ENGLISH 250 MAJOR WORKS OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

3 Credits
M-W 1:30-2:45

INSTRUCTOR: Robert Barclay
OFFICE: ʻĀkoakoa 236
OFFICE HOURS: M-W-F 9:30 to 12:30, T-Th 8:00 to 9:45, or by appointment
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EFFECTIVE DATE: Spring 2009

WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE MISSION STATEMENT

Windward Community College is committed to excellence in the liberal arts and career development; we support and challenge individuals to develop skills, fulfill their potential, enrich their lives, and become contributing, culturally aware members of our community.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

An introductory literature course including drama, poetry, essays, short stories, and novels of major American writers. Emphasis is on discussion of and writing about characteristics and themes of the works. Prerequisite: Credit for English 100 or consent of instructor.

REQUIREMENTS COURSE SATISFIES

WCC: DL, and fulfills three of the six writing intensive credits needed for the Associate in Arts degree.

RECOMMENDED BASIC SKILL LEVELS

Ability to carefully read and take notes on short stories and novels (about two hours of reading and prep per class—slower readers will take longer). Ability to write papers that contain and follow a clear thesis statement. Ability to arrive in class on time and prepared for discussions.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The student learning outcomes for the course are:
1. Use concepts and terminology particular to literary study to analyze and interpret imaginative literary works orally and in writing.
2. Respond to a work of literature as an expression of a culture’s values and compare those values with the student’s own.
3. Enjoy a more creative, enlightened, and fulfilled life through an appreciation of literature’s social, cultural, political, and philosophical significance.
4. Exhibit knowledge of some works, characteristic themes, and techniques of selected American authors.
5. Develop an awareness of the evolution of ideas in American culture.
COURSE CONTENT

We will study the literary history of America from multiple perspectives and across several genres. The questions that will guide our study are:

1) What is American?
2) Who is American, and does American mean different things to different people?
3) What are the characteristics of American literature?
4) What is a good work of literature?

As the semester progresses you will become a greater critical, ethical, and analytical reader and thinker of American literature—and, as this is also a writing intensive course, you will become a greater writer as well.

Most of the semester will be devoted to discussing the assigned readings. These discussions, in which you will be called upon to actively participate, will begin in small groups and expand to include the entire class. Other than the assigned reading, your homework will include focused preparation for the discussions, preparations for quizzes and the midterm, and the writing of several papers. You will also maintain a portfolio of all writing assignments, which you will turn in at the end of the semester. Attendance will be taken daily via a short, easy quiz on the assigned reading, and your quiz scores will determine the Attendance and Participation portion of your final grade (I assume that if you do well on the quizzes, you are not only present but also prepared to contribute to the discussion). Also, be sure to activate and check your Hawaii.edu email account, as that is how I will communicate with the class at times.

TEXTBOOKS

A Streetcar Named Desire by Tennessee Williams
The Toughest Indian in the World by Sherman Alexie
The Partly Cloudy Patriot by Sarah Vowell
The Awakening by Kate Chopin
101 Great American Poems Dover Edition
Mumbo Jumbo by Ishmael Reed
Other handouts will be provided in class

ASSESSMENT TASKS AND GRADING

You must complete ALL assignments to pass this class. No exceptions. Assignments that do not meet minimal proficiency (receiving an F grade) must be redone to receive passing credit.

Original American Short Story: 5% (four pages.)
Original American Essay: 5% (four pages)
Original American Poem: 5% (one page)
American Play Reader-Response Analysis 5% (two pages)
American Novel Comparative Analysis: 10% (four pages)
Attendance and Participation (determined by quiz scores): 10%
Portfolio, including all drafts and peer reviews, and a Self Evaluation (two pages): 60%
Three Conferences with Instructor (mandatory)
A = 90+; B = 80+; C = 70+; D = 60+; F = 59 and below
ATTENDANCE POLICY

This is not a correspondence course. There are no excused absences. Schedule medical appointments outside of class times. You are required to show up and participate. If, for whatever reason, you think you will miss more than five classes this semester, then this is not the class for you. **There will be no make-up quizzes**, so if you are late and miss the quiz, be sure to give me a piece of paper with your name on it so that you get credit for attendance. Five absences (accounting to missing over two full weeks of the semester) will lower your final grade by 5%. Six absences lowers it another 10%. **Seven absences results in an F final grade.** As such, you will be wise to not miss class except for real illnesses or emergencies. **If you do miss class, it’s your responsibility to contact your classmates** to find out what you missed, or any changes to assignments, or what you need to be prepared for the next class. If it is a day that we are conducting peer reviews of your drafts, you are still responsible to get that done. If life prevents you from regularly attending, then drop the course. If life prevents you from attending after the drop deadline, contact the Dean with proof of a valid excuse (medical emergency, death in the family) and you will receive a late withdrawal without penalty. Valid excuses for late withdrawal do not include employer or child care demands. **Bottom line: you must attend class, arrive on time, and be prepared to contribute.** This is not a hard class, but don’t think you can blow off a week and easily catch up. We will have moved on without you and you will have twice as much work.

