ENGL 2041

K. Martin
University of New Orleans
Instructor: K. Martin
Office: LA 327 Phone: 280-6462 (available during office hours, no answering device)
Office hours: Tuesday/Thursday 11:00-12:30, Wednesday 9:30-12:30, and by appointment
E-mail: kmartin@uno.edu

Course Description

The overarching theme of this course is American identity and the American Dream. Through the work of key American authors from 1621 to the present, this course examines several themes—reflections on Puritan writing and culture, the memoir as a commentary on national identity, and the American coming of age story from the diverse perspectives of both men and women. In each unit of the course, a small selection of works will explore its unit’s theme from the diverse historical and socioeconomic vantage points of American writers. The course is not intended as an exhaustive survey of American literature on any given theme, but rather as an inquiry into key works that merit comparison and familiarize you with noteworthy literary influences on the notions about “American identity” and “The American Dream.” You will be expected to read critically and write analytically about the works you read.

Learning Outcomes

By semester’s end, you should be able to

- Identify the elements of fiction and apply your knowledge to the texts you have read, even to works of nonfiction.
- Analyze the works you read with a clear spirit of inquiry.
- Elicit meaning from short segments of text, basing your interpretation and analysis on clear textual evidence.
- Analyze fluid concepts of American identity and the American Dream as they are presented in assigned works.
- Identify the primary indicators of significant periods in American literature.
- Recognize the perspectives of marginalized populations in the history of American literature.
- Perform clear textual analysis of the works you read, both in class discussion and in writing.

Texts


Course Requirements

Analytical essays (40% of final grade)

This course requires that you write two analytical essays of 1,000 to 1,200 words that closely examine an aspect of an assigned reading. A few weeks before the due dates, I will post instructions and suggestions about topics for these essays, but I do encourage you to devise your own topics that adhere to the guidelines I provide. The following two resources will be extremely helpful to you in getting started: 1. Purdue OWL’s “Writing about Fiction” (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/616/1/). 2. Purdue OWL’s “Writing about Literature” (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/618/1/). Essays are assessed based on complexity of ideas, clarity, focus, textual analysis and interpretation, smooth integration of quoted material, style and grammar. Close reading of weekly materials and thoughtful completion of class activities and discussion will prepare you for these tasks. The essays should be double-spaced, with one-inch margins. Every essay must have a title, somehow distinct from the assignment name or the work(s) it analyzes, and should be presented in MLA style.

All essays must be submitted on time to the correct submission inbox on Moodle in order to be graded. All essays must be submitted in an MS-Word compatible format. If you are unsure what this means, just submit your essay in .rtf format. I do not grade emailed essays. However, if you are unsure about whether your essay has successfully uploaded to the Moodle drop box, you might also email me a backup copy by the deadline, just to demonstrate that your intention was to upload the essay by its due date in case the submission is, for some reason, absent from the drop box.

Drafts: I will comment on a draft of each of your essays, in conference, as long as it is submitted to me via email a week before the final essay due date, and I strongly recommend that all students take advantage of this opportunity. I do not predict grades on these occasions but I do provide global comments intended to aid your revision process. I am also available during office hours or by e-mail to discuss your essay after it has been returned to you, or to discuss any of your other course work. I also encourage you to visit the Writing Center in LA334, where tutors can assist you at any level of your writing process.

Exams (30% of final grade)

I will give three exams throughout the semester. Each exam will require you to write extensive text-based interpretation of passages from assigned works, as well as statements of the overall significance of a passage to the work from which it comes and/or to the themes we explore in a unit. I assess these exams based on how thoroughly you elicit meaning from key passages of assigned works, via clear text-based interpretation and analysis. The final exam covers only the last unit of work assigned; it is not a cumulative final. Please see the rules above for submitting essays to Moodle and via email. These rules apply to exams as well.

Class discussion (30% of final grade)

Because this is an online course, our class meetings will be conducted entirely in the discussion forums in Moodle. Each Monday and Thursday by noon, I will post discussion topics that must be completed by the following Monday or Thursday by noon, whichever comes first. Your responses should each be thorough and thoughtful, and should range anywhere from a few paragraphs to a page. At midterm and at the end of the term, I will assign a cumulative grade to your responses.
The goal of class discussion is to respond to what you read, to understand how response leads to analysis, and to distinguish between the two. Your class discussion forum is somewhat less formal than your analytical essays, of course. No one can be expected to analyze a text without first asking questions, brainstorming answers to those questions, responding from a personal vantage point, taking risks, exploring ideas, and engaging with others in these pursuits. The discussion forum creates this space for you, and “good” work is that which demonstrates that you are using a discussion forum to these ends. Ideally, discussion forums are a means by which everyone is preparing to analyze text and often doing so, with a clear intent of inquiry and mutual support. Where there is disagreement, without which these discussions would be of little use to any of us, there must also be respectful and thoughtful disagreement that encourages others to clarify, respond, and engage further, rather than to feel attacked, insulted, or shut down. Any instances in which I see clear disrespect for others (classmates, entire demographics, me) in posts (including but not limited to abusive comments), I will respond just as I would in an onsite class—by involving the Office of Academic Affairs. In short, please don’t be afraid to disagree, but please disagree thoughtfully and respectfully.

