

Professor Joe Bisz

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Office Location: N-708 (within N-720)

Office Hours: Mondays 2-4pm; Wednesdays 5:20-6:20pm

The American Novel

Texts

The American. (1876) by Henry James

Their Eyes Were Watching God. (1937) by Zora Neale Hurston

Stranger in a Strange Land. (1960) by Robert Heinlein

Many critical essays will also be available on the course site, as well as links to radio interviews, films, etc.

Description

America's many disparate cultures and classes have evolved over two centuries from an interlocking of customs so thick and taken for granted that only a stranger to those systems could challenge them. From our safe position we will examine the movement of the American novel from the character psychologies of 19th century realist fiction, to the spirituality of southern fiction, to the speculations of modern science fiction. We will witness the crashing of the masculine world of logic and money down into the feminine world of feelings and community-building, and understand people's strong desire to hold onto and possess human beings when caught between survival and romantic love. We will watch American society seeing itself for what it really is, and trying to grow up.

Learning Outcomes

During this course you will learn to:

1. Deepen your ability to understand a writer's perspective. (Assessed through responses and thesis papers)
2. Use logic to challenge other people's ideas and refine your own through argumentative writing. (Assessed particularly through thesis papers and student responses)
3. Use your experiences as subject matter while being open-minded to learning new things. (Assessed through responses and thesis papers, particularly student responses)
4. Use the Internet and its media to enhance the college course experience. (Assessed through accessing of Blackboard course and citing required texts)
5. Employ informal writing strategies to appreciate the course material from alternative angles. (Assessed through Week 13 personality website response and other creative assignments)

General Education Outcomes

Below are the college's general education goals that students who successfully complete this course can expect to have achieved:

- **Communication Skills-** Students will be able to write, read, listen and speak critically and effectively. (Assessed through responses and thesis papers)
- **Arts & Humanities-** Students will be able to develop knowledge and understanding of the arts and literature through critiques of works of art, music, theatre or literature. (Assessed through responses and thesis papers)
- **Values-** Students will be able to make informed choices based on an understanding of personal values, human diversity, multicultural awareness and social responsibility. (Assessed through responses and thesis papers, particularly student responses)

Format

This is a distance-learning course to be offered entirely over the internet. Students are required to have frequent internet access (at least three times a week), but since you can always post an assignment early, you will have some flexibility in choosing what days you go online.

We will spend most of our time reading the three class novels but we'll also be reading many critical essays on topics related to the novel readings and looking at other media like news reports and films. Writing-wise, you will be responsible for posting one "reading response" paper and two "student response" papers each week which are considered your "Attendance." Also, there will be two Thesis Papers (the second is a final exam). You may revise the first Paper if you like; your new grade gets averaged with your old. If you do not hand in both of your thesis papers, you will receive an automatic grade of "F". This will total at least 20 pages of formal writing.

Attendance

Since this is a distance-learning class, I simply expect you to post your assignments on time. Visiting the class site to post your reading responses and student responses is required by BMCC policy as a way of showing your attendance and participation in an online class. *If you ever miss two complete weeks of posts for any reason (including sickness or accident), you will receive an automatic grade of "F" (or you can withdraw).*

You must complete all readings and responses by the date they are due. Late responses (reading responses or student responses) lose one letter grade. After a week (e.g., on the eighth day after a response is due), you can no longer post that response, and no credit will be given for it. (Exception: Paper #1 can be posted up to two weeks late, and it loses one letter grade each week.) If you don't do the work on time, it is *very easy* to fall behind!

Grading

40% Participation (as reflected by the timeliness and quality of the required Reading Response and Student Response posts)
60% Thesis Papers

There are no weekly grades for discussion board posts. Every three to five weeks, I will send you a personal email to your BMCC account telling you how you did and giving you an overall grade for the past few weeks.

If You Need Help:

You can see me! But you should also use these excellent services:

The Writing Center

Room S500. 212-220-1384. The Center will help you with your writing and in studying for the CUNY Proficiency Exam, including topics such as understanding the assignment, generating ideas, drafting, citing sources, and helping you to find your grammar mistakes. I encourage you to visit the center to better your chances of success!

The Learning Resource Center

Room S500. 212-220-1376. Offers small-group tutoring, study, note-taking, and test-taking skills, instructional videos, computer training, etc.

BMCC Policy on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity Statement

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's ideas, words, or artistic, scientific, or technical work as one's own creation. Using the idea or work of another is permissible only when the original author is identified. Paraphrasing and summarizing, as well as direct quotations, require citations to the original source. Plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. Lack of dishonest intent does not necessarily absolve a student of responsibility for plagiarism.

Students who are unsure how and when to provide documentation are advised to consult with their instructors. The library has guides designed to help students to appropriately identify a cited work. The full policy can be found on BMCC's website, www.bmcc.cuny.edu. For further information on integrity and behavior, please consult the college bulletin (also available online).

BMCC College Disability Statement

Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations or academic adjustments for this course must contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities, N768. BMCC is committed to providing equal access to all programs and curricula to all students. The office will supply you, if appropriate, with an academic accommodation letter for you to show to your professors.