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Office Hours: MW 7:00-7:50, MW 9:00-9:50, and by appointment

English 377K: The American Novel After 1920 (W)
MWF 8:00-8:50 P.M.
PAR 204
Spring 2010

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The many enduring contacts and conflicts between culturally and ethnically diverse communities have always been of interest to American novelists. In this class, we will consider the contributions to this literary history made by authors who place these contacts and conflicts at the center of their work. In our consideration of the novels on the reading list, we will discuss issues such as literary representation and self-representation, cultural sovereignty, cultural authenticity, and community identity. The diverse regional, religious, and cultural contexts that inform these novels provide a broad variety of perspectives on what W. E. B. Du Bois called in 1903 the problem of the twentieth century: the color line or, more specifically for this class, the color lines that these authors erase, negotiate, and, often, reconstruct in old and new ways.

TEXTS:

William Faulkner, *Light in August* (1932)
Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)
Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (1970)
Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake* (2003)
Nina Maria Martinez, *¡Caramba!* (2004)
Sherman Alexie, *Flight* (2007)
Casares, Oscar. *Amigoland* (2008)

CLASS REQUIREMENTS:

ATTENDANCE: You should plan to attend every class. Excessive absences (more than 5) will lower your final grade one full letter. Please do not be late to class, as being late is disruptive and disrespectful to your classmates, and please do not bring laptop computers to class.

PRESENTATION: I will ask each one of you to facilitate class discussion one day during the semester. For this assignment, please plan to speak for 5-10 minutes solely about the reading assignment for that day. There are several possible formats for your presentation, but your main goal should be to share your thoughts and questions about the reading.

TWO-PAGE ESSAYS: Four (4) two-page, double-spaced analyses of four (4) different reading assignments of your choice. The short essays should be explorations of very specific questions, concerns, insights, observations, etc., that you have about the readings. Your discussion might focus on aesthetic (formal), historical, and/or cultural (gender, religious, political) concerns, for example. You are welcome to ask me for suggestions about what ideas to explore in these essays,

though I strongly encourage you to make these decisions on your own. These short essays can be developed into one of the longer essays. PLEASE SEE SHORT ESSAY DUE DATES IN THE DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE BELOW.

FOUR-PAGE ESSAYS: Two (2) four-page, double-spaced analyses of a specific issue (literary, cultural, historical, political, etc.) or problem in one of the works we are reading. These papers should include an introduction with a clear, specific thesis and a general outline of your argument and its main points. In addition, the writing should be clearly focused, well-organized, well-polished, and demonstrate careful reading of the text/s that you discuss. Please use one-inch margins and twelve-point type, preferably Times New Roman, and correct MLA format. PLEASE SEE THE LONGER ESSAY DUE DATES IN THE DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE BELOW.

EIGHT-PAGE ESSAY OPTION: You have the option of writing one eight-page essay rather than two four-page essays. The requirements other than the page length are the same. If you choose this option, your essay is due on either one of the four-page essay due dates.

For those of you who are concerned about your writing, determined to earn a high grade in the class, and/or interested in working on your writing skills, I will read rough drafts of your papers. In addition, I have graded papers in my office from other classes that you can read in order to get some sense of how I grade.

***GRADES:** Your overall grade will be calculated in the following way:

Four 2-page essays – 40% total

Two 4-page essays OR one 8-page essay – 40% total

Attendance, class participation (quality and quantity), presentation – 20% total

*Plus/minus grades will not be assigned.

