-83

C+ = 77-79

C = 74-76

C- = 70-73

D+ = 67-69

D = 64-66

D- = 60-63

F = 0-60

Teaching Assistants

Discussion sections will be devoted practicing techniques of literary analysis and preparing for CREs and quizzes. Some quizzes will be administered in section and some in lecture. All assignments and quizzes will be graded by your TA in consultation with the professor. The professor meets regularly with the TAs; she will spot check grades to ensure consistency from section to section. If you want to alert us that you will be missing discussion section or have questions about discussion section or grades, please contact your TA, not your professor. The

professor or your TA can answer questions about course policies and lecture content, and both are available to offer extra help on written assignments.

Any student who has a question about a grade must discuss it with his or her TA, who will have the authority to change a grade in the unlikely case that this is appropriate. If a dispute remains after discussion, the student should leave the assignment with the TA who will pass it along to the professor for review. The professor will communicate the result of the review to the TA, who will then inform the student of the outcome. The professor's office hours are for discussion of issues raised in class and anything else you like, but not for talking about grade disputes.

Attendance

Regular attendance and punctuality is required at lectures and sections. Please do not expect the professor or TA to teach you in office hours what you missed by being late or absent from lecture, except in the case of a documented excuse (see below). If you do miss a lecture, you are responsible for getting the notes from a classmate.

Missed work

If you miss deadlines on Close Reading Exercises twice, those papers will simply count as the ones to be dropped. If you miss more than two deadlines, you will not get credit for those additional missing or late papers. Close Reading Exercises must be turned in at the beginning of lectures on the designated due date; if you are absent or late on one of these due dates, you cannot turn in your exercise and you receive a zero on that assignment. Two out of seven CREs may be skipped or dropped.

The intention of the sequence of weekly or semi-weekly assignments (short, frequent, and worth a small fraction of the grade) is to keep the workload in the course reasonable and constant, rather than overloading you two or three times a semester with a major assignment. For this reason, CREs and quizzes **MAY NOT BE MADE UP** (although you are allowed to drop or skip two CREs) except in the case of a documented excuse, as outlined below. It is crucial that you keep on top of the reading and assignments in order to succeed.

Use of Blackboard

This course uses Blackboard, a Web-based course management system in which a password-protected site is created for each course. (Student enrollments in each course are updated each evening.) Blackboard will be used to distribute course materials -- including CRE assignments, study guides and review sheets -- and to post grades. You will be responsible for checking the Blackboard course site regularly for class work and announcements. As with all computer systems, there are occasional scheduled downtimes as well as unanticipated disruptions. Notification of these disruptions will be posted on the Blackboard login page. Scheduled downtimes are not an excuse for late work. However, if there is an unscheduled downtime for a significant period of time, I will make an adjustment if it occurs close to the due date.

Blackboard is available at <http://courses.utexas.edu>. Support is provided by the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400 Monday through Friday 8 am to 6 pm, so plan accordingly.

Academic Honesty

Turning in work, whether Close Reading Exercises or the revised paper, that is not strictly your own will result in failing either the assignment or the course. A report of the incident will also be made to the Office of the Dean of Students. For more information, please consult the UT policy on Academic Honesty linked to our Blackboard page.

Documented excuses are written letters from your doctor, your dean, or your counselor that explain your inability to meet a deadline or attend a class session.

Accommodations

Any student with a documented disability (physical or cognitive) who requires academic accommodations should contact Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259. For test-related accommodations, please notify the professor at least two weeks before the first quiz.

TA Office Hours and E-mail Addresses

TAs may change their office hours with sufficient notice.

Brandon Forinash blforinash@mail.utexas.edu
34215 T 8:30-9:30
34230 M 1-2
Office Hours Monday 8-10AM

Laura Beerits laura.beerits@gmail.com
34220 T 8:30-9:30
34225 M 12-1
Office Hours Monday 8-10AM

Sally Treanor sally@mail.utexas.edu
34235 M 1-2
34240 M 2-3
Office Hours Monday 8-10AM

Michael Quatro michaelquatro@yahoo.com
34245 M 2-3
34250 M 4-5
Office Hours Monday 8-10AM

Kendall Gerdes kendalljoy@mail.utexas.edu
34255 M 4-5
34260 M 5-6
Office Hours Monday 8-10AM

Reading and writing assignments are due on the day they appear. CAA = *Classic American Autobiographies*. MAL = *Masterworks of American Literature: Selected Readings*

Discussion Section	Tuesday Lecture	Thursday lecture
Introduction	1/19 Introduction	1/21 Tim O'Brien <i>The Things They Carried</i> 1-61
Autobiographical essays due. O'Brien discussion	1/26 O'Brien <i>The Things They Carried</i> 67-85, 124-30, 162-180	1/28 Mary Rowlandson CAA 19-50
Rowlandson discussion	2/2 Rowlandson CAA 51-69	2/4 Benjamin Franklin CAA 70-106
Franklin discussion	2/9 Franklin CAA 106-156	2/11 Close Reading Exercises
Franklin, close reading workshop	2/16 Frederick Douglass CAA, 229-246	2/18 Frederick Douglass CAA 246-262; Close reading exercise #1 due.
Douglass, close reading workshop	2/23 Douglass CAA 262-327	2/25 Zitkala-Sa introduction, CAA 413-432; Close reading exercise #2 due.
Zitkala-Sa discussion	3/2 Zitkala-Sa CAA 433-49	3/4 Zitkala-Sa CAA 450-462; Review for quiz
Zitkala-Sa, close reading workshop	3/9 Quiz 1	3/11 Close reading exercise #3 due.
Spring Break	3/16 Spring Break	3/18 Spring Break
No section meeting this week.	3/23 Sara Orne Jewett "A White Heron" MAL 1-12	3/25 Jewett continued
Jewett, close reading workshop	3/30 Henry James "Daisy Miller: A Study" MAL 49-76	4/1 James "Daisy Miller" MAL 76-101; Close Reading Exercise #4 due.
James, close reading workshop	4/6 Charlotte Perkins Gilman "The Yellow Wallpaper" MAL 105-18	4/8 Toni Morrison "Recitatif" MAL 119-39; Close reading exercise #5 due.
Quiz 2	4/13 Hayden "Those Winter Sundays" MAL 144.	4/15 Theodore Roethke "My Papa's Waltz" Yusef Komunyakaa "Sunday Afternoons" MAL 149, 153-4; "My Father's Love Letters" (handout) 1604; Revised paper due.
Writing about poetry	4/20 Emily Dickinson "Tell all the truth"" MAL 178; William Carlos Williams "This is Just to Say" (handout); Close reading exercise #6 due	4/22 Dickinson poems MAL 179-88.
Popular music as poetry	4/27 Robert Frost poems MAL 155-70.	4/29 Frost continued
Popular music as poetry OR poetry close reading workshop.	5/4 Paul Lawrence Dunbar and Countee Cullen. Review for quiz.	5/6 Quiz 3; Close reading exercise #7 due.