

Course Syllabus

Course Information

<i>Course Number/Section</i>	LIT 6372.501
<i>Course Title</i>	American Literature Post-1945
<i>Term</i>	Spring 2025
<i>Days & Times</i>	Thurs. 7 – 9:45 pm JO 4.112

Professor Contact Information

<i>Professor</i>	Dr. Erin A. Smith (<i>please call me Dr. Smith or Prof. Smith</i>)
<i>Office Phone</i>	(972) 883-2338
<i>Email Address</i>	erins@utdallas.edu*
<i>Office Location</i>	Hoblitzelle Hall (HH) 2.304
<i>Office Hours</i>	Tues. 2:30 – 3:30 And by appointment in person or on MS Teams

Course Description

This course is both a historical survey of American literature from 1945 to the present and a critical examination of the creation of cultural value during this period. We will read a selection of books from across the cultural spectrum—literary prize-winners, popular middlebrow fiction, and “trash.” Where does the canon of modern and contemporary literature come from? How is the category of “literature” constructed, and by whom? How do literary prizes work, and how do they influence what and how we read? What is the role of newspapers and magazines (literary and mass-market) in choosing “good” books? What is the role of the academy? What kinds of influence do Hollywood, television, and celebrities like Oprah wield on what we read and how we read it? How do race, gender/sexuality, and social class frame authors’ opportunities and the kinds of stories they tell? Which stories are valued and why?

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

1. Students will be able to describe selected works of modern and contemporary American literature and the major issues and questions in literary scholarship about them.
2. Students will be able to analyze and evaluate literary and literary historical arguments made by scholars in the field.
3. Students will research and write a literary or literary historical argument about some aspect of post-1945 American literature.

Required Textbooks and Materials

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952)
Patricia Highsmith, *Price of Salt* (1952)
Sloan Wilson, *Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955)
Grace Metalious, *Peyton Place* (1956)
Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966)
Maxine Hong Kingston, *Woman Warrior* (1976)
Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1987)
Don DeLillo, *Mao II* (1992)
Julia Alvarez, *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994)
Anita Shreve, *The Pilot’s Wife* (An Oprah Book, 1995)

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah* (2013)

James English, *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value* (2005)

Mark McGurl, *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing* (2009)

Course Schedule:

Thurs. 23 Jan. - Intro. to Course

Louis Menand, "All That Glitters: Literature's Global Economy" *The New Yorker* 26 Dec. 2005 / 2 Jan. 2006. (e-reserve)

Thurs. 30 Jan. – Theories of Cultural Value

Pierre Bourdieu, "The aristocracy of culture," *Media, Culture & Society* 2 (1980): 225-254 (e-reserve)

Janice Radway, "The Book-of-the-Month Club and the General Reader: The Uses of 'Serious' Fiction," *Critical Inquiry* 14.3 (1988): 516-38 (e-reserve)

Tony Bennett, *et al*, "Introduction" (1-5); chap. 1, "Culture after Distinction" (9-23); chap. 6, "Popular and Rare: Exploring the Field of Reading" (94-112); "Conclusion" (251-59) in *Culture, Class, Distinction* (Routledge, 2009) (e-reserve)

Thurs. 6 Feb. – Literary Prizes and Literary Value

Pascale Casanova, "Literature as a World," *New Left Review* 31 (Jan.-Feb. 2005): 71-90 (e-reserve)

English, *Economy of Prestige*, Introduction (1-14) and chaps. 3 (50-68), 12 (264-96), and 13 (297-320).

****Thurs. 13 Feb.**

Ellison, *Invisible Man*

Kristin Matthews, chap. 3, "Reading to Outmaneuver: Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and African American Literacy in Cold War America" in *Reading America: Citizenship, Democracy, and Cold War Literature* (U Mass P, 2016): 53-79 (e-reserve)

****Thurs. 20 Feb.**

Highsmith, *Price of Salt*

Yvonne Keller, "'Was It Right to Love Her Brother's Wife So Passionately?': Lesbian Pulp Novels and U. S. Lesbian Identity, 1950-1965," *American Quarterly* 57.2 (June 2005): 385-410 (e-reserve)

Lillian Faderman, chap. 5, "'Naked Amazons and Queer Damozels': World War II and Its Aftermath," (118-38) and chap. 6, "The Love that Dares Not Speak Its Name" (139-58) in *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (Penguin, 1991) (e-reserve)

****Thurs. 27 Feb.**

Wilson, *Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*

Evan Brier, chap. 3, "Synergy and the Novelist: Simon & Schuster; Time, Inc.; and *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (74-101) in *Novel Marketplace: Mass Culture, the Book Trade, and Postwar American Fiction* (U of Penn P, 2010) (e-reserve)

****Thurs. 6 Mar.**

Metalious, *Peyton Place*

Anna Creadick, chap 5, "Picture Windows and *Peyton Place*: Exposing Normality in Postwar Communities," (118-41) in *Perfectly Average: The Pursuit of Normality in Postwar America* (U of Mass P, 2010) (e-reserve)

****Thurs. 12 Mar.**

Pynchon, *Crying of Lot 49*

Richard Ohmann, "The Shaping of a Canon: U.S. Fiction, 1960-75," *Critical Inquiry* 10.1 (Sept. 1983): 199-223 (e-reserve)

Thurs. 20 Mar. – SPRING BREAK / NO CLASS

****Thurs. 27 Mar. – conference abstracts and bios. due**

Kingston, *Woman Warrior*

Edward Said, "Introduction," *Orientalism* (Vintage, 1978): 1-31 (e-reserve)