PAPER AND ASSIGNMENT POLICY

Most of the writing assignments require you to turn in three drafts: a rough draft, a final draft and a revised final draft. The rough drafts must be complete drafts, and **all drafts must be typed in MLA format, with one inch margins in 12 point Times New Roman font, and sometimes including a works cited page.** The revised final draft will address and correct all punctuation, grammar, and content issues that I mark on the final draft. Drafts are due on the dates specified. Late drafts lose one letter grade. Drafts more than a week late will lose two letter grades. Do not submit papers as email attachments, or send email drafts to me for editing. If you want help with any of your papers come see me during my office hours or make an appointment. I am always happy to help.

PLAGIARISM POLICY

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If you do plagiarize, you will be dis-enrolled from the course, receive a failing grade, and the incident will be filed within your permanent academic record. See the MLA Handbook for a detailed definition and explanation of plagiarism, including examples of how and how not to paraphrase. All sources used in your papers must be properly cited according to MLA format. If in doubt, come see me before turning in your paper.

CONTENT WARNING

Literature, as does the world it speaks to and from, sometimes contains violence, sexuality, profanity, depravity, and other graphic content that might offend you. Additionally, the purpose of a college education is not to reinforce our own existing beliefs, but to examine the world outside of them in its entirety, including—and sometimes especially—what we find offensive, distasteful, or otherwise disagreeable. If you would prefer not to expose yourself to these things in reading, then this is not the class for you.
CONFERENCES WITH INSTRUCTOR

You are required, three times this semester, to sit down with me to discuss a draft of your papers. One of those conferences must be with a draft of your Comparative Analysis paper. Stop by during office hours, or make an appointment, or use the class days reserved for this purpose. An appointment may help you to avoid waiting while I meet with other students. Do not neglect these conferences, as you cannot pass the course without doing them. The conferences should last less than ten minutes. I will sign the papers so you and I can keep track.

DISABILITIES ACCOMODATION STATEMENT

If you have a physical, sensory, health, cognitive, or mental health disability that could limit your ability to fully participate in this class, you are encouraged to contact the Disability Specialist Counselor to discuss reasonable accommodations that will help you succeed in this class. Ann Lemke can be reached at 235-7448, lemke@hawaii.edu, or you may stop by Hale 'Akoakoa 213 for more information.
DISCUSSION GROUPS

DISCUSSION DIRECTOR
Your first responsibility is to make sure all members of the group know their roles and the assigned reading. Contact absent group members via email prior to class, so that they are informed as well. You are the leader of the group, so it is your responsibility to begin the discussion and to keep it moving and focused on the reading. Show up prepared with about ten intelligent questions to ask the group. While you will not likely get to all ten questions, they can be used to break the ice, keep the discussion moving, or inserted if they become relevant. Allow the discussion to move freely as long as it remains focused on the reading (and its implications). Insure that all members of the group contribute to the discussion.

PASSAGE/PARAGRAPH MASTERS (ALL MEMBERS OF THE GROUP)
Your job, in addition to being Director or Reporter, is to select at least four passages or paragraphs from the reading that you find worthy of discussion. Come prepared with a few questions or insights relevant to these passages or paragraphs. Remember, the goal is to contribute to an intelligent discussion, so anticipate how your passages or paragraphs (and what you want to say about them) will do so. Make sure to highlight or underline the passages or paragraphs in the book, then jot some notes about them in the margins.

REPORTER
Your job is to keep track of the discussion so that you can provide the rest of the class with a summary of its finest points. Additionally, you will give a brief summary of what intelligence each member of the group contributed.

PROCEDURES
Rotate jobs for each class. If, for whatever reason, you will not be coming to class, notify your group members in person, or via phone or email so that they can adjust their roles accordingly. Read carefully, not just to get a basic idea of the plot—God is in the details.

PORTFOLIO: DUE WEDNESDAY MAY 6
In a three ring binder, keep all of your writing assignments for this course. This includes your rough drafts, peer reviews, your final drafts, and revised final drafts that address and correct the items I mark on your returned final drafts. Separate each assignment with tabbed inserts. Do not wait until the end of the semester to revise your final drafts. Revise them shortly after I return them to you and place them in your binder. You might also visit with me prior to revising your final drafts, so that I can help you.

