

Eastern Illinois University
New Course Proposal
ENG 3706, American Regional Literature

1. Catalogue Description

- a. English 3706
- b. American Regional Literature
- c. (3-0-3)
- d. F or S.
- e. AM REGIONAL LIT
- f. A course focusing on literature produced within specific geographical regions, regional schools, or regional traditions of the United States. Topics may include Southern literature, the Plains, the Northwest, Southwest humorists, New York City writers, or Illinois writers. Group 6. WI
- g. Prerequisites: English 1001G and 1002G or equivalent.
- h. This course will be initially offered in the Fall of 2004.

2. Objectives and Evaluation of the Course

- a. Students will become familiar with bodies of literature associated with particular regions of the United States between the seventeenth and twenty-first centuries.

Students will examine critically the meaning of region in American culture generally, and also in their own lives.

Students will study the impact of geography, dialect, local history, regional affiliation, and regional antagonism as factors in the shaping of canons.

Students will identify anxieties over race, region, gender, and class as configured in specific regions and trace these configurations as they have permeated American culture more generally.

- b. Students will be assessed by the instructor's evaluation of essay assignments, classroom participation, examinations, oral presentations, and reading quizzes. See sample grade breakdown in Section 3.
- c. This course is delivered in traditional format.
- d. NA
- e. This is a writing-intensive course. Students will write frequent responses to assigned readings and they will produce more lengthy, formal research essays, and their examinations will include essay components. Students will also revise at least one paper that has been read and commented on by the instructor. No less than 35% of their final grade will be determined on the basis of these writing projects.

3. Outline of the Course (Sample Only)

The course is designed for a fifteen-week semester, with each week consisting of either three 50-minute class meetings (45 total) or two 75-minute class meetings (30 total). The following sample reading schedule assumes a MWF meeting schedule.

This syllabus focuses on literature written in the southern region of the United States, and divides the course into two major units. During the first, nine-week unit, students read William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, a landmark in southern writing, while also studying southern writings from the colonial period to the early twentieth century. The objective here is to bring students to an understanding of the regional motifs and tropes through which Faulkner narrates his novel, how those motifs and tropes were developed, and how Faulkner's use of them compares to their use by earlier writers who may have influenced Faulkner. Students will write a short essay that connects *Absalom, Absalom!* to one other text from the first nine weeks of reading, and they will also take a reading examination at midterm.

During the second unit of the course (from week 10 to week 15), students will take up a more contemporary southern work, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, and read this alongside readings dating from the early twentieth century to our day. A longer final essay will require students to develop, research, and argue a thesis concerning some aspect of the course materials, and they will be required to hand in a proposal for this project by Week 13 and to discuss it with the instructor. The final exam for the course is comprehensive.

Grades will be determined by the following formula:

Participation.....	10%
Short reading Responses (10 total).....	10%
Essay #1 (5-6 pp).....	20%
Midterm Examination.....	20%
Essay #2 (8-10 pp.).....	20%
Final Examination.....	20%

Week 1

Monday:	Introductions, course outline
Wednesday:	William Faulkner, <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> , chapter 1
Friday:	William Shakespeare, <i>The Tempest</i> Weekly response due

Week 2

- Monday: continue *The Tempest*
John Donne, "Elegy XIX"
- Wednesday: Sir Robert Filmer, selections from *Patriarcha*
Richard Bland, selected poems
William Byrd, selections from *The Secret Diary of William Byrd*
- Friday: Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, chapter 2
Weekly response due

Week 3

- Monday: Thomas Jefferson, selections from *Notes on the State of Virginia*
Jefferson, "Grammar and the American Language"
- Wednesday: William Byrd, selections from *The History of the Dividing-Line*
William Gilmore Simms, "Confessions of a Murderer"
Simms, "To the Mocking-bird"
- Friday: Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, chapter 3
Weekly response due

Week 4

- Monday: Frederick Douglass, from *the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Written By Himself*
- Wednesday: Harriet Jacobs, selections from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*
John Pendleton Kennedy, selections from *Swallow Barn*
- Friday: *Absalom, Absalom!*, chapter 4
Weekly response due

Week 5

- Monday: Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher"
- Wednesday: Poe, selections from *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*
- Friday: Poe, "The Raven"
Absalom, Absalom!, chapter 5
Weekly response due

