Harvard Extension School English E-166/W

Peter Becker, PhD Spring 2017

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TA: TBA

**The 20th-Century American Novel**

In this course we will read several landmark novels and examples of short fiction. We will begin at a time in which many writers left for Europe to leave behind a country they considered provincial while others immigrated to the United States as a refuge. We will examine how these continued exchanges across the Atlantic and the experiences of the World Wars and the Holocaust affected and reshaped the rich American novelistic traditions.

Proceeding largely in chronological order, the sequence of readings is divided thematically. The readings cluster around the way in which traditional American settings and literary forms interact with and adapt to national and transatlantic historical change. These changes are readily reflected in the novels of immigration, the Lost Generation, and the World Wars, but they also make themselves felt subtly in the way American writers think about the suburb, a direct result of World War II, negotiate the relationship between individualism and the shaping influence of family legacies, and try to grapple with the lasting effects of slavery.

January 26: Introduction

**Realism and Naturalism at the Turn of the Century**

February 2: Living Space as Environment

Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (1900; please read the Doubleday edition, not the Pennsylvania edition).

February 9: Regionalism

Willa Cather, *My Antonia* (1918).

**Modernism and Aestheticism**

February 16: The Lost Generation

Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925)and “Babylon Revisited” (1931).

February 23: The Emergence of Voice and the Legacy of Slavery

Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)

(Please begin reading Faulkner this week)

**Paper 1 Draft Due**

March 2: Modernism and Consciousness

William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) and "Wash"

March 9: Writing about War

Ernest Hemingway, *Farewell to Arms* (1929)

J.D. Salinger, “For Esmé – With Love and Squalor” (1950)

March 16: no class – Spring Break

**Postwar Literature and Postmodernism**

March 23: The Small Town and the South

Flannery O’Connor, stories

March 30: The American Suburb

Vlaimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (1955)

April 6: The Breakdown Narrative and Consciousness

Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1962)

April 13 & April 20: The Impact of the Holocaust

Cynthia Ozick, *The Shawl* (1981/84) (we will begin with *Beloved* on April 14).

Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1987)

**Paper 2 Draft Due**

April 27: The Postmodern American Family and the Alternative to Consciousness

Don DeLillo, *White Noise* (1985)

May 4: Wrapping Up: The Postmodern Story, Surface, Consciousness

David Foster Wallace, *Oblivion* (2005)

**Final Exam Distributed**

**May 11: Final Take Home Exam Due**

**Course Policies and Requirements**

This course is an in-class lecture with online video option. For many who are not on campus, this might be a new experience. General information on how these long-distance courses work can be found [here](http://www.extension.harvard.edu/courses/distance-education/how-distance-education-works).

The lecture videos will be available on our course website within 24 hours. You can access them after logging in with your ID and password. Since this course requires *a lot* of reading, it is really important that you set yourself a schedule and stay on track because it would be impossible (and disorienting) to have to catch up with much of the reading at a later point.

To mimic an in-class experience even though you might be watching from far away, I would like to encourage you to introduce yourself to your teaching assistant and me at the beginning of class. I would also like to encourage you to watch the class live because there will be room for questions and comments, and doing so will give you a stronger sense that you are really part of this course. If you are local, please do attend the lectures in person if you can. I like communicating with those who are taking the class.

**Required Readings** (available at the COOP or online):

Please try to get these editions, which will enable you better to follow the lectures and find quoted passages.

Willa Cather, *My Antonia* (Dover; ISBN: 9780486282404).

Don DeLillo, *White Noise* (Penguin; ISBN: 9780143105985).

## Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (Dover; ISBN: 9780486434681).

## William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (Vintage; ISBN: 9780679732181).

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (Scribner; ISBN: 9780743273565).

Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (Scribner; ISBN: 9780684801469).

Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Harper Collins; ISBN: 9780061120060).

Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (Vintage; ISBN: 9781400033416).

Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Vintage; ISBN: 9780679723165).

Flannery O'Connor, *The Complete Stories* (FSG; ISBN: 9780374515362).

## Cynthia Ozick, *The Shawl* (Vintage; ISBN: 9780679729266).

Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (Harper Perennial; ISBN: 9780061148514).

David Foster Wallace, *Oblivion* (Little, Brown; ISBN: 9780316010764).

**Writing Requirements:**

Writing-intensive courses at Harvard Extension offer students the opportunity to develop their writing skills in the context of a particular academic discipline, and they all feature common elements.  Students will:

\*   develop core writing skills, as defined by the instructor, in the discipline of the course;

\*   complete multiple writing assignments of varying lengths, at least 2 of which must be revised;

\*   produce a minimum of 10-12 pages of writing, exclusive of the required drafts, over the course of the term;

\*   meet at least once in individual conference (in person, by phone, or electronically) with the instructor or TA to discuss writing in progress;

\*   and receive detailed feedback on their drafts and revisions, on both content and expression.

\* Please submit your draft to your teaching assistant by the deadline indicated on the syllabus. Since this is a “writing intensive” course, the draft is required. If you do not submit a draft, your grade for the revision cannot be above a D. Your TA will discuss the draft with you in person and provide you with comments. The due date of the revision will be no later than one week after you received feedback from your TA.