In addition to revising your final drafts, you must also type in MLA format a three-page self-analysis of your writing and class experience this semester. To do so, first look at the Student Learning Outcomes for this course. Do you feel that you achieved these outcomes? How so? Do you feel that the course left you deficient in any of these outcomes? How so? Address all five outcomes, one at a time (listed below), and also give yourself a score, for each outcome, on a scale of one to ten. Then take a look at your writing assignments. What did you do well? Where did you make the most improvement? What do you still need to improve on? Lastly, answer the four questions at the top of page 2 of this syllabus. A rough draft of the self-analysis is due April 29. Your completed portfolio is due May 5. This portfolio is worth
60% of your final grade, so as the semester progresses make sure you complete all drafts and peer reviews. **Do not place papers in plastic sleeves. De-staple them and hole-punch them.**

**Portfolio Checklist** (make a copy of this page for your portfolio and check all items included)

- Original America Short Story
  - Revised Final Draft
  - Final Draft
  - Rough Draft
  - Peer Review
  - Grade sheet

- Original American Essay
  - Revised Final Draft
  - Final Draft
  - Rough Draft
  - Peer Review
  - Grade Sheet

- Original American Poem
  - Revised Final Draft
  - Final Draft
  - Rough Draft
  - Peer Review
  - Grade Sheet

- American Play Reader-Response Analysis
  - Revised Final Draft
  - Final Draft
  - Rough Draft
  - Peer Review
  - Grade Sheet

- American Novel Comparative Analysis
  - Required Conference Signature
  - Final Draft
  - Rough Draft
  - Peer Review
  - Grade Sheet

- Self Analysis
  - Final Draft
  - Rough Draft
  - Peer Review
A FEW VOCABULARY TERMS

Just as it helps to have a specific vocabulary to discuss the game of basketball (Lay-up, foul, dunk, etc.) it also helps to have a specific vocabulary to discuss literature. The list below provides a basic vocabulary, and any glossary of literary terms will show hundreds more.

1) Metaphor and Simile
   Metaphor: the representation of one thing by another. The tenor of a metaphor is what is being represented. The vehicle is what does the representing. Example: That test was a monster. Test is the tenor, and monster is the vehicle. A direct metaphor specifies both tenor and vehicle: My life is a train wreck. An indirect or implied metaphor mentions only the vehicle. This test bites. The implied tenor here is the act of taking the test. Another example: I bombed the test. Bombed is the implied tenor that refers to my performance on the test. Or “I plowed through the book.” An extended metaphor simply runs with the established tenor and vehicle relationship. Example: This test is a monster. I felt it sink its teeth into me with the first question, and then it kept chomping on me until it spit me out at the end or class. Keep in mind that metaphors are not just sentences. A character’s actions might be a metaphor; for example, crossing a raging river might represent some sort of rite of passage such as coming of age, becoming a man etc. Or a fire might represent anger or passion. A simile compares two different things by using connective words such as like or as to connect the tenor and vehicle. Example: Every class feels just like spending three hours in the DMV.

2) Foil, Protagonist, and Antagonist
   A foil is a type of character who by contrast to another character, often the protagonist, highlights that other character’s or protagonist’s qualities. For example, a foil to a character who is especially honest would be a character who is especially dishonest. The foil’s dishonesty highlights the other character’s honesty. To put this in modern jargon, the foil is what makes the protagonist “pop.” A protagonist is the most important or main character in a short story or novel. The protagonist is often the point of view character as well. An antagonist is a type of character that often blocks, frustrates, or comes in direct conflict with the protagonist. A particularly nasty antagonist is called a villain. An example of a non-villainous antagonist might be a sibling that the protagonist is always competing with for the attention of a parent or love interest.

3) Plot, Story, and In Media Res
   Plot is the order with which a story is presented, and the interrelationship of those plot points, which creates meaning or emotion. A plot may begin on page one with an event near the end of the story, then relate it to another event earlier in the story to give it meaning or to create suspense. For example, you may begin with your protagonist on the edge of a cliff, then from that plot point you go back in time to another series of plot points that show how your protagonist got there. This delay creates suspense, and if the flashback reveals the characters acrophobia, recent failures, the consequences of jumping or going back etc, this would give the initial scene meaning. Another function of plot is to impose a beginning, middle, and end on a story (life, as it travels in its straight-line chronology, does not always provide this). For example, a story might start with our character on the cliff,
back up to reveal how he got there on various levels (physical, emotional), then come back to the cliff and resolve the crisis—does he jump to possible safety in the river below, or does he find the courage to turn and face his antagonist? A **story** is a narrative of events delivered in the same order in which they happen, a straight-line chronology. Plot allows a writer to condense this story and to make it meaningful and entertaining. **In media res** means *in the middle of things*. It is a **plot** strategy wherein a short story or novel begins on page one in the middle (or sometimes near the end) of the main action.

