

AJ15002 American Literature 1960-Present
Spring 2015, Tue 14.10-15.40/15.50-17.20 room G22
instructor: Martina Horakova, office 3009, mhorakov@phil.muni.cz
office hours: Wednesday 14-15.30

Course description:

This course attempts to capture the diversity of American writing since the 1960s, including a variety of genres, literary generations, geographical regions and social and ethnic backgrounds.

Course objectives:

1. To appreciate the diversity of themes, genres and writers in contemporary American literature.
2. To refine critical thinking and achieve a deeper understanding of how literature affects us and how it may enrich our perception of the world.

Syllabus:

Week 1, Feb 17:

Introduction to course policies and assignments

Unit I: Identity Politics

Week 2, Feb 24

Guest talk: Rebekah Bloyd (Santa Clara University & Bard College, USA)

Native American Poetics:

Joy Harjo, poetry and memoir

Week 3, March 3

Fictional Ethno-autobiography:

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*

essay: Christopher Newfield and Avery F.

Gordon, "Multiculturalism's Unfinished Business"

Week 4, March 10

African American Cultural Heritage:

Alice Walker, "Everyday Use"

essay: Barbara T. Christian, "Introduction" to *Everyday Use*

Week 5, March 17

Growing Up Chicano/a:

Denise Chavez, "The Last of the Menu Girls,"

and Rudolfo Anaya, from *Bless Me, Ultima*

essay: Antonia Castañeda, "Language and Other Lethal Weapons"

Unit II: Varieties of Place and Self

Week 6, March 24

Middle-class Suburban Family:

John Updike, "Separating,"

John Cheever, "The Swimmer"

essay: Catherine Jurca, "Epilogue: Same as It Ever Was (More or Less)"

Week 7, March 31

Nature Writing:

Barbara Kingsolver, Annie Dillard, Linda Hogan, Scott Russell Sanders

Week 8, April 7

Reading week, no class (read Guterson's novel)

Week 9, April 14

History and Place:

David Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars*

Unit III: Genres and Strategies

Week 10, April 21

Guest talk: Robert Švábenský

Post-Apocalyptic Novel:

Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*

Week 11, April 28

Guest Talk: Paulina Mirowska (University of Lodz, Poland)

American Postwar Drama:

Sam Shepard, *True West*

Week 12, May 5

Guest talk: Veronika Pituková

Hardboiled Fiction:

Robert B. Parker, *The Godwulf Manuscript*

Week 13, May 12:

Essay topic proposals, consultations

Assessment:

class participation and discussions	10%
5 response papers (out of nine classes)	40%
final essay	50%

Evaluation: points out of 10 (response papers)/100 (final papers); 60% pass/fail line; A 100-85, B 84-80, C-79-75, D 74-70, E 69-60, F 59-0.

Attendance:

Since this course consists of literary seminars in which students' participation is crucial, attendance is compulsory. Absences due to illness must be documented in the study department.

Assignment Guidelines:

Class participation and discussions:

Students are expected to come prepared, having read all assigned materials, including the secondary readings. They should participate actively in both group and class discussions. The performance in the class contributes to the final mark.

Response papers:

Objectives: to read primary texts critically and in detail: this activity facilitates a "focused" reading, it makes students notice details, underline key passage, think about the structure and composition of the text – simply "work with" the text rather than just "read" it; it also helps students prepare for class discussions; the format helps students write effectively, analytically, and to the point.

Form: a short (max. 1-2 double-spaced page) critical analysis of the primary readings; write two or three coherent paragraphs about your response to the primary text(s): no research involved at this stage, "only" your own ideas; choose an interesting aspect of the text (e.g. analysis of a character development, function of a setting, a symbol, a particular narrative strategy, etc.) and analyze this aspect; avoid plot summaries and descriptions, be analytical (always ask Why? What does this or that show us?); in most classes, you will be given 2-3 discussion questions to choose from.

Deadlines: students are to write 5 response papers (out of 9) throughout the course – it is their responsibility to choose for which session they will write RPs; bring a hard copy to the class BEFORE the text(s) are discussed in class; it is appreciated if you can print on both sides; no late RPs will be accepted unless it is negotiated with the teacher.

Final essays:

Discussion questions will be made available during the semester, deadlines will be set in the IS.

Form: six full pages (excluding bibliography), evidence of research (min. three solid secondary academic sources), textual evidence in the text (quotes, paraphrases, correct in-text references).

Note:

The **format** of ALL assignments in his course must follow the MLA documentation style (see MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th edition): double-spaced, proper heading, referencing in the text and correct format of bibliography;

Plagiarism: Any attempt to plagiarize from whichever source and citing/paraphrasing unacknowledged sources will result in failing the assignment and/or the course.