

ENGL 263g American Literature  
MWF 9-9:50 am, THH 117  
Fall 2019

Ben Levine, Ph.D.  
Office hours: Fridays 10-11 AM,  
& by appointment; THH 412  
[BRLevine@usc.edu](mailto:BRLevine@usc.edu)

### Course Description and Objectives

*“Now the past didn't go anywhere, did it? It's right here, right now.”*  
-Utah Phillips, storyteller, folksinger, poet. 1935-2008

This course will cover the breadth of American Literature from the Pre-Colonial through the present day via an intensive reading of texts both canonical and idiosyncratic. We will be reading texts across time periods, looking at works in past centuries and reading texts that look back across centuries. Our discussions will address history, race, sex, gender, sexuality, and national identity. **Respect for viewpoints other than your own is a requirement, not a request.** You must come to class 1) having done the reading, 2) having formed some opinion about or reaction to that reading, and 3) willing to express that opinion in class. Not every student will connect with every text, but each student should leave with at least one aspect of American Literature that they'd like to explore further.

### Reading List:

**Procurement and Format:** You may choose to read off a screen or in hard copy, but you must bring a copy of the text to class. Anything labeled as 'handout' on the syllabus will be supplied in hard copy far enough in advance for you to have completed the reading. I have provided online links for some texts.

You will buy or procure a number of texts, purchased digitally, or new or used in hard copy, or located at a library. **You will have these texts and have read them in time for class:**

- EL Doctorow, *Ragtime* [Please note: you will have to read this by September 30th; I suggest you begin soon, reading concurrently with other texts]
- Nella Larsen, *Passing*
- Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, *Farewell to Manzanar* [selections]
- Martin Sherman, *Bent* [play]
- Tony Kushner, *Angels in America* [play; selections]
- Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep*
- Dashiell Hammett, *The Woman In the Dark*
- Patricia Highsmith, *Eleven* [short story collection; selections]
- Roxane Gay, *Difficult Women* [short story collection; selections]
- Toni Morrison, *Home*
- SE Hinton, *The Outsiders*
- Paul Zindel, *The Pigman*
- Text for final week; TBD in classroom discussion. (See schedule for options)

### Grading Policy

Participation:	15%
Quizzes:	20%
1st Short Paper:	25%

Final Paper: 40%

## Assignments

### Quizzes

All testing will come in the form of quizzes throughout the term. The quizzes will sometimes be short sessions in class where you will be asked to write down answers to questions I pose to confirm you are up to date with the readings. Occasionally you will be given a quiz question in class to take home and return the next week (either covering the previous class's reading, or in anticipation of an upcoming class's texts ) and be asked to write answers in response to a prompt I will provide you.

There will be an opportunity to drop your lowest quiz score.

Quizzes will not be announced beforehand.

Combined with participation, these will make up over a third of your grade in this course. That is a strong incentive to arrive to every class awake, on-time and prepared.

### Papers

You will be assigned two papers on this course. They will both make up significant portions of your grade, and it will be greatly to your benefit to be prepared and organized in your preparation for writing them.

I will not require you to do research on any works outside of the syllabus. However, if you do opt to engage in any independent research, I will be happy to discuss it with you and help aim you in a fruitful direction. Any concepts, ideas, or manners of expressing those ideas should be attributed to the work in which they were found to avoid the dangers of plagiarism. (Please see the University's plagiarism policy appended at the end of this syllabus.)

**Your First Paper is due MONDAY OCTOBER 7th, by e-mail before class at 9 AM; hardcopy to me in class; FIVE (5) pages, double-spaced in 12pt font.** I will provide you with prompts from which you will choose. You must write on a text (or texts) from the syllabus.

Your **Final Paper** will make up nearly half your grade in this class, and will be **DUE ON MONDAY DECEMBER 16th by 1pm; in both e-mail and hard copy.** Please plan accordingly. This paper will require you to write substantively on multiple texts from more than one period from the syllabus and make meaningful connections between them. We will discuss this further throughout the course.

Though there is no formal "Time-Management" component to your grade, I predict your chances of success in all aspects of this course will be vastly improved if you are able to effectively schedule time to read and write what is required of you in a timely manner.