4) **Irony, Verbal Irony, Situational Irony, and Sarcasm**

**Irony** is a contradiction between expectation and reality. For example, you would expect an anger management instructor to be a calm person, and so if in reality he starts a fight at his anger management seminar, that would be ironic. **Verbal irony** is a contradiction between what a character says and what that character really thinks or means. For example, upon seeing a man in a neon green aloha shirt with penguins on it, a character might say “Nice shirt.” Sometimes it can take a little effort to tell if a character is being verbally ironic—you might think the character really likes the shirt. Another example of verbal **irony** might be a character looking up at a stormy sky and saying, “What a great day for the beach.”

An example of **Situational irony** would be the one above concerning the anger management instructor, or seeing a man in a McDonalds uniform eating at Burger King. The situation itself is ironic. Another example would be Dwayne Hoobler’s hobby of making birdhouses in a world where there are no longer any birds. If in giving a presentation of the vocabulary term **irony**, I were unable to explain it, then that would be situationally ironic too. **Sarcasm** is mean, nasty, and insulting irony intended to hurt or embarrass someone. “Nice shirt,” is a form of sarcasm. “What a great day for the beach,” is not sarcasm.

5) **Epiphany**

An **epiphany** is when a character has a sudden, almost blinding insight into something deep and meaningful. A character might suddenly realize that his whole life has been spent chasing an impossible dream. The little girl in the short story “Distance” has an epiphany at the end when she looks into her father’s eyes. The substance of that epiphany is left up to the reader to interpret.

6) **Theme**

In literature, **Theme** is an interpretive statement. To state a theme is to state your interpretation of a story’s or novel’s meaning. As such, the theme of a story would not be “love,” but what you believe the story is saying about love. For example, rather than saying the theme of a story is *the general vulgarity of human beings*, I would instead say, *This story demonstrates that human beings are inherently vulgar in their treatment of others and the planet, and as our technological ability advances, so does the scale of our vulgarity. This, ultimately, is self-destructive and will be our demise*. If I were writing a thematic critical analysis of this story, I would state this theme in the first paragraph and then use the rest of the paper defending its existence with evidence and argument.

7) **Subtext**

In literature, subtext is sometimes mistakenly believed to be the “hidden meaning.” It’s not really hidden though, just unstated. Why? Because we dislike being hit over the head with messages, and sometimes it’s the only way to get an audience to confront a controversial or difficult issue without alienating them. For example, Dr. Seuss’s story “The Sneetches,” which on the surface is just a silly little children’s story, has deep subtext that pushes us to
confront our own biases against people who we perceive as different. If a story were to straight-out call us racist or classist or sexist, we might never read it and internalize the message. Bottom line: subtext is a way to be subtle, and in literature being subtle is often the best way to deliver a message.

8) Narrator, Unreliable Narrator, Stream of Consciousness, and Interior Monologue.

A narrator is who is telling a story, often but not always one of the characters. An unreliable narrator is usually a first person narrator who the reader simply cannot trust to tell the story truthfully or reliably. It is their perception that is in question. For example, a character might be drunk, insane, mentally ill, possessed, or simply biased. Usually but not always an author will provide clues as to what is actually happening.

Stream of consciousness is a narrative technique that tries to capture the way thoughts actually process through the human mind. There are various levels of this, and the closer they are to how the mind actually works, the harder they are to understand. This is because the mind does not process information using clear grammatical sentences, and is often chaotic. For example, a stream of consciousness narration of what is going through my mind as I’m sitting here might be: Type type type. It’s raining. Warm soda. Sometimes I wish I could fly. Once, when I was twelve, I almost drowned. Focus focus focus. Get these terms done. “Do you know what time it is,” a guy asks me. He stands there at my door, frowning at me. I don’t know what time it is. I don’t even know what day it is. Why the hell is he frowning at me? An Interior Monologue is a type of stream of consciousness that renders a character’s thoughts, feelings, and emotions, and can occur at times in any kind of narrative. Sometimes an interior monologue might be broken up by thoughts coming from an outside narrator.

9) Point of View, Person, and Levels of Omniscience

Point of View is the predominant perspective and voice of the narrator, and can be broken into first person (I), second person (you) and third person (he, she, it, etc.). Each of these can be paired with present, past, and future tense. For example, a story may be told in first person, present-tense point of view. Third person narrators can have total omniscience, in which they are privileged to know the thoughts and perceptions of all characters (most of the time this kind of narrator is not one of the characters), limited omniscience, in which the narrator can know the thoughts and perceptions of a limited number of characters, and central omniscience, in which the narrator writes through the thoughts and perceptions of just one character. In central omniscience, for example, an character would not be able to narrate what is going on behind his or her back. To do so would be to lapse into total or limited omniscience. Lapsing from one to the other usually indicates bad writing.

10) Character: Characters can run the spectrum from flat, (one-dimensional) to fully rounded (complex). Flat characters are often stereotypical, more caricature than character. For example, as you have probably seen in countless movies: the wise-cracking buddy cops, the thoroughly evil bad guy, the wimpy scientist, etc. Round characters are more complex, and often display the inconsistencies and internal conflicts found in most people. A good round character, as William Faulkner says, demonstrates “the human heart in conflict with itself.” This is not to say that flat characters are poor choices to use in fiction; some great novels are full of them.