\*Two papers, 4-5 pages each:

1. close reading of a pre-WW II novel.
2. close reading of a post-WW II novel.

\*Take-Home Final Exam (this is an open book exam; you are, in fact, strongly encouraged to use the texts discussed in the course to craft your answers to the questions on the exam. The questions are designed to invite comparisons of several novels, so it is important that you have completed the required readings).

**Sections**:

There will be weekly online section meetings via web-conference. Please refer to the [Extension School website](http://www.extension.harvard.edu/courses/course-formats/web-conference-courses) explaining the procedure and technical requirements. Sections last about 50 minutes. They are also recorded and can be accessed via the course website (time tbd). Attendance of these meetings is strongly encouraged.

**Graduate Requirements:**

The requirements for the graduate students are the same as for undergrads: two papers and a take-home final exam. You will be held to a higher analytical and writing standard in the papers/exam than undergraduate students. Depending on enrollment, there will also be a separate graduate section.

**Grading:**

Your TA will grade only the revisions (that is, the last version) of your essays, not the drafts. However, the draft is required, and as you will see, will lead to a substantial improvement of the revised essay. Course grades will be determined as follows:

35% First Essay

35% Second Essay

30% Final Exam

**Attendance, Participation, and Completion of Work:**

Harvard Extension School expects students to be active and engaged participants. Students registered in a course for undergraduate or graduate credit must attend all classes or participate online as a distance student, take all exams, and complete all coursework on time. You must write both of the assigned essays and the take-home exam to pass the course, and you must write them within the schedule of the course—not in the last few days of the semester after you have fallen behind. You will receive a letter reminding you of these requirements, therefore, if you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of an essay by the final due date for that essay. The letter will also specify the new date by which you must submit the late work. *If you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of the essay by this new date, and you have not documented a medical problem, you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course for neglect of work.*

**Lateness:**

For *all* assignments promptness is *mandatory* and part of the grade so please schedule your work accordingly. *THERE WILL BE NO GUARANTEE THAT YOU WILL RECEIVE FEEDBACK IF YOU TURN IN AN ASSIGNMENT LATE.* The penalty for late written work will be a deduction of 1/3 of the final grade for each day that it is late. (So if you were three days late in turning in an essay that would have received an “A-”, you would receive a “B-” for it.) Please note that weekends are included in the deduction of a grade for late work. Late work any more than 5 days after the due date will not be accepted. Please contact your TA if you have a medical reason or family emergency that will prevent you from turning in your work on time.

**Electronic Submissions:**

You will submit at least some of your work electronically this semester. As you send or upload each document, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have saved the document in a form compatible with Microsoft Word doc or docx. It is also your responsibility to

ensure that the file you are sending is not corrupted or damaged. If your TA cannot open or read the file you have sent, the essay will be subject to a late penalty.

**Academic Honesty:**

Harvard Extension School expects students to understand and maintain high standards of academic integrity. Breaches of academic integrity include the following examples:

Plagiarism is the theft of someone else’s ideas and work. It is the incorporation of facts, ideas, or specific language that are not common knowledge, are taken from another source, and are not properly cited.

Whether a student copies verbatim or simply rephrases the ideas of another without properly acknowledging the source, the theft is the same. In the preparation of work submitted to meet course requirements, whether a draft or a final version of a paper or take-home exam, students must take great care to distinguish their own ideas and language from information derived from sources. Sources include published and unpublished primary and secondary materials, the Internet, and information and opinions of other people.

Extension School students are responsible for following the standards of proper citation to avoid plagiarism.  A useful resource is [*The Harvard Guide to Using Sources*](http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do) prepared by the Harvard College Writing Program and the Extension School’s Career and Academic Resource Center’s [guide and tutorial on plagiarism](http://www.extension.harvard.edu/resources/career-academic-resource-center/plagiarism-proper-use-sources).

Collaboration on assignments is prohibited. When collaboration is permitted, students must acknowledge all collaboration and its extent in all submitted work. Collaboration includes the use of professional or expert editing or writing services. Because it is assumed that work submitted in a course is the student’s own unless otherwise permitted, students should be very clear about how they are working with others and what types of assistance, if any, they are receiving. The goal of this oversight is to preserve the status of the work as the student’s own intellectual product. Students should remember that the [Writing Center](http://www.extension.harvard.edu/resources/writing-center) is available to assist them with assessing and editing their own work.

The following kinds of collaboration are permitted in this course: developing or refining ideas in conversation with other students, and through peer review of written work (including feedback from [Writing Center](http://www.extension.harvard.edu/resources/writing-center) tutors). If you would like to acknowledge the impact someone had on your essay, it is customary to do this in a footnote at the beginning of the paper. You do not need to acknowledge discussion with others of general approaches to the assignment or assistance with proofreading. However, all work submitted for this course must be your own: in other words, writing drafts or revisions with other students is expressly forbidden.