Daily Class Schedule (minor changes might be made throughout the semester)

Week 1 (January 18 - January 22)

M Jan. 18 **MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY -- NO CLASS**

W Jan. 20 Introduction to the class

F Jan. 22 *Light in August*, Chapters 1-4

Week 2 (January 25 - January 29)

M Jan. 25 *Light in August*, Chapters 5-6

W Jan. 27 *Light in August*, Chapters 7-9

F Jan. 29 *Light in August*, Chapters 10-12

Week 3 (February 1 - February 5)

M Feb. 1 *Light in August*, Chapters 13-14

W Feb. 3 *Light in August*, Chapters 15-17

F Feb. 5 *Light in August*, Chapters 18-19

Week 4 (February 8 - February 12)M Feb. 8 *Light in August*, Chapters 20-21**TWO-PAGE ESSAY #1 DUE**W Feb. 10 *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Chapters 1-3F Feb. 12 *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Chapters 4-8**Week 5** (February 15 - February 19)M Feb. 15 *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Chapters 9-13W Feb. 17 *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Chapters 14-20F Feb. 19 *The Bluest Eye*, Introduction and Autumn**Week 6** (February 22 - February 26)M Feb. 22 *The Bluest Eye*, WinterW Feb. 24 *The Bluest Eye*, Spring to 163F Feb. 26 *The Bluest Eye*, finish Spring, 164-183, and read Summer and Afterword**TWO-PAGE ESSAY #2 DUE****Week 7** (March 1 - March 5)

M Mar. 1 Nikolai Gogol, "The Overcoat"

W Mar. 3 *The Namesake*, Chapters 1-3F Mar. 5 *The Namesake*, Chapters 4-5**Week 8** (March 8 - March 12)M Mar. 8 *The Namesake*, Chapters 6-7W Mar. 10 *The Namesake*, Chapters 8-12F Mar. 12 finish *The Namesake***FIRST FOUR-PAGE ESSAY DUE****Week 9** (March 15 - March 19) -- **SPRING VACATION****Week 10** (March 22 – March 26)M Mar. 23 *¡Caramba!* Tabla 1W Mar. 25 *¡Caramba!* Tabla 2F Mar. 27 *¡Caramba!* Tabla 3**Week 11** (March 29 – April 2)M Mar. 29 *¡Caramba!* Tabla 4W Mar. 31 *¡Caramba!* Tabla 5F Apr. 2 *¡Caramba!* Tabla 6**Week 12** (April 5 - April 9)M Apr. 5 finish *¡Caramba!***TWO-PAGE ESSAY #3 DUE**

W Apr. 7 Sherman Alexie, selected short stories and poems

F Apr. 9 *Flight*, Chapters 1-6

Week 13 (April 12 - April 16)

M Apr. 12 *Flight*, Chapters 7-12
 W Apr. 14 *Flight*, Chapters 13-18
 F Apr. 16 *Flight*, Chapters 19-21

Week 14 (April 19 - April 23)

M Apr. 19 finish *Flight*
TWO-PAGE ESSAY #4 DUE
 W Apr. 21 Oscar Casares, "Big Jesse, Little Jesse" and "R.G."
 F Apr. 23 Oscar Casares, *Amigoland*, Part I, Chapters 1-4

Week 15 (April 26 - April 30)

M Apr. 26 Oscar Casares, *Amigoland*, Part II, Chapters 5-13
 W Apr. 28 Oscar Casares, *Amigoland*, Part III, Chapters 14-22
 F Apr. 30 finish Oscar Casares, *Amigoland*, Part IV, Chapters 23-41

Week 16 (May 3 - May 7)

M May 3 Course exit questions and evaluations
 W May 5 Final essay questions and concerns
 F May 7 **FINAL DAY OF CLASS**
SECOND FOUR-PAGE ESSAY DUE

NO FINAL EXAM

COMPLIANCE WITH AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT: In accordance with the terms and spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, your professor will cooperate with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement's Service for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to make reasonable accommodations for students. If you have a disability, please register with SSD as soon as possible. If you already have university authorization for extra time to take tests or for a private place to take them, for example, please be sure to let your professor know as soon as possible. If any of you have suspected in the past that you might need extra time or a more private atmosphere in which to take a test, or otherwise need accommodations to complete the requirements for this course, now is the time to go to the **Office of Services for Students With Disabilities**. It is in the Student Services Building in room 4.104. The phone number is 471-6259.