Forum attendance: Forum discussions must be submitted on time to receive credit and feedback. Don’t be left behind. No one in the class, including me, can be expected to revisit to look for or respond to late posts. The course moves quickly, and each new forum dominates the attention of everyone. However, a key to success in the course is returning to forums after my comments, videos, or additional resources are posted in response to your discussion.

My Feedback: Though I will respond to your posts as a group, either in my end comments or in an instructional video, I do not respond to each post individually. You will often see that I respond individually to a few posts, but please do not conclude that if you I don’t respond to your post individually, I haven’t read it. I read and think about all of your work that is posted on time—this is how my own comments and instructional videos take shape and how your grade for class discussion is ultimately formed. A key to success in the course is returning to forums after my comments, videos, or additional resources are posted. Usually, this is within three to 24 hours after the forum closes.

Grading Guidelines

- An A represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course/assignment requirements.
- A B represents achievement that is significantly beyond the level necessary to meet course/assignment requirements.
- A C represents achievement that meets the course/assignment requirements in every respect.
- A D represents achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course/assignment requirements.
- An F represents achievement that fails to meet the course/assignment requirements.

You are responsible for meeting all of the requirements of each assignment, and you should expect to receive a grade below C if you do not. You are also responsible for contacting me in advance for clarification if you do not understand the requirements. For the sake of clarity, an A in this class is 90-100, a B is 80-89, a C is 70-79, a D is 60-69, and an F is a grade below 60.

Forum Grades
To earn an A for class discussion, you must have missed no more than one discussion. Your comments must be thoughtful, original, and thorough to the degree that they model engaged response for your peers. They demonstrate that you are working closely with multiple pieces of a text (direct quotations and solid evidence) to reach reasoned conclusions. You must identify yourself as one who is prepared, curious, and enthusiastic about the subject matter. Your questions and responses and analysis will clearly demonstrate that you are absorbed in the topics at hand. You will have demonstrated a willingness to return to the discussion forum after refining your thoughts in response to others’ comments. You will have demonstrated clear interest and generosity in your responses to the posts of others. Your comments must be relatively sound in terms of grammar, style, and mechanics.

To earn a B for class discussion, you must have missed no more than two discussions. Your comments must be thoughtful, original, and thorough. You must approach discussions in a spirit of academic inquiry with clear enthusiasm and demonstrate an ability to base your conclusions on evidence that you clearly present to the rest of us. Your discussions will be relatively sound in terms of grammar, style, and mechanics.

To earn a C for class discussion, you must have missed no more than three discussions. Your comments must be thoughtful, original, and thorough. Your responses must adequately address the discussion questions at hand. Your responses must be relatively sound in terms of grammar, style and mechanics.

Missing more than three discussions, developing a habit of simply agreeing with the comments of those who have posted before you, posting responses that are clearly hurried and unenthusiastic, or consistently posting responses that are unclear or unedited, will result in a class participation grade of D or below.

Attendance
Failure to participate in four discussion forums or class activities by the due dates posted is grounds for failing this course. Please contact me if you are having difficulty and I will do my best to assist you. Do not “disappear” from the course. Disappearance from the course for a few weeks (or more) is the primary reason for failure of online classes.

Deadlines
All of your work must be submitted by the due dates I post in Moodle. Under “class discussion,” above, I explain, in depth, the rules regarding forums and weekly assignments. I will accept one essay or one exam (except for the final exam, for which no makeup is available) up to three days after its due date. I will consider only serious and documented excuses for exception to this rule. An example of a serious and documented excuse is “I was in the hospital. Here is a note from my physician.” Or “I was serving on a jury that was sequestered on the following date. Here is a copy of the legal notice.” Even in circumstances such as these, it is sometimes necessary to drop the course if you are unable for an extended period to complete assignments. Even in circumstances such as these, it is also necessary for you or someone on your behalf to inform me of the situation as soon as possible. For instance, I do not consider a documented excuse after a semester has ended to accept an assignment that was due before finals week.

Accommodations for Disability
It is University policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services as well as their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. For more information, please go to http://www.ods.uno.edu.

**Academic Integrity**

Academic dishonesty will result in failure of this course. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the Student Code of Conduct for further information. The Code is available online at http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu.