

ENGLISH 2310-13: American Literary Cultures
The More Things Change: Technology and American Literary History
MWF 9:05-9:55
Carroll Science 104

Instructor: Dr. Tim DeJong

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Office Hours: MWF 8:00-9:00, MW 12:00-4:30, and by appointment

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Course Description

From horse-drawn carriages and letters by candlelight to smartphones and Netflix binges, technologies have always shaped our day-to-day experiences and even our patterns of thought. This course will investigate the historical trajectory of American literature with a particular focus on how technological change has been described, adopted, and resisted in the works and words of American writers from different eras. Some questions we will consider: Is such change always good? To what ends is it directed? How does it come about? And how – for good or ill – are we affected by it?

We’re not interested in technology alone in this course – we’ll track how it intersects with numerous other big concerns in American literature, including religion, money, love, evil, gender, and race. As the course title suggests, we’ll also be thinking throughout the term about “touchstones” upon which American writers – and we as critics – can fall back, anchors that might guide us through seas or seasons of change, or lenses through which such changes can be understood.

Course Objectives

As participants in this course, we will cultivate and enrich an appreciation for important texts in American literature – their history, meaning, and power – and will develop a shared appreciation for literature in general as something that merits study and attention both inside and outside academic the academic context. This course will also provide a forum in which we can hone our critical thinking skills, developing the ability to read both literary and non-literary texts closely, thoughtfully, and generously. More specifically, after successfully completing this course you will have demonstrated your ability to

1. describe, in general terms but with reference to specific authors and texts, how American literature has played a significant role in American history, particularly with regard to our understanding of how technological changes have impacted human culture;
2. offer competent sight readings of selected passages from a variety of American texts
3. research, outline, draft, and revise an essay of no less than 1500 words that discusses a significant work of American literature.

Course Texts

Sara Levine et al, eds., *The Broadview Anthology of Short Fiction*

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*

Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw and Other Ghost Stories*

Octavia E. Butler, *Kindred*

Annie Baker, *The Flick*

Tracy K. Smith, *Life on Mars: Poems*

Grade Breakdown

Attendance and Participation	15%
Quizzes	15%
Reading Responses (2x5%)	10%
Essay	20%

Unit 1 Test	10%
Unit 2 Test	10%
Final Exam (Monday, December 13, 4:30-6:30 p.m.)	20%

Classroom Expectations / Attendance and Participation

You are expected to show up to class having read the required material and prepared to contribute to the discussion. Broadly speaking, your attendance and participation grade derives from three factors: (1) regular attendance in class; (2) active, regular, and respectful verbal participation in class discussion; and (3) intentional, thorough completion of in-class writing assignments. *Please be sure to bring to class the text under discussion that day*, as class sessions will often involve close readings and/or group discussions of selected passages. Students who fail to bring their course texts with them may be marked as absent for that class session. Additionally, please use the version of the texts sold by the bookstore, as using a different version will cause discrepancies in the page numbers and prevent you from following along in class discussions.

Face masks are not required in the classroom, though they are recommended for all unvaccinated students. In all other respects, the attendance policy will return to normal for this semester. COVID-19-related absences will be treated similarly to any other absence and should be documented either via medical professionals or university health services in order to not lose attendance and participation points.

While regular class attendance and a high grade typically go hand in hand, you must participate actively and regularly in class discussions in order to ensure your success in this area. Additionally, some components of your course grade, such as in-class participation and quizzes, cannot be completed if you aren't here. Quizzes and missed work can only be made up at a later date for valid reasons such as quarantining, documented illness, or university sponsored-trips.

If you are required to quarantine, or to miss class for some other valid reason, let me know via email as soon as possible. If you do miss a class for any reason, all class lectures will be videotaped and can be watched on Canvas via the “My Media” tab if needed.

Technology-Free Policy

For reasons I'll explain in more detail early in the term – including, but not limited to, the fact that numerous studies have shown that writing notes by hand improves comprehension and retention – we'll work in a “technology-free” classroom this semester. This means that the use of smartphones and laptops in the classroom is not permitted. You will be required to print out the readings posted on Canvas and take hard copies of them to class. If this stipulation proves to be an insurmountable hardship for you, see me privately to discuss alternative options.

The first time you have a cell phone, iPad, or laptop out during class I will warn you verbally or make a note of it. The second instance will result in you being marked as “late” (half an absence). The third time, you will be marked as absent. Repeated violations of this rule will result in still harsher penalties to your grade.

Please note that I may not always mention it in front of the class when I see phones and laptops – whether because I didn't wishing to call you out publicly, I didn't want to disrupt the flow of a conversation, or both – but that doesn't mean I didn't see it. Either way, the penalty will be upheld.

The only exceptions to the above rules will involve university-approved accommodation, about which, please see me if necessary.

Tips for Reading Effectively and Well

As a college student, you obviously know how to read. However, my experience has been that busy schedules and competing demands often lead many students to read in cursory ways. I invite you to be a deeper thinker than a “busy-driven” culture often demands. Here are a few practical tips for retaining more of what you read and concentrating on analyzing assigned texts.