11) Conflict: Conflict is the struggle between opposing forces. A protagonist might be struggling against some combination of obstacles or other characters. Or the conflict might
be internal, involving competing motives, desires, loyalties: the human heart in conflict with itself.

12) **Setting:** Think of this as not just time and place, but social setting as well. In a paper, you might analyze how various setting evoke mood or atmosphere, how settings mirror or contradict (creating irony) what’s happening in the novel or in a character’s mind. Do changes in setting compliment changes (motives, desires, conflicts) within the characters?

13) **Scapegoat** A person, group, or thing upon whom the blame for the mistakes or crimes of other is thrust.

14) **Genre:** A more or less arbitrary mode of classification, whose justification is the convenience of talking about literature. Novel, poem, essay, play, short story.

15) **Tone**
The quality of writing which results from the attitude of the narrator or character toward his or her subject matter. This attitude, which the audience must interpret, can be sarcastic, sentimental, angry, silly, high makamaka, etc.

16) **Figurative Language**
A departure from the standard meaning of words in order to achieve some meaning or effect. *His eyes drank heavily of her beauty. Kobe Bryant is on fire!*

17) **Imagery**
Mental pictures produced verbally though literal or figurative language. Often defined more broadly to include all sensory experience.

**A Stab at Goodness**
A work of literature is good if it is beautiful and meaningful. Sometimes it only needs to be one of those. And sometimes just being meaningful is beautiful. E=MC². Truth is beauty is truth is beauty is truth. Something is beautiful when it creates positive emotion, when it moves us, when it evokes our senses or makes us feel something. How do you know when a man or a woman is beautiful? You know because of what that person makes you feel. The same is true of literature. If it makes you feel something, then it has succeeded and it is good. If it makes you think something, then it has succeeded and it is good. In this way, even something ugly can be beautiful. This presupposes that there is a value to beauty in this world.
Write, and submit for publication, a four page (minimum) American short story. Your story will receive an A if 1) it includes an interesting plot, 2) interesting and developed characters, 3) it strives to impart some theme, and 4) it is written with clear sentences and understandable punctuation. Similes and metaphors will greatly impress! Strive to say something about America, about being American. Remember, this is fiction. Use your imagination to create this story. Save personal experience for the essay assignment.

Look at the stories we have read this semester as models. How are they structured? What makes for an interesting plot, characters, theme? What makes them American?

Think about the story having a beginning, middle, and especially a good ending. Think about point of view, good dialogue, strong descriptions that appeal to the senses and give the reader a precise and vivid evocation of experience. Write scenes that are in the moment, transitioning from scene to scene. Most of all, think about your audience. What must you do to make them like it? Write through the senses of your character and to the senses of your audience.

You must submit this story for publication to receive credit. I suggest Rain Bird, the WCC literary and art journal. Applications will be provided. If you choose to submit elsewhere, give me a copy of the cover letter you send to the publisher. On the day the final draft is due, you must turn in the final draft, the rough draft, and the peer review, stapled together in that order. Final drafts without rough drafts and a peer review will be considered rough drafts and returned without a grade. Drafts must also be in MLA format. Remember, you need to turn in two final drafts, one for me to grade, and one to submit for publication.

Rough Draft is Due Monday, February 2
Final Draft is Due Monday, February 9
Short Story Peer Review

**Final draft should be turned in stapled to the rough draft and the peer review, in that order**

1) Describe the protagonist, then offer suggestions on how this character might be improved or better realized. Add some back story on any of them?

2) Is the setting detailed and specific enough to draw you into the story? If not, how might the setting become better established?

3) A good story moves through specific scenes, complete with vivid details and dialogue. Does the story have specific, detailed scenes, or is it just generally narrated, almost operating like an essay instead of a story? Help the author create better scenes.

3) Insure that dialogue is separated by paragraphs, not jammed together in the same paragraph.

4) What theme is the story communicating to you, or what theme might be developed?

5) What is American about this story?

6) What did you like best about this story?

7) What needs the most improvement?
8) Author’s comments: State three things in three full sentences on how you plan to improve this story.

**Short Story Evaluation Sheet**

*Subtract 10% for late papers, and 5% for every half page short of four full pages.*

(Papers less than three full pages will not be graded—resubmit)

**Proper MLA Format 25%**

- 12 pt. Times New Roman Font
- Double Spacing Throughout
- One Inch Margins
- Headings (name, page #)
- Stapled

**Assignment Criteria 50%**

- Contains Interesting Plot
- Contains Interesting and Developed Characters
- Theme
- Peer Review
- Good Title

**Quality of Writing 25%**

- Grammar
- Punctuation
- Spelling
- Voice
- Final Draft Improves Greatly from Rough Draft
Based on a personal experience of yours in America, or a series of experiences, write a four page essay that strikes at some sense of American-ness. How do you participate in American culture? How do you resist it? What do you think about it? Where, in your experience, is American culture admirable? Where, in your experience, is it less than admirable? Ground the essay in experience and observation, and be meaningful.