## Notes on Attendance & Participation

- Unexcused absences will have a negative impact on your participation grade.
- Failure to prepare for class (readings and assignments) will have a negative impact on your participation grade.
- Missed quizzes cannot be made up and your quiz average will suffer.

## Weekly Reading List

- **Mon Aug 26th**
  - Intros; Syllabus review; review of readings and reading schedule; Assignments structure; expectations and aims

- *Poor Richard Almanack* selections- from handout
- Native American Origin Stories: The Origin of Earth, Tuskegee; In the Beginning, Yuchi; The First Fire, The Origin of Medicine, Cherokee; Creation, Apache; The Origin of Fire, Origin of the Animals, Jicarilla-Apache- all from handout
- Joy Harjo, ‘Trickster’; ‘Remember’ -handout
- **Wed Aug 28th**
  - Colonial Literature; Postcolonial theory; oral tradition; origin myths and borrowing.
  - Joy Harjo, excerpts from *American Sunset*, poems, prose- from handout
  - Joy Harjo, poems: ‘Grace’; ‘Deer Dancer’; ‘Original Memory’; ‘Transformations’; ‘Heartshed’; ‘Eagle Poem’; ‘He Told Me His Name Was Sitting Bull’; ‘Crossing the Border’; ‘Morning Prayers’; ‘Don’t Bother the Earth Spirit’; ‘Remember’ -all from handout
  - Native American Origin Stories: Iroquis Creation Story from *Norton Anthology of American Literature* from handout; Adoption of the Human Race, Natchez; Origin of the Buffalo, Cheyenne; How the Hopi Indians Reached Their World, Origin of the Clans, Hopi -all from handout
  - *Autobiography of Ben Franklin*, excerpts from handout
- **Fri Aug 30th** Washington Irving, “Rip Van Winkle” & “English Writers on America”
  - Go to: USC Libraries, Databases, ProQuest Ebook Central
- **Mon Sept 2nd** - Labor Day
- **Wed Sept 4th** Arthur Miller, *The Crucible*
  - Read online- <https://archive.org/details/TheCrucibleFullText>
- **Fri Sept 6th** Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown”
  - Go to: USC Libraries, Databases, ProQuest Ebook Central
  - -AND “Gentle Boy”
    - Go to: USC Libraries, Databases, ProQuest Ebook Central, In *Twice Told Tales*.
- **Mon Sept 9th** Herman Melville, *Bartleby the Scrivener*
  - Go to: USC Libraries, Databases, ProQuest Ebook Central
- **Wed Sept 11th** E.A. Poe, “Fall of the House of Usher”; “Tell-tale Heart”; “Cask of Amontillado”
  - Go to: USC Libraries, Databases, ProQuest Ebook Central, In *The Tell-Tale Heart and Other Stories*
- **Fri Sept 13th** Flannery O’Conner, “A Good Man Is Hard To Find”; “Everything that Rises Must Converge”
  - Find link to full texts: <http://www.shortstoryguide.com/flannery-oconnor-short-stories/>
- **Mon Sept 16th** Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* through Chapter 1-15 (“Sandy’s Tale”) AND Chapter 39 “Yankee’s Fight with the Knights”
  - Go to: USC Libraries, Databases, ProQuest Ebook Central

