

David Blake
Fall 2022
Bliss 226, ext. 3048
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OH: M, Th 11:00-12:20 *and by appointment*

LIT 376: United States Literature, 1900-present

Required Texts:

Bechdel, Alison, *Fun Home: Family Tragicomic* (9780618871711)
Cisneros, Sandra, *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* (9780679738565)
Eliot, T.S., *The Waste Land: A Norton Critical Edition* (9780393974997)
Ellison, Ralph, *Invisible Man* (9780679732761)
Far, Sui Sin, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Stories* (9780593241202)
Faulkner, William, *The Sound and the Fury* (9780393912692)
Ginsberg, Allen, *Howl And Other Poems* (9780872860179)
Hemingway, Ernest, *In Our Time* (9780684822761)
Hurston, Zora Neale, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (9780061120060)
Morrison, Toni, *Sula* (9781400033430)
Zitkala-Sa, *American Indian Stories* (9781984854216)

Course Description: The course explores the diversity of U.S. literature in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Topics may include modernism, the Harlem Renaissance, the emergence of 1930s protest literature, mid-century experimentation, and post-modernism. For English majors, this class meets the Literary History and American requirements.

Course Introduction and Objectives: LIT 376 offers an intensive study of U.S. Literature from 1900 to the present. The course covers a tremendously rich period of literary, political, and social history, a period that included two world wars, economic collapse, the dropping of the atomic bomb, the collapse of empires, the struggle for civil rights, and the erosion of traditional notions about race, class, gender, sexuality, and personal identity. Writers during this period sought to be increasingly experimental and avant-garde, even as literature itself developed into a cultural institution, a commercial commodity, and an intellectual antidote to movies, television, and popular culture. This course introduces you to a variety of works that self-consciously address questions of genre, history, and experimentation. It includes works of poetry composed of fragments, novels composed of other stories, and texts that combine memoir, fiction, and drama.

Students who complete this course will be able to:

- Read independently and develop a strong sense of how aesthetic form and style intersect with content and theme;
- Identify and discuss major literary movements in 20th-century US Literature;
- Appreciate and de-code the conversations that take place between texts and the role these conversations play in creating different versions of literary history;
- Develop their own critical voice as they encounter both primary literary texts and secondary critical sources

Schedule of Readings

6 September: Zitkala-Sa, "The School Days of an Indian Girl"; Sui Sin Far, "Mrs. Spring Fragrance," "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian" (Canvas)

****Remember: TCNJ follows a Monday schedule on this Tuesday****

12 September: Hemingway, *In Our Time*

19 September: Eliot, *The Waste Land*; Eliot selections from "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and "Hamlet" (114-121); Williams, *Burning the Christmas Greens* (Canvas)

26 September: Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*, sections 1 and 2

3 October: Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*, sections 3 and 4, Appendix

10 October: No class: Fall Break

17 October: *The Poetry of Robert Frost and Langston Hughes*: Frost, "Mending Wall," "Home Burial," "The Wood Pile," "The Oven Bird," "After Apple Picking," "Desert Places," "Design."; Hughes, "Johannesberg Mines" (43), "I, Too," (46), "America" (52), "Let America Be America Again" (189), "Old Walt" (446), "Gods" 37, "Dream Variations" (40), "Johannesburg Mines" (43), "Formula" (74), "Poet to Patron" (212) (Canvas)

****Paper 1 Due: October 17, 5:30 pm****

24 October: Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; Hughes, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" (23), *Danse Africaine* (28), "The Weary Blues" (50), "Lenox Avenue Midnight" (92), "Harlem Night Club" (90), "Saturday Night" (88), "Rent Party: For Lady Dancer" (130) (Canvas)

31 October: Ellison, *Invisible Man*

7 November: Ellison, *Invisible Man*

14 November: The Poetry of Selfhood at Mid-century: Ginsberg, "Howl," "America," "A Supermarket in California"; Sexton, "Her Kind," "The Abortion," and TBA (Canvas)

****Paper 2 Due November 14, 5:30 pm****

21 November: Morrison, *Sula*

28 November: Cisneros, *Woman at Hollering Creek*

5 December: Bechdel, *Fun Home*

****Paper 3 Due December 7, 5:30pm****

TBA Final Exam

Course Information Policies

- 1) **Absence and Attendance:** Your attendance and participation are critical to your success. If circumstances arise which mandate a prolonged absence, please contact the Office of Student Life (771-2201) and provide me with appropriate documentation. TCNJ's policy on academic absences is available on the web: <https://academicaffairs.tcnj.edu/tcnj-syllabus-resources/> I will, of course, make all reasonable accommodations for students who are quarantined because of Covid.
- 2) **Written assignments:** You will write three papers in this course. All essays must be printed legibly on 8.5 x 11 white paper with black ink. They must be turned in on the date that they are due in hard copy and on Canvas. Papers over 72 hours late risk failure, unless you've made prior arrangements with me. Students must complete each assignment to pass the course.
- 3) **Final Exam:** The course will culminate in a comprehensive final examination which will ask students to apply their knowledge of literary history to course texts. The Registrar will announce details on the time and place of the exam later in the semester. TCNJ's Reading Days/ Final Exam policy is available on the web: <https://academicaffairs.tcnj.edu/tcnj-syllabus-resources/>
- 4) **Grading:** The breakdown in grading percentages is:

