E 338: American Literature: From 1865 to the Present
The American Dream

Spring 2010  Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Wilks
MWF: Please see course catalog  Office: PAR 108
PAR: Please see course catalog  Office hours: Available upon request

Course Description
Using F. Scott Fitzgerald’s classic *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and Joseph O’Neill’s critically acclaimed *Netherland* (2008) as historical bookends, this course will explore post-Civil War American literature through the concept of the “American Dream.” Our central concern will be that of how national perceptions of individual success and collective belonging have changed from the late nineteenth century to the twenty-first. Are there limits—social, economic, and otherwise—to the self-fashioning that is central to this dream? How did the suburbanization of the 1950s and 1960s alter U.S. notions of the ideal life? Finally, how have immigration and globalization reshaped not only what is means to “arrive,” but also what it means to be “American”? Indeed, can one still speak of such a nationally specific concept in our post-9/11, “borderless” world?

Texts
F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925)
Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959)

Requirements
Course requirements include:

*Papers*: Two short papers, the first of which will be turned in as a complete, 4-page rough draft, revised, and resubmitted for a final grade. All papers must be formatted according to the guidelines of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, available in libraries and bookstores.

*Reading responses*: Short responses on assigned readings. You do not have to address everything in the reading; unless I give you a specific question or topic, you may write on whatever in the reading interests you. You may be asked to share your reading response with the class. I will collect them at the end of class, and they will be graded with a **check** (you did it), **check-plus** (you are really thinking and asking questions), or **check-minus** (did you really read the assignment?). Responses will not be accepted late, and they should be typed (1-2 double-spaced pages).

Grading
Two short papers (4 pages each) 40%
Final exam 25%
Reading responses/ quizzes 20%
Rough draft of first paper (4 pages) 15%

Plus/minus grading will be used. The grading scale can be found on the course Blackboard site.

University Policy Notes
* Academic Integrity
“A fundamental principle for any educational institution, academic integrity is highly
valued and seriously regarded at The University of Texas at Austin, as emphasized in the standards of conduct. More specifically, you and other students are expected to ‘maintain absolute integrity and a high standard of individual honor in scholastic work’ undertaken at the University (Sec. 11-801, Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities). This is a very basic expectation that is further reinforced by the University’s Honor Code. At a minimum, you should complete any assignments, exams, and other scholastic endeavors with the utmost honesty, which requires you to:

- acknowledge the contributions of other sources to your scholastic efforts;
- complete your assignments independently unless expressly authorized to seek or obtain assistance in preparing them;
- follow instructions for assignments and exams, and observe the standards of your academic discipline; and
- avoid engaging in any form of academic dishonesty on behalf of yourself or another student.”

This passage quoted from and additional information available at http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

* Disabilities
Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, by calling 471-6259.

* Religious holidays
A student who misses an examination, work assignment, or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day will be given an opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence, provided that he or she has properly notified the instructor. It is the policy of the University of Texas at Austin that the student must notify the instructor at least 14 days prior to the classes scheduled on dates he or she will be absent to observe a religious holy day. For religious holy days that fall within the first two weeks of the semester, the notice should be given on the first day of the semester. The student will not be penalized for these excused absences, but the instructor may appropriately respond if the student fails to complete satisfactorily the missed assignment or examination within a reasonable time after the excused absence.

**Schedule**
*(subject to change)*

**Week One**
January 20  
Introduction and course description  
January 22  
Historical Background: Late 19th and Early 20th Century

**Week Two**
January 25  
The Idea of the American Dream  
January 27  
Horatio Alger (excerpt)  
January 29  
Horatio Alger (excerpt)

**Week Three**
February 1  
The Great Gatsby, Ch. I-III  
Response 1  
February 3  
The Great Gatsby, Ch. IV-VI
February 5  
*The Great Gatsby*, Ch. VII-IX

**Week Four**  
February 8  
Peer Review  
**Paper 1 (draft) due**

February 10  
Historical Background: Post-WWII and the 1950s

February 12  
Documentary screening

**Week Five**  
February 15  
Documentary (cont’d)  
**Paper 1 (final) due**

February 17  
Bonner, *Frye Street & Environs* (excerpt)

February 19  
Brooks, *Maud Martha* (excerpt)

**Week Six**  
February 22  
*A Raisin in the Sun*, Act I  
**Response 2**

February 24  
*A Raisin in the Sun*, Act II

February 26  
*A Raisin in the Sun*, Act III

**Week Seven**  
March 1  
*A Raisin in the Sun* (screening)

March 3  
*A Raisin in the Sun* (screening)

March 5  
*A Raisin in the Sun* (screening)

**Week Eight**  
March 8  
Historical Background: Late 20th Century

March 10  
Viramontes, “The Cariboo Café”

March 12  
Díaz, *Drown* (excerpt)

**Week Nine**  
March 15-19  
Spring Break

**Week Ten**  
March 22  
*The House on Mango Street*: “The House on Mango Street”-“Darius & the Clouds”  
**Response 3**

March 24  
*The House on Mango Street*: “And Some More”-“Geraldo No Last Name”

March 26  
*The House on Mango Street*: “Edna’s Ruthie”-Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes

**Week Eleven**  
March 29  
Peer Review  
**Paper 2 (draft) due**

March 31  
Instructor-student conferences  
**Paper 2 (final) due**

**Week Twelve**  
April 5  
Jin, *A Good Fall* (excerpt)

April 7  
*Mona in the Promised Land*, Ch. 1-4  
**Response 4**

April 9  
*Mona in the Promised Land*, Ch. 5-8
Week Thirteen
April 12  
Mona in the Promised Land, Ch. 9-10
April 14  
Mona in the Promised Land, Ch. 11-Epilogue
April 16  
Historical Background: The American Dream in the 21st Century

Week Fourteen
April 19  
Cricket 101: James
April 21  
Cricket 101: Lagaan (clip)
April 22  
Netherland, pp. 3-63
Response 5

Week Fifteen
April 25  
Netherland, pp. 63-131
April 27  
Netherland, pp. 131-200
April 29  
Netherland, pp. 200-256

Week Sixteen
May 3  
TBA
May 5  
Final exam review
May 7  
Final reflections; evaluations