- **Wed Sept 18th** Ray Bradbury, ‘Fire Balloons’; ‘Last Night of the World’; ‘The Long Rain’; ‘The Veldt’ -all on handout
  - Some available from <http://www.shortstoryguide.com/ray-bradbury-short-stories/>
- **Fri Sept 20th** Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*
  - Available online through USC Libraries
- **Mon Sept 23rd** Stephen Crane, *Open Boat and Other Stories*, selections:
  - ‘Open Boat’; ‘A Man and Some Others’; ‘One Dash—Horses’; ‘Death and the Child’.
  - Available online through USC Libraries.
- **Wed Sept 25th** E Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*
  - Available online at [https://archive.org/stream/oldmansea00hemi\\_1/old-mansea00hemi\\_1\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/oldmansea00hemi_1/old-mansea00hemi_1_djvu.txt)
- **Fri Sept 27th** John Steinbeck, *The Pearl*
  - Available online at [https://archive.org/stream/ThePearlJohnSteinbeck/The-Pearl-John-Steinbeck\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/ThePearlJohnSteinbeck/The-Pearl-John-Steinbeck_djvu.txt) and <https://archive.org/details/ThePearlJohnSteinbeck>
- **Mon Sept 30th** EL Doctorow, *Ragtime*
- **Wed Oct 2nd** Thoreau, *Walden*, excerpts. Read chapters:
  - 2. Where I Lived and What I Lived For; 3. Reading; 4. Sounds; 5. Solitude; 11 Higher Laws; 12. Brute Neighbors
  - Go to: H.D. Thoreau, *Walden*. USC Libraries, Databases, ProQuest Ebook Central
- **Fri Oct 4th** Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* [1891-2 edition], “I Hear America Singing”; “Song of Myself” stanzas 1-8; 17-28; 44-52 required. The entire poem is recommended.- all from handout.
- **Mon Oct 7th - FIRST PAPER DUE; e-mail before class; hard copy in class.**
  - TS Eliot, “Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock”;
    - Online at <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/44212/the-love-song-of-j-alfred-prufrock>
  - AND TS Eliot, “The Wasteland”
    - Online at <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47311/the-waste-land>
- **Wed Oct 9th** F Scott Fitzgerald, “Diamond as Big as the Ritz”, short story
  - in *Tales of the Jazz Age*: USC Libraries, Databases, ProQuest Ebook Central, Search for *Tales of the Jazz Age*.
  - In addition, PDF available online at <https://freeditorial.com/en/books/the-diamond-as-big-as-the-ritz/related-books>
- **Fri Oct 11th** Emily Dickinson, selected poems- from handout

- **Mon Oct 14th** Langston Hughes, poems ('My People'; 'Migration'; 'My Beloved'; 'The White Ones'; 'Gods'; 'Grant Park'; 'Lament for Dark Peoples'; 'Fascination'; 'Youth'; 'Afraid'; 'Mammy'; 'Dream Variations'; 'Subway Face'; 'The Ballad of Margie Polite'; 'Reverie on the Harlem River'; 'Love'; 'Freedom's Plow')- all on handout.
- Zora Neale Hurston, "John Redding Goes to Sea", short story.
  - Available online at <https://www.narrativemagazine.com/issues/stories-week-2016-2017/story-week/john-redding-goes-sea-zora-neale-hurston>
- **Wed Oct 16th** Nella Larsen, *Passing*
- **Fri Oct 18th Semester Break**
- **Mon Oct 21st** James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues" [included in *Going to Meet the Man* and in various other collections]
  - Available online and to download <https://learning.hccs.edu/faculty/selena.anderson/engl1302/readings/sonnys-blues-by-james-baldwin/view>
- **Wed Oct 23rd** Truman Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*
  - Available online at [https://archive.org/details/CapoteTrumanBreakfastAtTiffany39S\\_201603](https://archive.org/details/CapoteTrumanBreakfastAtTiffany39S_201603) and [https://archive.org/stream/CapoteTrumanBreakfastAtTiffany39S\\_201603/Capote Truman - Breakfast at Tiffany 39 s djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/CapoteTrumanBreakfastAtTiffany39S_201603/Capote%20Truman%20-%20Breakfast%20at%20Tiffany%2039%20s%20djvu.txt)
- **Fri Oct 25th** Sylvia Plath,
  - *Ariel*, selected poems: 'Morning Song'; 'The Couriers'; '**The Applicant**'; '**Lady Lazarus**'; '**Ariel**'; 'Lesbos'; 'Medusa'; 'The Moon and the Yew Tree'; '**A Birthday Present**'; '**Daddy**'- from handout
  - *Colossus*, selected poems: 'The Eye-Mote'; 'The Colossus'; 'Lorelei'; '**Suicide off Egg Rock**'; 'Mushrooms'; '**Full Fathom Five**'; 'The Burnt-Out Spa' -from handout
  - Anne Sexton, poems ('You, Doctor Martin'; 'Kind Sir, These Woods'; 'Music Swims Back to Me')- from handout.
  - Camille Paglia, on Plath's 'Daddy'-from handout
- **Mon Oct 28th** Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*
  - Obtain download at <https://all-med.net/pdf/death-of-a-salesman-text-and-criticism/>
- **Wed Oct 30th** Gwendolyn Brookes, poems:
  - 'the white troops had their orders but the Negroes looked like men'; 'firstly inclined to take what it is told'; 'The Bean Eaters'; 'We real Cool'; 'the mother'; 'a song in the front yard'; 'the peached: ruminates begins the sermon'; 'Old Mary'; 'A Bronzeville Mother Loiters in Mississippi. Meanwhile, a Mississippi Mother Burns Bacon'; 'Lovers of the Poor'; 'Sunset of the City'; 'Langston Hughes'- from handout;
  - Joy Harjo, poems ('America'; 'Crossing the Border' & excerpts from *American Sunrise*: 'Welcoming Song'; 'American Sunrise'; 'Exile of Memory'; 'Washing My Mother's Body')- from handout;
  - Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *A Coney Island of the Mind* and *A Far Rockaway of the Heart* selected poems -from handout.

