

ENGLISH 441

American Literature, 1865-1920: Frontiers of Transformation

Spring 2018, TTh, 9:30-10:50, THH 213

Professor Bill Handley

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Office hours: Tuesdays 2:30-4pm, or by appt. other times

Course Description

The six decades after the Civil War were among the most transformative in U.S. history. This course will trace the formal and thematic ways that some writers addressed a rapidly changing society that included unprecedented numbers of new immigrants, the rise of the New Woman, the passing of the western "frontier," Reconstruction, and industrialization. We will explore how the genres of Realism and Naturalism addressed limited freedoms, social inequities, and forced choices in American society, and how the rise of psychology and anthropology opened doors to new kinds of literature evident within both popular and "high" genres. The overarching rubric for the course will be that of frontiers: the geographical western frontier that white Americans became nostalgic for, the disciplinary frontiers of psychology and anthropology that emerged in the late 19th century, the frontiers between genders and ethnicities, and this threshold period itself that transformed the U.S. nation and the world, at the advent of modernism, the lingering influences of which are still evident across cultures today.

Course Objectives

- To explore how texts are part of their historical moment and how they help to fashion how Americans understood themselves in relation to other Americans, immigrants, and indigenous peoples.
- To understand why "freedom" was a relative concept in this transformative period, depending on the accidents of birth and environment in relation to dominant definitions of what counts as the "true" American.
- To improve how to read critically and closely and how to write a compelling argument based on textual evidence.

Required Texts

Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!* (1913) (Dover) ASIN: B00E32OUVQ

Willa Cather, *My Antonia* (1918) (Dover) ISBN-13: 978-0486282404

Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (1899) (Dover) ISBN-13: 978-0486277868

Zane Grey, *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912) (Modern Library) ISBN-13: 978-0812966121

Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (1871) (Signet) ISBN-13: 978-0451531100

Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (1920) (Dover) ISBN-13: 978-0486298030

Owen Wister, *The Virginian* (1902) (Dover) ISBN-13: 978-0486449043

Course Schedule

January 9 Introduction

The Frontiers of Psychology, Anthropology, Gender, and Race

January 11 Reading: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) (handout)

January 16 Reading: *The Awakening*, through Chapter 20.

January 18 Reading: *The Awakening*, to end.

January 23 Reading: Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (through Ch. 10)

January 25 Reading: *The Age of Innocence* (through Book 1)

January 30 Reading: *The Age of Innocence* (through Chap. 25 of Book 2)

February 1 Film Viewing and Discussion: *The Age of Innocence* (1993; dir. Martin Scorsese)

February 6 Film Viewing, Continued

The Western Frontier and the Imagining of Gender, Ethnicity, and Nation

February 8 Reading: W. E. B. Du Bois, "Of the Dawn of Freedom," from *The Souls of Black Folk*; excerpts from Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, *Life Among the Paiutes* (handouts)

February 13 Reading: *Roughing It*, Chapters 1-20

February 15 Reading: *Roughing It*, Chapters 21-39

February 20 Reading: *Roughing It*, Chapters 40-59

February 22 Reading: Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893) (handout)

February 27 Reading: Owen Wister, *The Virginian*, to p. 84

March 1 Reading: *The Virginian*

March 6 Reading: *The Virginian* **First paper due**

March 8 **MIDTERM EXAM**

Spring Break: March 11-18

March 20 Reading: *Riders of the Purple Sage* (Editor's intro, and to p. 89)

March 22 Reading: *Riders of the Purple Sage*, to p. 218

March 27 Reading: *Riders*, to end.

March 29 Reading: *O Pioneers!*, to page 91 (or end of Part II)

April 3 Reading: *O Pioneers!*, to end.

April 5 Viewing: Documentary on Willa Cather

April 10 Reading: *My Ántonia*, Book 1

April 12 Reading: *My Ántonia*, Books 2-3

April 17 Reading: *My Ántonia*, to end.

Mordernist Transformations: Some American Poetry

April 19 Reading: poems by Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens, and W.H. Auden (handouts)

April 24 Dickinson, Stevens, and Auden (cont.)

April 26 Course Review **SECOND PAPER DUE**

FINAL EXAM, May 8, 8-10am in our classroom.

Course Requirements and Grading

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION (20%): It is essential that you do the reading before class, so that you can contribute to and get the most out of the discussion. We'll do a lot of close reading together amidst the bigger picture of cultural history.

MIDTERM and FINAL (20% each).

TWO PAPERS (5-7 pages each; 20% each)

The following is required on my syllabus by USC:

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity:

<http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the Department of Public Safety

<http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>.

This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men—

<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/>

provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu/> describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more.

Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs

http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html

provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.