15%	Paper 1
20%	Paper 2
30%	Paper 3
25%	Final Exam
<u>10%</u>	<u>Class Participation</u>

100% Total

The grading scale in this course incorporates the principle of "rounding up," so further adjustments will not be made:

100 - 92.6 % = A	79.5 - 76.6 % = C+
92.5 - 89.6 % = A-	76.5 - 72.6 % = C
89.5 - 86.6 % = B+	72.5 - 69.6 % = C-
86.5 - 82.6 % = B	69.5 - 64.6 % = D
82.5 - 79.6 % = B-	64.5 - 0 % = F

- 5) **Academic Integrity:** The College of New Jersey prohibits students from using the same paper for two different courses *unless the student receives written permission from both instructors*. All work for this course must be done by you. Please avoid plagiarism! If you ever have questions about plagiarism or proper citation methods, please consult me. All cases of plagiarism will be referred to the Academic Integrity Officer of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. They will also

result in a zero grade for the paper and/ or a failure in the course.

Academic dishonesty is any attempt by the student to gain academic advantage through dishonest means, to submit, as his or her own, work which has not been done by him/her or to give improper aid to another student in the completion of an assignment. Such dishonesty would include, but it is not limited to: submitting as his/her own a project, paper, report, test, or speech copied from, partially copied, or paraphrased from the work of another (whether the source is printed, under copyright, or in manuscript form). Credit must be given for words quoted or paraphrased. The rules apply to any form of academic dishonesty, whether the work is graded or ungraded, group or individual, written or oral. TCNJ's academic integrity policy is available on the web: <https://academicaffairs.tcnj.edu/tcnj-syllabus-resources/>

- 6) **Tutoring:** The Tutoring Center is an excellent place to get help on your papers. Please see the details at: <https://tutoringcenter.tcnj.edu/>
- 7) **Student Support:** The TCNJ community is dedicated to the success, safety and well-being of each student. TCNJ strictly follows key policies that govern all TCNJ community members rights and responsibilities in and out of the classroom. In addition, TCNJ has established several student support offices that can provide the support and resources to help students achieve their personal and professional goals and to promote health and well-being. You can find more information about these policies and resources at the "TCNJ Student Support Resources and Classroom Policies" webpage here: <https://academicaffairs.tcnj.edu/tcnj-syllabus-resources/>.

Students who anticipate and/or experience barriers in this course are encouraged to contact the instructor as early in the semester as possible. The Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) is available to facilitate the removal of barriers and to ensure reasonable accommodations. For more information about ARC, please visit: <https://arc.tcnj.edu/>."

- 8) **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** The TCNJ community is composed of people with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences, and the college is committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, access and belonging. The college's Campus Diversity Statement can be viewed here: <https://diversity.tcnj.edu/campus-diversity-statement/>."
- 9) **Other Policies:** Across its curriculum, The College of New Jersey has adopted common resources and policies for its students. I have featured several of those policies above. For a full statement of policies (including policies on Student Conduct, Discrimination in the Workplace and Educational Environment, and Class Recordings), please consult: <https://academicaffairs.tcnj.edu/tcnj-syllabus-resources/>
- 10) A syllabus is a plan not a contract, especially with changing public health conditions. While we will make every effort to follow this schedule, I reserve the right to alter the due dates of assignments, to clarify and modify the nature and length of assignments, and to include unannounced assessments in order to meet the educational goals of this course.
- 11) Literature gains some of its power from its ability to explore the extremes of human relationships. The writers in this course address a wide range of experiences that range

from the reflective to the traumatic and from the socially acceptable to the morally grotesque. If you are anxious about your personal response to these works, you should consider whether this course is appropriate for you. My expectation is that every student will complete every one of the assigned readings and be prepared to listen to discussions about them in class.

- 12) There will be numerous opportunities for you to meet with me, especially before a paper is due. Regular office hours will be conducted on Mondays via Google Hangout and on Thursdays in person. Please feel free to attend office hours if you have questions you'd like to ask about the class. The best way to contact me is by e-mail – blake@tcnj.edu. I check my mail regularly and expect you to do the same.

LIT 376/ U.S. Literature Since 1900, Fall 2022
Department, School, and College Goals and Policies

1) As one of the courses that meet the Literary History requirements in the TCNJ English major, LIT 376/ U.S. Literature since 1900 provides a rigorous survey of a historical time period. The course will meet the following English Department Learning Outcomes:

- (1) Students will be able to demonstrate familiarity with a range of critical, generic, and literary traditions (including recent theoretical approaches) that shape – and are shaped by – literary discourses and texts of particular periods or movements.
- (3) Students will be able to identify historically specific elements relevant to a particular text.
- (4) Students will be able to read a literary work and characterize its main aesthetic, structural, and rhetorical strategies in an argumentative, thesis-driven essay.