1. Don’t read late at night or while lying down. You’ll retain less and engage more superficially with the material if you’re tired.
2. Read by yourself, or at least where the movement and noise of others won’t distract you. You may also want to use headphones and listen to white noise by using websites such as simplynoise.com.
3. Read in bright light. Bright light is a substitute for caffeine.
4. Set reading goals. It’s really tempting to use Snapchat in the middle of a long reading assignment, but don’t do it! Set goals such as, “I won’t text, check my email, or tweet until I finish this chapter.”
5. Write out definitions of unknown words. If you don’t know the definition of a word, look it up and write in the margins of the page.
6. Read with a pencil. In addition to underlining in the books themselves, you can also try creating a reading notebook in which you write questions you’d like to raise in class or copy passages you find difficult/interesting. This exercise may pay big dividends for papers and final exams.

Quizzes

Throughout the term, there will be several reading quizzes to encourage you to keep up with the course readings. Quizzes will be brief and may assume one of several formats. Each quiz will always require you to engage *only* with the assigned readings due in the class session in which that quiz is given. Quizzes will not be announced beforehand. (Sorry; this is how I encourage you to do the readings!) There is no set number of quizzes for this course, but a typical number to expect is approximately eight to twelve. The amount of quizzes will vary directly with the level of class participation: a high level of class participation will indicate that the class is keeping up with the course readings and that numerous quizzes are therefore not warranted, whereas a lower level of participation will indicate the opposite, and will result in an increased number of quizzes.

Reading Responses

During the term, you will be required to write two reading responses to the texts under discussion. Reading responses will be submitted online via a Turnitin link on Canvas. Once class sessions of a given text have been completed, you have up until end of the day on the date of the following class session to submit a reading response. Once we have moved on to other works, reading responses may no longer be submitted for previous works we have discussed. You may not write both reading responses on the same text.

To encourage you to submit your responses in a timely fashion rather than leaving them all until the end of term, one fixed due date is in place: you must have submitted *one of your two* reading responses by **October 20**. Failure to meet this deadline will result in the application of the same penalty as exists for essays to your late reading response(s). Your second reading response must be turned in by the final day of class.

Each reading response should list your name, the course name, the instructor’s name, and the date, in the left-hand margin. They should begin with an interesting, provocative title. They must be typed in 12-point Times New Roman, and be **400-600** words in length. They will be graded for both style and content, out of a maximum of twenty points. More information about the reading responses will be distributed early in the semester.

Essay

Essays must be typed in 12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. They must follow current MLA format and must include a Works Cited page that lists the work you are discussing. It is advisable to retain at least one hard copy of the essay in case of loss or damage to the original. Essays will be graded for, in descending order of importance: originality and import of argument; ability to support the argument with reference to the primary text; use of secondary texts to further enhance the argument; rhetorical persuasiveness; syntax; grammar; spelling; accurate bibliographic citation; and general adherence to MLA format.

Essays must be **1500-2500** words in length. They will be due on **November 19**. As with your reading responses, you will hand in your essays online via a Turnitin link on Canvas. All essays not handed in on this date will be considered late. Essays will be penalized for lateness at a rate of 2% per day, weekends included, to a maximum of 14 days, at which point the essay may no longer be submitted. Essays that have been submitted late may also receive minimal comments and will be returned at my leisure. More information on, and preparation for, the essay will be provided in class.

Baylor Writing Center

The stated mission of the Baylor Writing Center is “to assist all members of the Baylor University community—undergraduate and graduate students (both in-person and online), faculty, and staff from all disciplines—by working with them to improve their writing projects, to develop skills and abilities that will help them become more effective, more confident writers, and to make writing a more meaningful, productive, and enjoyable process.” The Writing Center is a valuable university resource that you are highly encouraged to make use of during the semester. The Baylor Writing Center is located in Moody Memorial Library, 2nd West. They can be reached at 254-710-4849 or via email at uwc@baylor.edu. More information: see baylor.edu/english/index.php?id=948048.

Important Dates

September 8 is the last day to drop and add classes without receiving a W (Withdrawal) on one’s transcript. **November 2** is the last day of the semester on which a class can be dropped.

Grading Policy

Grades will be distributed according to the following scale established by the College of Arts and Sciences at Baylor University:

93-100%	A	77-79%	C+
90-92%	A-	73-76%	C
87-89%	B+	70-72%	C-
83-86%	B	60-69%	D
80-82%	B-	0-59%	F

Note on Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. One form of plagiarism is presenting someone else’s work as one’s own, whether in part or in full. A second form of plagiarism is using sources without including the proper citation. This includes copying words from a source, but also includes borrowing ideas, *even if paraphrased*, without giving credit. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence which will result in, at minimum, a grade of 0 on the paper in question and, at maximum, automatic failure of the course. Instances of plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will also be reported to the Honor Council. You are expected to be familiar with Baylor’s Honor Code and policies, available to read online at www.baylor.edu/honorcode.