**On the day the final draft is due, you must turn in the final draft, the rough draft, and the peer review, stapled together in that order.** Final drafts without rough drafts and a peer review will be considered rough drafts and returned without a grade. Drafts must also be in MLA format.

**Rough Draft is Due Monday, Feb 23**
**Final Draft is Due Monday, March 2**
American Essay Peer Review

Final draft should be turned in stapled to the rough draft and the peer review, in that order

1) Is the essay grounded in experience and observation? How so?

2) Is the experience detailed and specific enough to create mental imagery? If not, what details would make it come alive?

3) What is identifiably American about this essay?

4) Does the writing flow well, and can you hear the author’s voice? Point out trouble spots.

5) What do you like best about this essay?

6) What needs the most improvement?

8) Author’s comments: State three things in three full sentences on how you plan to improve this story.
American Essay Evaluation Sheet

Subtract 10% for late papers, and 5% for every half page short of four full pages.
(Papers less than three full pages will not be graded—resubmit)

Proper MLA Format 25%

12 pt. Times New Roman Font

Double Spacing Throughout

One Inch Margins

Headings (name, page #)

Stapled

Assignment Criteria 50%

Essay is Grounded in Experience and Observation

Essay Contains Strong Imagery

Essay is Identifiably American

Peer Review

Good Title

Quality of Writing 25%

Grammar

Punctuation

Spelling

Voice
Try writing, and submitting for publication, a poem that explores just one small aspect of America or being American. Maybe it’s as small as being perplexed by too many choices in the cereal aisle of Foodland. Maybe it’s an image of some mallrats smoking outside Windward Mall, with that little cemetery and the ancient Ko’olau behind them. Maybe it has something to do with television, or motorcycles, or people wearing coats downtown when it’s 90 degrees outside. Go for strong imagery. Play with language. Do any damn thing you want!

You must submit this poem for publication to receive credit. I suggest Rain Bird, the WCC literary and art journal. Applications will be provided. If you choose to submit elsewhere, give me a copy of the cover letter you send to the publisher. On the day the final draft is due, you must turn in the final draft, the rough draft, and the peer review, stapled together in that order. Final drafts without rough drafts and a peer review will be considered rough drafts and returned without a grade. Remember, you need to turn in two final drafts, one for me to grade, and one to submit for publication.

Rough Draft is Due Wednesday, March 4
Final Draft is Due Wednesday, March 11
American Poem Peer Review

1) Does the poem contain strong imagery? If so, what is it? If not, what image might the author include?

2) Is the use of language interesting in some way—rhyming couplets, poetic form such as sonnet, haiku, etc?

3) What is identifiably American about the poem?

4) What did you like best about the poem?

7) What needs the most improvement?
8) Author’s comments: State three things in three full sentences on how you plan to improve this poem.

American Poem Evaluation Sheet

Assignment Criteria 50%

Contains Strong Imagery
Identifiably American
Poetic Use of Language
Peer Review
Good Title

Quality of Writing 50%

Grammar
Punctuation
Spelling
Voice
Final Draft Improves Greatly from Rough Draft
AMERICAN PLAY READER-RESPONSE ANALYSIS

Now that you have read *A Streetcar Named Desire*, ask yourself how it relates to your own thoughts and perceptions. Where does the play resonate with your own life, your own thoughts and experiences concerning issues raised in the play? What does the play make you think about? What conclusions about life can be drawn from the play? Make strong, interesting points in this paper, and support them with sound logic, evidence, and argument. Be careful not to drift into personal essay, and keep the focus of this paper on the play. See handout for a sample paper.

**On the day the final draft is due, you must turn in the final draft, the rough draft, and the peer review, stapled together in that order.** Final drafts without rough drafts and a peer review will be considered rough drafts and returned without a grade. Drafts must also be in MLA format.

Cite the play at least twice (quotes should not take up more than 2 lines). Also cite at least two authoritative outside sources (no more than 2 lines each), and include a works cited page. Assume your audience to be this class and **do not retell or summarize the play.** The paper should be at least two full pages, and in proper MLA Format. See the peer review and evaluation sheets to insure you follow all criteria.

**Rough Draft is Due Monday, March 30**
**Final Draft is Due Monday, April 6**
American Play Reader-Response Analysis Peer Review

Final draft should be turned in stapled to the rough draft and the peer review, in that order

Author’s signature: I attest that this paper is completely free of plagiarism, and I understand that if any plagiarism is found I will, without exception, fail this course

What are the main points made in the paper? Write them down, and state what evidence is used to support each one.

