

ENG 255
SURVEY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE: MODERN

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| Instructor: | Robin Havenick |
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| Class Website: | LBCC home/Dept & Programs/Instructor Webpages/English/Havenick |
| Office Hours: | Mon 1 - 2 & Writing Center 2 - 3, Tues 3:30 – 4:30, Wed 2 - 3 |
| CRN: | 45545 Tuesday and Thursday 11:00 – 12:20 NSH206 |
| Text: | <i>Harper Single Volume American Literature</i> , 3 rd edition |
| Prerequisite: | ENG255 is the third of a 3-course sequence in American Literature, but you do not have to take either of the preceding courses (ENG253 or ENG254) to enjoy and succeed in this modern course. |

“Over and over again I am amazed by the treasure trove that American literature is. . . work which bears and invites re-readings, which motions to future readings as well as contemporary ones, (which) implies a shareable world and an endlessly flexible language.”

Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark*

Course Description

Welcome to a falcon’s view of 20th Century American Literature. The era is rich. We’ll watch as writers break literary ground to give human voice in poetry and prose to two world wars, to the great urban migrations north, to the *militaryindustrialcomplex*, to civil rights movements and the Vietnam War. Always, our focus will be on the ways these artists use our American language to (in the words of Ezra Pound, one of our great modernist poets) “make it new.” Always, we’ll keep ourselves firmly planted in the 21st century, appreciating what was *then* from the perspective of who we are now and of the ways in which we are telling our American story today.

Learning Outcomes: When you successfully complete ENG255, you should be able to:

- Read, write, and talk critically and insightfully about Modern American Literature.
- Recognize literature’s place in American culture and history.
- Demonstrate how American Literature enhances our contemporary selves/cultural awareness and creativity.
- Write and speak confidently about your own and others’ ideas regarding American Literature.

The Work We'll Do (200 points total)

Discussion/Participation (40)

Class discussions – in which we all participate – go a long way toward extending and deepening meaning, understanding, and pleasure. I'll provide the focus, concepts, and context as together we will explore this modern era. Plan to prepare well before class and to participate in readings, activities, and discussions during class. Be prepared for a discussion of the weekly assignments by reading well: read and re-read these writings – once to get an overview and feel for the piece; the second time to explore its meanings. Question and examine what they mean to you. Present and participating in discussions earns full credit. Please always be present for class! You – your consistent presence and participation – contribute to the integrity of our classroom community.

Response Writings (60: six at 10 points each)

You'll be gathering your responses to weekly readings as well as practicing and refining your analytic and interpretive skills in focused (informal) writings. I'll provide an assignment each week; you'll pick six from the ten possibilities. And I will always try to provide a creative option. These response writings, which are designed for you to reflect on and apply what you are learning, will lead you toward your Formal Essay and provide you with your own writing as foundation for that formal essay. (Full Credit: turned in on time, represents clear understanding and critical thinking, well developed. Partial Credit: not turned in on time, or does not represent a clear understanding or clear critical thinking, or is not well developed. Format: one full page, word-processed, single-spaced.)

Formal Essay (70)

A formal essay focused on Modern American Literature that grows out of your own interests and previous writings.

Presentation (30)

Here's your opportunity to focus on and share with us (in any creative ways that you choose) what brought you to this class or what became most interesting to you as we explored the Modern tradition (e.g. the Beats and spoken word, the Blues foundation for American Literature, the art of war). Collaborative projects give you the opportunity to step outside of the standard academic assignments (individual written/academic performance). You're invited to get together with some of your colleagues, bring your own interests and talents, and create a presentation that (in any creative way) enhances our (the class) understanding of your subject. Get to know others in class early; browse the text for works that inspire your imagination; plan to use your creative strengths (drawing, acting, singing, etc.), to stay within the 15 – 20 minute timeframe, and to have as much fun in the preparation as you will in the presentation.

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| Succeeding in this class will require that you have college-level writing and reading skills (write at the WR121 level). If you have not yet taken WR121 (or aren't taking it this term), please see me. |
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