- **Fri Nov 1st** Alan Ginsberg, ‘Howl’;
  - Obtain online at <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49303/howl>
  - And ‘Footnote to Howl’;
    - Obtain online at <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/54163/footnote-to-howl>
  - And ‘A Supermarket in California’
    - Obtain online at <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47660/a-supermarket-in-california>
- Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *Wild Dreams of a New Beginning*, selected poems- from handout.
- Jack Kerouac, *Pomes all sizes*, selected poems- from handout.
  
- **Mon Nov 4th** , Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, *Farewell to Manzanar* - through Chapter 12 (that is Part 1 & one more chapter beyond)
- **Wed Nov 6th** Martin Sherman, *Bent* (play)
- **Fri Nov 8th** Tony Kushner, *Angels in America*
  - *Part I* is required. *Part II* is **highly recommended**.
  
- **Mon Nov 11th** Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep*
  - You may stop at Chapter 23, if you can. The entire novel is recommended.
- **Wed Nov 13th** Dashiell Hammett, *The Woman in the Dark*
- **Fri Nov 15th** Patricia Highsmith, *Eleven*, short story collection; read:
  - “When the Fleet was in Mobile”; “Heroine”; “Another Bridge to Cross”; “Barbarians”; “Empty Birdhouse”
  
- **Mon Nov 18th** Studs Terkel, *Working* (selections):
  - available online: <https://libcom.org/files/Working%20-%20Studs%20Terkel.pdf>
  - ‘Preface II: Who Spreads the News’: Billy Carpenter; Cliff Pickens; Terry Pickens;
  - Barbara Herrick-‘Did You Hear the One About the Farmer’s Daughter?’;
  - Roberta Victor- prostitute (in some editions ‘hooker’) ;
  - Rip Torn- actor;
  - Vincent Maher-policeman;
  - Renault Robinson- policeman, founder Afro-American Patrolmen’s League;
  - Frank Decker- interstate trucker;
  - Alfred Pommier- car hiker;
  - Theresa Carter- housewife;
  - Jesusita Novarro- housewife;
  - David Reed Glover- stockbroker;
  - Elmer Ruiz- gravedigger.
  - *Recommended*: Any other interviews that catch your attention.

- **Wed Nov 20th**
  - Cesar Chavez, *An Organizer's Tale* excerpts from handout
    - “Chronology”- to gain a sense of context for what you will be reading.
    - “An Organizer’s Tale”; ‘Creative Nonviolence’; ‘At Exposition Park’; ‘Do We Exist?’; ‘Martin Luther King, Jr. I’; ‘Martin Luther King, Jr. II’; ‘What is Democracy’; “Wrath of Grapes”
  - Studs Terkel, *Working* excerpts available online as above
    - ‘Introduction’;
    - Robert Acuna- farm worker;
  - Martin Luther King Jr., speeches and writings:
    - ‘The Other America’ - <https://www.crmvet.org/docs/otheram.htm>
    - ‘Our God Is Marching On’; ‘I Have a Dream’; ‘I See the Promised Land’ - handout
    - *Recommended:*
      - ‘Time to Break the Silence’ sometimes called ‘Beyond Vietnam’; ‘Letter from Birmingham Jail’ -handout
  