2) As part of the curriculum of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, LIT 376 meets the following Learning Goals as they have been presented to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education:

- #1 Written Communication
- #5 Critical Analysis and Reasoning: Ability to critique the arguments of others in the discipline and the construction of one's own arguments in the discipline, using data/evidence as a focus of instruction and/or the ability to analyze linguistic and cultural patterns
- #7 Interpret Language and Symbol
- #12 Students will be able to demonstrate familiarity with a range of critical, generic, and literary traditions (including recent theoretical approaches) that shape – and are shaped by – literary discourses and texts of particular periods or movements
- #14 Students will be able to identify historically specific elements relevant to a particular text
- #15 Students will be able to read a literary work and characterize its main aesthetic, structural, and rhetorical strategies in an argumentative, thesis-driven essay or in a writing workshop
- #17 Analyze how creative texts, artworks, or performances reflect, shape, exalt, or challenge the values of a culture.

3) This course meets 160 minutes a week but carries 1 full unit of credit toward the completion of an undergraduate degree. Students enrolled in this course are expected to take substantial responsibility outside the classroom for their own learning experience and to complete assignments at a level of excellence that significantly exceeds what is required at many other colleges and universities, including at the College itself prior to 2006.

4) Because the students in this course are assigned additional learning tasks that make the semester's learning experience more deeply engaged and rigorous, no additional classroom time or space is needed.

Grading Rubric

CRITERIA GRADE	ARGUMENT	EVIDENCE	STYLE	MECHANICS/ GRAMMAR
A	Argument is focused, clearly stated at the beginning, and developed logically throughout the paper to a conclusion. Paragraphs organized around concepts with strong topic sentences. Argument is bold, fresh, and compelling	Extensive and varied factual evidence supports argument. No significant omissions, irrelevancies, or errors of fact. Quoted and paraphrased material is introduced fluidly, with varying and helpful framing.	Excellent prose style: clear, elegant, persuasive. Language and phrasing are precise and, in some cases, memorable. Writer has an identifiable and coherent voice.	Minimal errors in grammar, spelling, etc.
B	Argument relatively clear and focused but may fail to develop to a precise, ambitious conclusion. Topic sentences advance different stages of the argument. Papers in the B-/C+ range generally have a routine argument or one that re-hashes class discussion rather than breaking new ground.	Generally good evidence, but some lack of variety of sources, errors of omission, and/ or irrelevant data. Quoted and paraphrased material is framed properly, though at times mechanically.	Clear, serviceable prose that does not obscure understanding. Writer has used varying sentence patterns, although the sentences lack the rhythm and precision of an A paper. Writer's voice is emerging.	A few errors ranging from typos and spelling mistakes to the inappropriate use of the passive voice.
C	Argument is vague, general, implied, and does not lead to a well-developed conclusion. When organized, paragraphs and topic sentences emphasize sequence (time, scenes, etc) rather than concepts. Frequent plot summary. Papers often "recognize" an image or thematic pattern and "display" that pattern, but do not advance an argument.	Some evidence, but excessive dependence on a single scene or source, substantial omissions or irrelevancies, and/or minor errors of fact. Quoted and paraphrased materials are simply dropped into the text without attribution or framing.	Understandable writing, but sometimes vague, wooden, or choppy. Sentences are haphazardly constructed, giving the impression that the writer has little control.	Substantial errors which detract from overall effect of paper or suggest a wavering commitment to the assignment.*

D	Argument is barely discernible and/or very poorly developed.	Very little, or largely irrelevant evidence, and/or substantial errors of fact. Problems in quoted and paraphrased material ranging from misquotations to passages that arouse suspicions of plagiarism.	Writing is confusing, vague, and/or hard to understand.	Frequent and serious errors which make paper hard to understand or suggest a profound lack of commitment to the assignment.*
F	No discernible argument or paper totally digresses from argument.	Virtually no relevant evidence and/or very serious errors of fact. Problems in quoted and paraphrased material that indicate a case of either intentional or unintentional plagiarism	Writing is nearly unintelligible.	Massive errors which render paper nearly unintelligible.*

Grading papers is not a precise business, and my comments will be holistic. The above table should be read as a guideline only. It breaks down the course's grading criteria into four categories: argument, evidence, style, and mechanics. These are not, however, entirely discrete categories, and in fact, your performance in one area will often shape your performance in another. For example, readers will not be able to appreciate your argument if they have to struggle to understand the sentences that convey it. If you think it would be helpful, you are welcome to bring a copy of this rubric to office hours and ask me to show how your graded paper fits into these categories.

*Note: my response to your paper will not be aimed at correcting your grammar or mechanics, but any paper in which these mistakes are plentiful will not receive a high grade, regardless of the quality of the argument and evidence. Students who clearly do not understand a grammatical or stylistic principle (passive voice, comma-splice, etc) will not be markedly penalized. However, once I have explained the principle (in class, in office hours, or in the paper's annotations), the repetition of these errors in future assignments will dramatically reduce your grade.