Does the paper tend to simply summarize the play in places (this happened, then that happened, etc)? Show the author so that these areas can be deleted.

Does the focus get away from the play in places? Where? How can the material be related to the play?
Does the paper include intelligence from at least two **authoritative** outside sources? What are the sources?

How would you rate the level of insight in the paper? How might the paper be made more insightful?

Author’s comments: on the back, in five complete sentences, state five ways you will improve this paper.

**American Play Reader-Response Evaluation Sheet**

*Subtract 10% for late papers, and 5% for every half page short of two full pages.*

**Proper MLA Format 25%**

- 12 pt. Times New Roman Font
- Double Spacing Throughout
- One Inch Margins
- Headings (name, page #, Works Cited page)
- Stapled

**Assignment Criteria 50%**

- Contains strong points that are supported with sound logic, evidence, and argument (10%)
- Contains Authoritative Outside Sources (not encyclopedias or dictionaries)
- Outside Sources Cited Properly, in Text and Works Cited Page (according to MLA)
- Quotes from the Play
- Cites the Play Properly (not too many, too few, or too long passages)
- Avoids Summarizing the Work(s)
- Contains Intelligent Thought
- Peer Review
- Good Title
AMERICAN NOVEL COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Write a four-page comparative analysis, in MLA format, of The Awakening and Mumbo Jumbo. You might focus on how you believe the works compliment or oppose each other in their representation of America. Or you might focus on the differences and similarities of the protagonists. Are there two different Americas here? Is one perspective more accurate than the other, or can they co-exist? Is that co-existence identifiably America? Compare these novels in any way you wish, but keep your focus narrow to have a strong paper. Also, keep this paper in mind as you read both novels, and use your notes and class discussions to help you arrive at what to write about.

You must have a thesis statement in the first paragraph, then a coherent organization that delivers a body of information supporting your thesis. Cite the works at least four times as evidence in support of your thesis (quotes should not take up more than 2 lines). Also cite at least two authoritative outside sources. Assume your audience to be this class and do not retell or summarize the works. See the peer review and evaluation sheets to insure you follow all criteria.

On the day the final draft is due, you must turn in the final draft, the rough draft, and the peer review, stapled together in that order. Final drafts without rough drafts and a peer review will be considered rough drafts and returned without a grade. Drafts must also be in MLA format.

Rough Draft is Due Wednesday, April 22
Final Draft is Due Wednesday, May 6
American Novel Comparative Analysis Peer Review

Final draft should be turned in stapled to the rough draft and the peer review, in that order

Author’s signature: I attest that this paper is completely free of plagiarism, and I understand that if any plagiarism is found I will, without exception, fail this course_______________________________

Does the paper have a clear thesis statement in the first paragraph? What is it? Write it down. Comment on it.

What are the main points made in the paper that support the thesis statement? Write them down, and state what evidence is used to support each one.

Are there any points defended in the paper that are not related to the thesis statement? If so, how might the thesis statement be adjusted to accommodate these points?
Does the paper tend to simply summarize the work or works in places (this happened, then that happened, etc)? Show the author so that these areas can be deleted.

Does the paper include intelligence from at least two authoritative outside sources? What are the sources? How do they contribute to supporting the author’s thesis statement?

How would you rate the level of insight in the paper? How might the paper be made more insightful?

Author’s comments: on the back, in five complete sentences, state five ways you will improve this paper.

American Novel Comparative Analysis Evaluation Sheet
Subtract 10% for late papers, and 5% for every half page short of four full pages.
(Papers less than three full pages will not be graded—resubmit)

Proper MLA Format 25%
  12 pt. Times New Roman Font
  Double Spacing Throughout
  One Inch Margins
  Headings (name, page #, Works Cited page)
  Stapled

Assignment Criteria 50%
  Contains a Clear Thesis Statement As Asked For In The Assignment (10% of grade)
  Contains Authoritative Outside Sources (not encyclopedias or dictionaries)
  Outside Sources Cited Properly, in Text and Works Cited Page (according to MLA)
  Quotes from the Work(s)
  Cites the Work(s) Properly (not too many, too few, or too long passages)
  Avoids Summarizing the Work(s)
  Contains Intelligent Thought
Peer Review

Good Title

**Quality of Writing 25%**

Grammar

Punctuation

Spelling

Voice

Final Draft Improves Greatly from Rough Draft

Author’s Name

Your Name

Self-Analysis Peer Review

**Staple together final draft in the following order: Final Draft, Rough Draft, Peer Review**

Does the paper have a title—not self evaluation or self analysis?

Is the paper in proper MLA format? If not, suggest how to get it there.

Does the paper address each SLO for the course? If not, help the author do so.

Does the paper address the four questions at the top of page two of this syllabus?