- **Fri Nov 22nd**
  - Roxane Gay, *Difficult Women*, short story collection; read:
    - ‘I Will Follow You’; ‘Difficult Women’; ‘Baby Arm’; ‘In the Event of My Father’s Death’; ‘Best Features’; ‘Noble Things’
  - Audre Lord, essays & poems from *Your Silence Will Not Protect You* - handout
    - ‘The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House’; ‘Poetry Is Not a Luxury’; ‘Sexism: An American Disease in Blackface’; ‘Uses of the Erotic: the Erotic as Power’; ‘Blackstudies’; ‘A Litany for Survival’; ‘Power’; ‘For Toni’
  - Ani DiFranco, *Verses*, excerpts- handout
  
- **Mon Nov 25th** Toni Morrison, *Home*
- **Wed Nov 27th** **Thanksgiving Break**
- **Fri Nov 29th** **Thanksgiving Break**
  
- **Mon Dec 2nd** SE Hinton, *The Outsiders*
- **Wed Dec 4th** Paul Zindel, *The Pigman*
- **Fri Dec 6th** **We will choose one of these three together during the semester:**
  - 1) Graphic Novel; we will **choose either:**
    - Frank Miller, either: *Sin City* TPB to be chosen, or *Dark Knight Returns* TPB
    - Brian Michael Bendis, *Alias* either: TPB 4 (issues 22-28) and/or 2 (issues 11-15)
  - 2) Jack Schaefer, *Shane*
  - 3) Steve Martin, *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* (play)

- **FINAL PAPER DUE MONDAY DECEMBER 16TH by 1PM**

**Final Paper may be written on any of the works on this syllabus, WHETHER COMPLETE OR IN EXCERPT and/or one (1) of the following supplemental, optional novels:**

- James Fenimore Cooper, *Last of the Mohicans*
- Jack Schaefer, *Shane*
- Joyce Carol Oates, *Broke Heart Blues* **OR**
- Joyce Carol Oates, *The Accursed*
- Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood*
- Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina*
- N. Scott Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*

### **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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. 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>.

#### **Support Systems:**

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** - 1-800-273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

**Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention** Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

#### **Sexual Assault Resource Center**

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

**Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance** – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>



**Bias Assessment Response and Support**

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

**Student Support & Advocacy** – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

**Diversity at USC** – <https://diversity.usc.edu/> Tabs for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students’ ability to learn and an instructor’s ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action. These strictures may extend to behaviors outside the classroom that are related to the course.

**Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis**

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

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**Definition of Excellence in Teaching  
USC Department of English**

All writing is creative, and all civic engagement requires a sophisticated understanding of discourse and interpretation. The USC Department of English is committed to the power of the story, the word, and the image. We analyze and organize complex ideas, evaluate qualitative information, anticipate how real audiences respond to language, and study behaviors of complex characters leading uncertain lives with competing values. We develop critical abilities for a successful life, but our stories tell us why life is worth living.

Excellence in teaching is an active engagement with these commitments, perspectives, and values. A student with a major in **English** should graduate with an appreciation for (1) the relations between representation and the human soul, and (2) the relations between words and ideas.

Teachers will encourage this appreciation through their knowledge and conveyance of the subject, the appropriateness of instructional materials, and the quality of their students’ responses.

We expect our students to:

- understand the major representations in English discourse from earliest beginnings to the current moment; all literatures exist in conversation with earlier literatures;
- organize and interpret evidence;

- feel the experiences of others, both by engaging in literatures and by their own efforts to create new literatures;
- understand how periods, cultural intentions, and literary genres differ;
- grasp the skills and theories of interpretation, and the history of our own discipline;
- see how interpretive interests shift with time and place;
- attend to linguistic details of semantics, phrasing, and structure;
- assume there are reasonable alternative understandings of a text;
- adjudicate differences through reasoned arguments that honestly engage counter-arguments.

Our students will have lives in very different arenas, but all calling for skills in discourse, empathy, civil argument, and civic engagement. We cannot and should not say what those careers will be; we train students for jobs that have not yet been invented.

English Department students with an interdisciplinary major in **Narrative Studies** should expect instruction that inculcates an appreciation for all of the above, and coordinates with definitions of teaching excellence in USC's corresponding departments.

The Department of English adheres to the modalities of instruction published in the "USC Definition of Excellence in Teaching."

Approved September 18, 2018  
Undergraduate Studies Committee  
Department of English