

Literature 3324: American Realism and Naturalism

Shari Goldberg
sgoldberg@utdallas.edu
972-883-4930

Office JO 5.110
Office hours T 12:00-1:00
R 3:00-4:00

Spring 2010
T R 1:00-2:15
SOM 2.804

Course description

What does it mean to make an "-ism"—a school of writing—out of two concepts that appear fundamental: the real and the natural? Presumably, fictional writing always maintains some relation to reality and to nature, but in late nineteenth-century America, these two concepts came to ground a mode of representation. Our task in this course will be two-fold: we will want to understand how the real and the natural became literary imperatives in this time period, and we will want to study what reality and nature mean in a variety of prose texts. Finally, we will have to ask: if those terms have different meanings in different contexts, then to what extent does fiction produce—rather than reflect—what is real and natural?

Student learning objectives

Students will learn: 1. to understand reality and nature as concepts defined by context rather than essential fundamental truths; 2. to discern how critical and fictional American texts written between 1865 and 1910 define those concepts; 3. to study how developments in technology and philosophy contributed to a major literary movement; 4. to hone skills of close reading and careful writing.

Required texts

Available at Stanza Books on Campbell Road (972) 231-2665:

Stephen Crane, *Great Short Works of Stephen Crane* (Perennial)

Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw and The Aspern Papers* (Penguin)

Frank Norris, *The Octopus: A California Story* (Dover)

Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins* (Norton)

Assignments from other texts (marked in the syllabus with a *) will be available via UTD e-reserves (unless otherwise announced in class). The e-reserves site is: <<http://www.utdallas.edu/library/services/reserves/reservesvc.htm>> Our course page is: <<http://utdallas.docutek.com/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=747>> The password is: pragmatic.

The editions listed are recommended but not required. Many assigned texts may be available online; these are acceptable for use only when printed versions are brought to class for reference. Students with alternative versions must take responsibility for locating passages discussed in class. Please draw texts from academic (.edu) or other reputable sites (e.g., [gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org)).

Course requirements

Students must:

- ◇ Act respectfully towards the viewpoints of others—those present in class and those whom we will read.
- ◇ Be prepared and present in all class sessions. Four absences, latenesses, or unprepared presences will result in the final grade being lowered by one full grade. More than four absences may result in failure of the course. Phones must not be used during class.
- ◇ Complete all assignments on their own and on time. *Reading is the primary assignment and must be taken seriously.* Students are also responsible for participating in class discussions and completing all writing assignments—in addition to other work announced in the course of the term.

Please see me in the event that these requirements become difficult to meet.

Evaluation

Student performance will be evaluated on an A-F grading scale, with components weighed as follows:

Weekly response papers	25%
World's Fair paper & presentation	10%
Contribution to class	15%
Midterm	25%
Final	25%

Assignments

Each Tuesday: Brief (approximately 300 words) writing assignments based on the reading are due. These will be an opportunity for you to demonstrate your engagement with the texts as well as your involvement in the class discussions. Additional research is neither required nor desirable. Grades for these will be a check (grade equivalent of 85%), check plus (grade equivalent of 95%) or zero. Keep in mind that work must be above average to receive credit. This means that careful and steady reading habits are essential. Late assignments will not be accepted. In case of illness or emergency, they may be emailed to me before the class meeting time if a hard copy is also delivered in or by the next class. Please double-space assignments and use MLA citation format; a Works Cited line, but not a separate page, should be included.

- ◇ Assignments will be posted each Friday at: <http://spgoldberg.edublogs.org/>.

Thursday 3/11: Midterm exam is due in class. The exam will pose questions about key texts engaged during class and will be handed out and explained on 3/2. Complete exams will be approximately 2,400 words and should demonstrate proficiency with the texts as well as familiarity with ideas discussed in class.

Thursday 4/1: Paper analyzing a technology demonstrated at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair is due in class (approximately 1,200 words). These will require research through an archival database and will be presented, in groups, to the class.

Monday 5/10: Final exam is due in my office by 10 am. Format and evaluation criteria will be similar to those for the midterm, above.

Schedule of readings and assignments, DUE ON THE DATE LISTED

* indicates that the text is available on e-reserves

T 1/12	Introduction to subject matter & expectations for success in the course
R 1/14	*Twain, "Awful, Terrible Medieval Romance"; *Norris, "Fiction is Selection" in <i>The Literary Criticism of Frank Norris</i> (pp. 50-53); *Howells, <i>Criticism and Fiction</i> section XVI (pp. 40-41)
T 1/19	*Norris, "A Plea for Romantic Fiction" in <i>The Literary Criticism of Frank Norris</i> (pp. 75-78); *Howells, <i>Criticism and Fiction</i> Introduction & sections I, II, XVII, XVIII (pp. 9-15, 41-51)
R 1/21	Twain, <i>Pudd'nhead Wilson</i> , "Whisper to the Reader," chapters 1-8
T 1/26	Twain, <i>Pudd'nhead Wilson</i> , chapters 9-15
R 1/28	Twain, <i>Pudd'nhead Wilson</i> , chapters 16-conclusion
T 2/2	*Du Bois, excerpts from <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i>
R 2/4	*Chesnutt, "The Wife of His Youth" and "A Matter of Principle"
T 2/9	Crane, <i>The Monster</i> , chapters 1-13
R 2/11	Crane, <i>The Monster</i> , chapters 14-24
T 2/16	Crane, <i>Red Badge of Courage</i> , chapters 1-10
R 2/18	Crane, <i>Red Badge of Courage</i> , chapters 11-24
T 2/23	*Historical context for <i>Red Badge of Courage</i> (Pizer is listed as author on e-reserves); *Norris's satire: "The Green Stone of Unrest"; *Colvert, "Unreal War"
R 2/25	*Norris, "A Problem in Fiction: Truth versus Accuracy" and "The Responsibilities of the Novelist" in <i>The Literary Criticism of Frank Norris</i> (pp. 75-78, 94-98)
T 3/2	*Jewett, "A White Heron," excerpts from <i>The Country of the Pointed Firs</i> Midterm assigned
R 3/4	*William James, <i>Pragmatism</i> chapters 2-3
T 3/9	*William James, <i>Pragmatism</i> chapter 6 and <i>The Meaning of Truth</i> chapter 9
R 3/11	Midterms due Chicago World's Fair of 1893 Papers & presentations assigned
3/15-3/19	SPRING BREAK
T 3/23	Henry James, <i>Turn of the Screw</i> chapters 1-11
R 3/25	Henry James, <i>Turn of the Screw</i> chapters 12-24
T 3/30	NO CLASS

	READINGS, continued
R 4/1	1893 World's Fair presentations
T 4/6	1893 World's Fair presentations
R 4/8	Norris, <i>The Octopus</i> Book 1, chapters 1-5
T 4/13	Norris, <i>The Octopus</i> Book 1, chapter 6 & Book 2, chapters 1-3
R 4/15	Norris, <i>The Octopus</i> Book 2, chapters 4-6
T 4/20	Norris, <i>The Octopus</i> Book 2, complete
R 4/22	*Simon Newcomb, "The Organization of Labor"
T 4/27	*Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper," "Why I Wrote the Yellow Wallpaper"
R 4/29	Final assigned
M 5/10	Final papers due in my office by 10 am.

This syllabus is subject to change at the instructor's discretion.