What did the author do well in his or her writing this semester?

Where did the author make the most improvement?
What does the author still need to improve on?

Remind the author that his or her portfolio needs to be hole-punched into a three ring binder, with no staples and no plastic sleeves.

Author’s comments: State five things in five full sentences that you will do to improve this paper.

**Reader Response Theory**

Reader response theory has been recognized as a distinct critical movement since the early 1970s. Its many advocates include Kenneth Burke, Wayne Booth, Stanley Fish, Louise Rosenblatt, and Walker Gibson. Although these thinkers disagree on many of the features of reader response criticism, they agree that reader response criticism should pay attention to the areas of psychology, history, and sociology. In so doing, these critics make reading an interdisciplinary activity. They also weaken notions of "expert readers," for reader response criticism adheres to the principle that everyday readers can produce, if not "right" interpretations, then at least interpretations that make sense for them. Reader response criticism develops open-ended problem solving strategies, or heuristics, intended to assist readers with the work of interpretation. Reader response criticism operates on the following premises:

* Texts affect readers in unique and subjective ways.
* Readers participate in determining the meaning of literary works.
* Anything that contributes to the development of a reader influences his/her interpretation of a reading selection.
* An individual's social class, racial background, ethnicity, gender, nationality, age, physical condition, employment, vocational interests, and so on, make a profound impact on how that person sees and understands the world.
* Just because reader response theory validates the interpretive powers of the reader does not mean that "anything goes" in interpretation. Readers are expected to support their interpretations with sound references and inferences, combining their understanding of the text with their knowledge of the world.
Sample Reader Response Paper

The following sample, written from the perspective of a female college student, is based on Richard Wright’s short story “The Man Who Was Almost a Man.”

As I began the story, I was jolted by Dave's use of the word "nigger," even before I understood that the character was an African American. I have always been conditioned not to use that word, and to think that people who do so are morally confused. Later, after I gathered that he was black, I reconsidered. However, I'm still doubtful of that whole cultural thing that says people who belong to a certain group can use whatever language they like to describe themselves. Just because I'm female, I wouldn't call other women "bitches" or "hos."

As I continued to read, I got over my language hang-up, because I saw that the whole piece is written in a rough country dialect. None of the characters in the story have much of a vocabulary. Actually, I enjoyed the dialect. My grandparents were tenant land farmers, and they spoke a country dialect. Once I realized that the people in the story are much like the people in my own hardworking, close-knit family, I began to sympathize with the characters. I wanted good things to happen for Dave.
I also wanted some opportunity to present itself that would enable Dave to feel good about himself. I felt sorry for Dave because of the way other men on the farm treated him, and I wondered if his problems are peculiar to African American males, or applicable to all. I tend to think that most men endure this treatment. I've listened to the conversations of some young men, and I know how cruel they can be to each other, and how much pressure they put on themselves to feel like men—the whole male angst thing. Not that females aren't guilty of similar stuff, but… this story is about a guy.

At the same time, I understand that, sometimes, people treat others poorly because they themselves suffer from low self-esteem. I've been mistreated in similar ways. For instance, I once happened to win a special college award. At a party shortly afterward, I overheard two girls saying to each other, "What did she do to win that award? She's not so hot." I was a little stung by their remarks. I had worked very hard to qualify for that award, and I had not pulled any strings in order to get it. After thinking about it, I thought that they might suffer from low self-esteem. Tearing me down, and suggesting that I won the award through secret channels, made them feel better about themselves. So, I tossed the whole thing off, and wished them both much happiness. Perhaps the older men in the story also felt bad about themselves, and talking down to Dave made them feel bigger and stronger.

After the shooting accident and the death of the mule, I knew Dave was in serious trouble. He couldn't possibly stay on the farm and endure an endless round of ribbing from the other men. As much as he loved his mom, he couldn't put up with more insults to his self-esteem. It was bad enough to be poor and to have nothing to look forward to but another day of backbreaking work. So, although I did not agree with his running away in the end, I understood why he did it. If it were my decision to make, I probably would have stayed, even though it would mean more or less constant humiliation for awhile. Eventually, though, people would forget about the mule and chalk up the whole incident to youthful high jinks. Perhaps the story
would have become something to laugh about. Growing up is hard. Sometimes I've been so embarrassed that I've felt tempted to run away, but I never have, because I know that running away doesn't make problems disappear; it only creates a set of new problems. Dave's decision must have created more problems for him. Who would have supper waiting for him at the end of the train ride? No-one.

Dave's story makes me think about young people in the world who are desperate for some shred of human dignity. I believe that lots of teens think that drugs, sex, and violence will provide them a way out of a life of loneliness and deprivation. I'll have to think about this problem, because I don't have any good answers for it yet. As this story shows, family love is not enough, for, even though Dave's mother loved him, she couldn’t help him. A more broadly cultural solution must be needed.