Title IX

Baylor University does not discriminate on the basis of sex or gender in any of its education or employment programs and activities, and it does not tolerate discrimination or harassment on the basis of sex or gender. This policy prohibits sexual and gender-based harassment, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, stalking, intimate partner violence, and retaliation (collectively referred to as prohibited conduct). For more information on how to report, or to learn more about our policy and process, please visit www.baylor.edu/titleix. You may also contact the Title IX office directly by phone, (254) 710-8454, or email, TitleIX_Coordinator@baylor.edu.

Academic Accommodations

Any student requiring academic accommodation owing to a mental or physical disability should inform me immediately at the beginning of the semester. As student, you are responsible for obtaining appropriate documentation and information regarding needed accommodations from the Baylor University Office of Access and Learning Accommodation (OALA) and providing it to me early in the semester. Contact the OALA at 254-710-3605. More information is available online at <http://www.baylor.edu/oala>.

Crises and Emergencies

BUCC Crisis Line: (254) 710-2467 (Business Hours/Non-Business Hours/Weekends)

Baylor Police Department: (254)710-222

MHMR Crisis Center: (254)867-6550

MHMR 24-Hour Emergency/Crisis Number: (254)752-3451

When home during academic breaks, when the counseling center is closed, please call your local resources. Some national numbers for support during a crisis:

National Hope Network Hotline: 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)

DATE	READING
Aug 23	Course Introduction
	UNIT ONE // Guns, Gurus, Ghosts
Aug 25	John Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charity” [Canvas]
Aug 27	Hopi, “How the Spaniards Came to Shung-Opovi” [Canvas]
Aug 30	Mary Rowlandson, from <i>Captivity and Restoration</i> [Canvas]
Sept 1	Walt Whitman, “Mannahatta,” “As I Walk These Broad Majestic Days” [Canvas]
Sept 3	Edgar Allan Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher” [Hawthorne, <i>House</i> 261-277]
Sept 6	Labor Day (University Holiday)
Sept 8	Edgar Allan Poe, “The Cask of Amontillado” [BA 22-27]
Sept 10	Nathaniel Hawthorne, <i>The House of the Seven Gables</i> , I-III (3-42)
Sept 13	Hawthorne, <i>The House of the Seven Gables</i> , IV-VI (42-71)
Sept 15	Hawthorne, <i>The House of the Seven Gables</i> , VII-X (71-113)
Sept 17	Hawthorne, <i>The House of the Seven Gables</i> , XI-XIII (113-150)
Sept 20	Hawthorne, <i>The House of the Seven Gables</i> , XIV-XVII (150-188)
Sept 22	Hawthorne, <i>The House of the Seven Gables</i> , XVIII-XXI (188-225)
Sept 24	Herman Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener” [Canvas]
Sept 27	Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener”
Sept 29	Unit One Test
	UNIT TWO // Hierarchies and Histories
Oct 1	Henry David Thoreau, “Where I Lived, and What I Lived For” [Canvas]
Oct 4	Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper” [BA 55-69]
Oct 6	Henry James, <i>The Turn of the Screw</i> , I-VI (148-184)
Oct 8	James, <i>The Turn of the Screw</i> , VII-XV (184-221)
Oct 11	James, <i>The Turn of the Screw</i> , XVI-XXIV (221-257)
Oct 13	James, <i>The Turn of the Screw</i> / Midterm Review
Oct 15	No Class (Instructor Conference)
Oct 18	Flannery O’Connor, “A Good Man is Hard to Find” [BA 198-211]
Oct 20	Essay-Writing Workshop
Oct 22	Fall Break (University Holiday)
Oct 25	Octavia E. Butler, <i>Kindred</i> , 1-45
Oct 27	Butler, <i>Kindred</i> , 45-101
Oct 29	Butler, <i>Kindred</i> , 102-143
Nov 1	Butler, <i>Kindred</i> , 143-188
Nov 3	Butler, <i>Kindred</i> , 189-227
Nov 5	Butler, <i>Kindred</i> , 227-264
Nov 8	Unit Two Test
	UNIT THREE // From Suburbia to Space
Nov 10	Annie Baker, <i>The Flick</i> , I.i-vi (1-61)
Nov 12	Baker, <i>The Flick</i> , I.vi-II.ii (62-116)
Nov 15	Baker, <i>The Flick</i> , II.ii-II.viii (117-177)
Nov 17	Tobias Wolff, “Bullet in the Brain” [BA 280-285]
Nov 19	Lauren Groff, “The Midnight Zone” [Canvas]
Nov 22-26	Thanksgiving Break (University Holiday)
Nov 29	Robert Frost, “After Apple Picking” [Canvas]
Dec 1	Carrie Fountain, “First,” Matthew Dickman, “Wonderland” [Canvas]
Dec 3	Tracy K. Smith, <i>Life on Mars</i> (selected poems)
Dec 6	Smith, <i>Life on Mars</i> (selected poems)
Dec 8	Conclusion and Exam Review