

Course Syllabus

Course Information

<i>Course Number/Section</i>	HUSL 6360.501
<i>Course Title</i>	American Literature Post-1945
<i>Term</i>	Spring 2015
<i>Days & Times</i>	Thurs. 7 – 9:45 pm JO 3.908

Professor Contact Information

<i>Professor</i>	Dr. Erin A. Smith
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<i>Office Hours</i>	Tues. 2:30 – 3:30 Thurs. 5:30 – 6:30 And by appointment

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, *Crying of Lot 49* (1966)
Maxine Hong Kingston, *Woman Warrior* (1976)
Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1987)
Oscar Hijuelos, *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love* (1989)
Anita Shreve, *The Pilot's Wife* (An Oprah Book, 1995)
George Saunders, *Tenth of December: Stories* (2013)

James English, *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value* (2005)
Jim Collins, *Bring on the Books for Everybody: How Literary Culture Became Popular Culture* (2010)
Mark McGurl, *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing* (2009)

Selected readings on e-reserve at

<http://utdallas.docutec.com/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=1822>

Password:

All texts available at Off-Campus Books or the UTD bookstore or Stanza Books

Additional course materials on eLearning

Course Schedule

Thurs. 15 Jan.

Intro. to Course

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

Thurs. 22 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) and chap. 1, "Culture After Distinction" (9-23) in *Culture, Class, Distinction* (New York: Routledge, 2009) (e-reserve)

Thurs. 29 Jan. – 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. 5 Feb.

Ellison, *Invisible Man*

Barbara Foley, "Biography and the Political Unconscious: Ellison, Toomer, Jameson, and the Politics of Symptomatic Reading," *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* 36 (Fall 2013): 649-71 (e-reserve)

Thurs. 12 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* (New York: Penguin, 1991) (e-reserve)

Thurs. 19 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* (Philadelphia: U of Penn P, 2010) (e-reserve)

Thurs. 26 Feb.

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* (Boston: U of Mass P, 2010) (e-reserve)

Thurs. 5 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. 12 Mar. – conference abstracts and bios. due

Kingston, *Woman Warrior*

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 (New York: Routledge, 1990): 234-51 (e-reserve)

Thurs. 19 Mar. – SPRING BREAK / NO CLASS

Thurs. 26. Mar.

Morrison, *Beloved*

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

Thurs. 2 Apr.

Hijuelos, *Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*

Sigmund Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XIV (1914-1916), (London: Hogarth, 1957): 243-258 (e-reserve).

Thurs. 9 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* (New York: 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* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2011): 151-73 (e-reserve)

Thurs. 16 Apr.

Saunders, *Tenth of December*

Cowles, Gregory. "Rays of Hope," Rev. of *Tenth of December*. *New York Times Book Review*, 3 Feb. 2013, BR11 (e-reserve)

Lovell, Joel. "George Saunders Has Written the Best Book You'll Read This Year," *New York Times Magazine* 6 Jan. 2013, MM23+ (e-reserve)

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

Thurs. 23 Apr. – Contemporary Literary Culture and Commerce

Collins, *Bring on the Books for Everybody*

Thurs. 30 Apr. – Contemporary Literary Culture and the Academy

McGurl, *The Program Era*

Thurs. 7 May - Presentations of Final Projects

Course Requirements

- *seminar attendance, preparation, and participation
- *class presentation (probably) with a partner (facilitate discussion and provide 1-page handout of 4-6 questions for discussion)
- *book review (3-5 pages) with oral presentation and 1-page handout
- *final Project
 - *abstract and brief bio. due Thurs. 12 Mar.
 - *final conference paper (10-12 pages) due Thurs. 7 May

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."

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus.

Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

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