King-Kok Cheung, "The Woman Warrior versus The Chinaman Pacific: Must a Chinese American Critic Choose between Feminism and Heroism?" in *Conflicts in Feminism*, ed. Marianne Hirsch & Evelyn Fox Keller (Routledge, 1990): 234-51 (e-reserve)

****Thurs. 3 Apr.**

Morrison, *Beloved*

English, *Economy of Prestige*, chap. 10, "Strategies of Condescension, Styles of Play," 217-46

Richard Jean So, "Introduction," (1-26) in *Redlining Culture: A Data History of Racial Inequality and Postwar Fiction* (Columbia UP, 2021) (e-reserve)

****Thurs. 10 Apr.**

DeLillo, *Mao II*

Guy De Bord, chap. 1, "Separation Perfected" in *Society of the Spectacle* (Black & Red, 1983): para. 1- 34 (e-reserve)

****Thurs. 17 Apr.**

Alvarez, *In the Time of the Butterflies*

Gloria Anzaldúa, "Preface," (1-2) and chap. 2, "Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan" (15-23) in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (Aunt Lute Books, 1987) (e-reserve)

****Thurs. 24 Apr.**

Shreve, *The Pilot's Wife*

Ted Striphas, chap. 4, "Literature as Life on Oprah's Book Club," in *The Late Age of Print: Everyday Book Culture from Consumerism to Control* (Columbia UP, 2009): 111-40 (e-reserve)

Timothy Aubry, chap. 5, "The Politics of Interiority in *The Pilot's Wife*," in *Reading as Therapy: What Contemporary Fiction Does for Middle Class Americans* (U of Iowa P, 2011): 151-73 (e-reserve)

Meg Wolitzer, "The Second Shelf," *New York Times Book Review* 1 Apr. 2012, BR12+ (e-reserve)

Thurs. 1 May

Adichie, *Americanah*

Rebecca Walkowitz, "Introduction: Theory of World Literature Now" (1-48) in *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature* (Columbia UP, 2015) (e-reserve)

Thurs. 8 May – Contemporary Literary Culture and the Academy

McGurl, *The Program Era*, "Introduction: Halls of Mirror" (1-74); chap. 2 (127-79); chap. 4 (227-70), chap. 5 (273-320); "Afterword: Systematic Excellence" (399-410).

Thurs. 15 May - Presentations of Final Projects

Course Requirements

***seminar attendance, preparation, and participation** – This is a seminar. You are expected to come to class prepared, to participate actively, and to respond in intelligent and respectful ways to the ideas and contributions of other class members.

***class presentation** – a PowerPoint presentation to start / facilitate discussion of the readings on one class session (available dates marked with a **) and provide 4-6 questions for discussion. Additional guidance on a handout on eLearning.

***book review (5 pages) with oral presentation.** Additional guidance on a handout on eLearning.

***final project** – additional guidance on a handout on eLearning.

*abstract (500 words) and brief bio. due Thurs. 27 Mar.

*final conference paper and presentation (10-12 pages) due Thurs. 15 May

Grading Policy --Your grade will be based on:

Seminar preparation / participation	25%
Final Project/conference paper/presentation	30%
Book Review paper / presentation	25%
Class Presentation	20%

You must complete **all** course requirements in order to pass the class (e.g., if you do not hand in a paper or complete a presentation, you will fail the class, even if the other grades average out to a passing grade). Habitual lateness, leaving at the break, absences, or failure to hand in a paper on time will be reflected in your grade. **Anyone missing more than 4 classes (or part of classes that add up to more than 4 classes) for whatever reason will fail the course.** Please consult me in the event of illness, emergency, or other extenuating circumstances.

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty: I have a zero-tolerance policy on cheating and plagiarism. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University.

GENERATIVE AI: All your written assignments for this course are expected to be generative AI free. AI-generated content including writing, tables, code, analysis, or images should not be presented as your own work. Turnitin and other methods may be used to detect the use of AI. Under UTD rules about due process, referrals may be made to the Office of Community Standards and Conduct. Inappropriate use of AI may result in penalties, including a 0 on the assignment.

A NOTE ON CELL PHONES —please keep them put away and silenced / turned off (this includes texting)

Class Materials

The instructor may provide class materials that will be made available to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. These materials may be downloaded during the course; however, these materials are for registered students' use only. Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with those not in class or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved AccessAbility Resource Center accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Class Attendance

The University's attendance policy requirement is that individual faculty set their course attendance requirements. Regular and punctual class attendance is expected. Students who fail to attend class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty. In some courses, instructors may have special attendance requirements; these should be made known to students during the first week of classes.

Class Participation

Regular class participation is expected. Students who fail to participate in class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty. A portion of the grade for this course is directly tied to your participation in this class. It also includes engaging in group or other activities during class that solicit your feedback on homework assignments, readings, or materials covered in the lectures (and/or labs). Class participation is documented by faculty. Successful participation is defined as consistently adhering to University requirements, as presented in this syllabus. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Texas Senate Bill 17, the recent law that prohibits diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and activities at public universities in Texas, does not in any way apply to academic course instruction. Students should not feel the need to self-censor or limit their participation in academic courses pertaining to topics of race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, equity, and inclusion, and related topics.

Class Recordings

Students are expected to follow appropriate University policies and maintain the security of passwords used to access recorded lectures. Unless the AccessAbility Resource Center has approved the student to record the instruction, students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved AccessAbility Resource Center accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Comet Creed

This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:

“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Please review [the section](#) within the UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures webpage.

Academic Support Resources

Please visit the [Academic Support Resources](#) page to view the University’s academic support resources for all students.

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures

Please visit the [Syllabus Policies](#) page to view the University’s policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus.

Please review the catalog sections regarding the [credit/no credit](#) or [pass/fail](#) grading option and withdrawal from class.

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.