Week 6

- Monday: Henry Timrod, "Ethnogenesis"
Timrod, "The Cotton-boll"
- Wednesday: Anonymous, "The Difference of Race Between the Northern and Southern People"
Anonymous, "The Conflict of Northern and Southern Races"
William Archer Cocke, "The Puritan and the Cavalier"
George Fitzhugh, "Superiority of Southern Races"
- Friday: Anonymous, "The Old Scottish Cavalier"
Absalom, Absalom!, chapter 6
Weekly response due

Week 7

- Monday: Joel Chandler Harris, "The Wonderful Tar-Baby Story"
Harris, "Mr. Rabbit Grossly Deceives Mr. Fox"
- Wednesday: Charles Chesnutt, "The Goophered Grapevine"
Chesnutt, "The Wife of His Youth"
- Friday: *Absalom, Absalom!*, chapter 7
Weekly response due

Week 8

- Monday: Thomas Dixon, selections from *The Clansman*
- Wednesday: Kate Chopin, "Désirée's Baby"
Chopin, "La Belle Zoraïde"
- Friday: *Absalom, Absalom!*, chapter 8
In-class viewing: Scenes from *The Birth of A Nation*
Essay #1 due

Week 9

- Monday: finish *Absalom, Absalom!*
- Wednesday: Faulkner, "That Evening Sun"
- Friday: **Midterm Examination**

Week 10

- Monday: H. L. Menken, "The Sahara of the Bozart"
Jean Toomer, "Reapers," "Harvest Song," "November
Cotton Flower," "Blood-burning Moon," "Becky"
- Wednesday: Allen Tate, "Ode to the Confederate Dead"
Tate, "Narcissus as Narcissus"
- Friday: Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, pp. TBA
Weekly response due

Week 11

- Monday: Erskine Caldwell, "Kneel to the Rising Sun"
Richard Wright, "Big Boy Leaves Home"
- Wednesday: William Faulkner, "Dry September"
Caroline Gordon, "The Last Day in the Field"
- Friday: Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, pp. TBA
Weekly response due

Week 12

- Monday: Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*
- Wednesday: Zora Neale Hurston, "Drenched in Light"
Hurston, "How It Feels To Be Colored Me"
- Wednesday: Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, pp. TBA
Weekly response due

Week 13

- Monday: Alice Childress, "Northerners Can Be So Smug"
Ernest J. Gaines, "The Sky Is Gray"
Proposal for Final Paper due
- Wednesday: Alice Walker, "Everyday Use"
- Friday: Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, pp. TBA
Weekly response due

Week 14

- Monday: David Sedaris, "Drama Bug" and "The Rooster"
- Wednesday: James Dickey, "Cherrylog Road"
Dickey, "Power and Light"
- Friday: Flannery O'Connor, "Everything That Rises Must
Converge"
Weekly response due

Week 15

- Monday: Finish *The Color Purple*
- Wednesday: Flannery O'Connor, "Revelation"
- Friday: **Final papers due**
Review for final exam, final discussion

4. Rationale

- a. Purpose and need: Regional literature is an established and growing area of scholarship in the American Studies community as well as the American literary studies community. This course allows students to study literature written by authors from various regions of the United States, many of whom are widely recognized as important to the development of U.S. culture but who tend to be excluded from other kinds of American literature surveys. By focusing on regional genres of American literature, students gain an appreciation for the meaning of region in American life generally as well as an appreciation of the distinctive nature of poetry and prose written in the South, the Midwest, the Southwest, the Northwest, the West coast, or other areas, and they also build an expanded understanding of the variety and scope of American literatures. For these reasons, most English departments in the U.S. today include courses focused on regional literatures within their curricula.
- b. The level and quantity of reading assignments, the complexity of the subject matter, and the demanding nature of the examinations and writing assignments justify this course at the 3000 level; the course complements our other 3000-level courses in terms of scope and content.
- c. This course is not similar to any existing course.
- d. For English majors, this course may be taken as a Group 6 elective.

5. Implementation:

- a. This course may be assigned to Drs. Allison, Boswell, Carpenter, Engles, Hanlon, Guzowski, Leddy, Loudon, Murray, Swords, Vietto, or Zahlan.
- b. There are no additional costs associated with this course.
- c. Relevant readings will be selected by the instructor.

6. Community College Transfer

No community college course will be accepted as a substitute for this course.

7. Date approved by the department : 6 October 2003

8. Date approved by CAHCC: 12 November 2003

9. Date approved by CAA: 11 December 2003

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