

American Literature II (English 382, 981), Fall of 2009
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Required Books

Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain (Dover Thrift edition)
The Awakening by Kate Chopin (Dover)
Song of Myself by Walt Whitman (52 poems, also Dover)
101 Great American Poems ed. The American Poetry and Literacy Project (Dover Thrift)
The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald
In Our Time by Ernest Hemingway
Uncle Tom's Children by Richard Wright
Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller
The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison
In Our Time by Ernest Hemingway

You can find these books at Manhattan Books on Chambers Street, as well as many other stores and sites. There will also be essays, poems, and fiction scanned or downloaded and posted to our Blackboard site throughout the semester.

Objectives for the class:

*In American Literature II, you will hone the critical writing skills you have been acquiring in English 101 and English 201.

*You will strengthen your hold on the MLA system of parenthetical citation and your ability to write researched papers.

*I will introduce you to important writers, issues and literary developments in American literature from the middle of the nineteenth century to the present, including the evolution of literary forms.

*We will use historical context in our discussions as a tool for interpreting literature, which you will incorporate into the papers you write.

*I hope you will find characters, words, images, ideas, stories, and poems to live by.

Your grade will be based on the discussion boards (33%), the quizzes (33%), and papers (33%—six short ones and a final essay). The discussion boards and quizzes are due a few days before the end of the module as indicated, and the papers are due by midnight of the last day of the module because it makes sense to begin with the quizzes, which are not too hard, and the discussion boards, which are more challenging and good preparation for writing the paper. The quizzes are self-evident, and the papers should be done in standard Modern Language Association (MLA) format—double spaced, in the literary present, with a parenthetical citation for every quotation and paraphrase and a works-cited list at the end. What you say and how well you say it will be the basis of your paper grades. If you don't have a handbook to check on matters of grammar, punctuation and citation, I recommend Diana

Hacker's *A Pocket Style Manual*. The point in writing about literature is to illuminate what you read, to work your way beneath the surface, which always entails explaining, giving examples, quoting and paraphrasing, rewriting, polishing and tightening. Good written work about complicated books begins for most mortals with notes and ends with rewriting, polishing and tightening. Students who show the most improvement learn to write more effectively and to tap the richness of the works we're studying to flesh out their ideas.

The discussion boards (DBs) are the equivalent of class discussions, the chief difference being you have to participate to participate in a dl class. There are no silent partners. For each DB, I would like you to initiate at least one post and to read all your classmates' posts and to respond with some substance to at least two of those posts. A good post runs from a paragraph to three or more, and a good response is at least a paragraph. Everyone benefits if you explain your ideas and back them up with examples from the stories, poems and essays we're reading. The DBs become collective notebooks, making it easier for everyone to write good papers. For each module you will receive a DB grade of an F, C and A. Good writing and good thinking usually go together, but I will grade your DB work as best I can on your ideas, not correctness. However, I would recommend that you compose your posts and responses in Word and cut and paste them into the DB dialogue box so that you don't lose work if you lose your connection.

Please make sure that your work is on time. Put differently, since this isn't a correspondence course and we can't work together unless we're on the same page, I will not accept late work for any reason, including computer problems. So pace yourself and make sure you back your work up and have a plan B in case you have a problem with the computer you usually work on. You should check your BMCC email every day, and you should read the new posts for the current module's DBs every day.

Module One (8.28-9.12). Mark Twain and Frederick Douglass.

1. Mark Twain's America. Reading: *Huck Finn* and the following critics in Course Documents: Smith, Eliot, and Morrison. Also, read the lectures and exchanges and the Norton Anthology's introduction to the literature of the Gilded Age, both in Course Documents > Module One. There is also Ken Burns' documentary on video reserve—not required but recommended. Go to BMCC's library page, choose Eres and choose my last name—Pace. Our password is Douglass.

2. The Life, Times and Work of Frederick Douglass. Reading: chapters 1-2, 4-7, and 10-11 of *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and David Blight's "Introduction" to Douglass's book, both of which are in Course Documents > Module One > Frederick Douglass. There is an excellent documentary of Douglass on video reserve at Eres.

Written work: for the first module, the two quizzes and two discussion boards are due by midnight 9.8.09 and the paper is due by midnight on 9.12.

Module Two (9.13-9.27) Kate Chopin.

Kate Chopin's short novel *The Awakening*. Also, read the critical articles by Toth, Ziff, Spangler, Showalter, Gilbert, all in course documents, module two.

Written work: two quizzes and one DB, due by 9.23, and a paper, due by 9.27.

Module Three (9.28-10.11): Big City, American Dream, and 20th Century Modernism

Reading: Poems by Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson in Course Documents and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. I'd also like you to read the module's lectures on Whitman, Dickinson and Fitzgerald, an excerpt from Malcolm Cowley's *Exiles Return*, and the Norton Anthology's introduction to the first half of 20th century literature. Recommended reading: Fitzgerald's "Winter Dreams" and "Babylon Revisited."

Writing: the Whitman-Dickinson quiz and Discussion Board are due by Saturday midnight, October 3rd, and the Gatsby quiz and Discussion Board are due by Sunday midnight, 10.11. No paper for module 3.

Module Four (10.12-10.25) Modernism Continued.

Reading: Ernest Hemingway's stories, William Faulkner's "Barn Burning," the lecture on twentieth century American poetry, and the Norton Anthology's introduction to American literature between the wars. Also, read the following poetry: in *101 Great American Poems*, the poems of Edwin Arlington Robinson, Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, William Carlos Williams, T.S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, and Langston Hughes.

Writing: two discussion boards and two quizzes, due by 10.21, and one paper, due by 10.25.

Module Five (10.26-11.10) The Harlem Renaissance and Its Heirs

Reading: the first chapter of W.E.B. Dubois' *Souls of Black Folk*, a collection of Harlem Renaissance poems, an excerpt from Zora Neale Hurston's *Eatonville Anthology*, Ralph Ellison's "Battle Royal," and an excerpt from Richard Wright's "Blueprint for Negro Writing, which are in Course Documents. I am also assigning the introduction to Richard Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children*, by Richard Yarborough, and the first three stories of that collection (pp. 16-156) and in *101 Great American Poems* the poems by James Weldon Johnson, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Jean Toomer, Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and Countee Cullen.

I would also like you to see part two of Ken Burns' *Jazz*, which you will find on electronic reserve (instructions in Course Information, ERES). Recommended but not required viewing: *Native Son*, *Bamboozled*, and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

Writing: one discussion board and two quizzes, due by 11.7, and one rewrite, due by 11.10.

Module Six (11.11-11.29) Postwar Writers.

Reading: Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, John Updike's "A&P," Toni Cade Bambara's "The Lesson," Allen Ginsberg's "Howl," Sylvia Plath's "Daddy," an excerpt from Edward Rivera's *Family Installments*, "For the Union Dead" by Robert Lowell, Audre Lorde's "Black Mother Woman," "Dream Song 1" and "Dream Song 14" by John Berryman, "Those Winter Sundays" and "Frederick Douglass" by Robert Hayden, and Cathy Song's "Chinatown."

Written work: two discussion boards and two quizzes due by midnight of 11.25 and one paper due by 11.29.

Module Seven (11.30-12.12) Contemporary Fiction

Reading: Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*.

Written work: a discussion board and a quiz, due by 12.9, and a short paper, due by 12.12.

Module Eight (12.13-12.17) Final Exam

Written work: essay exam, due by 12.17.