Fall 2011

**English 247: American Literature and Popular Culture**

HH280: Monday & Wednesday, 10:00am – 11:20am
Instructor: Charles Boyes
Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday, 11:30am – 12:30pm
Email: boyescharlesw@gmail.com

**About this course:**

In this course, we will survey American literature and popular culture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Throughout the term, we will explore a number of prescient theoretical concerns: what is literature? what is popular culture? why are some books literature and others just, well, books? And, most importantly, what is the relationship between, on the one hand, literary and popular texts and, on the other, our everyday world? How and why do texts make us who we are? How and why do we produce texts? While the first half of the course is designed to simply have us recognize that these are questions worth asking, the second half will focus our efforts on a particular time and place in history (urban American in the 1980s) in order to, perhaps, ground the preliminary theoretical inquiries. We will encounter a variety of texts, including novels, comics, films, and critical and cultural theory, some of which may be familiar and others which you will be seeing for the first time. We will also be thinking about race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality and the ways that these issues are part of larger discussions about (popular) culture in America.

**Course texts:**


*Please Note:* Additional reading materials will be made available throughout the term.
### Assignments and Evaluations

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response Paper</td>
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<td>Mid-Term Test</td>
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<td>Final essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>To be scheduled</td>
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### Date | Readings | Dues Dates and Additional Readings
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Monday September 12 | Introduction |  
Wednesday September 14 | Course Questions:  
What is a text?  
What is literature?  
What is popular culture? |  
Monday September 19 | Texts and Ideology | Althussur, “Ideology …” (web)
Wednesday September 21 | Krazy and Ignatz |  
Monday September 26 | Krazy and Ignatz |  
Wednesday September 28 | The Jungle |  
Monday October 3 | The Jungle | Tompkins, Sensational Designs (web)
Wednesday October 5 | The Jungle |  
Monday October 10 | The Maltese Falcon |  
Wednesday October 12 | The Maltese Falcon | Chandler, “Simple Art of Murder” (web)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Monday October 17</td>
<td><em>Shadows</em> (film viewing)</td>
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<td>Wednesday October 19</td>
<td><em>Shadows</em></td>
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<td>Monday October 24</td>
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<td><em>Mid-Term Test</em></td>
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<td>Wednesday October 26</td>
<td><em>Stone Butch Blues</em></td>
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<td>Monday October 31</td>
<td><em>Stone Butch Blues</em></td>
<td><em>A Brief History of Neoliberalism</em> 1-4, 5-30</td>
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<td>Wednesday November 2</td>
<td><em>Dark Knight Returns</em></td>
<td><em>Response Paper</em></td>
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<td>Monday November 7</td>
<td><em>Dark Knight Returns</em></td>
<td><em>A Brief History of Neoliberalism</em> 36-63</td>
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<td>Wednesday November 9</td>
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<td><em>Essay Workshop</em></td>
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<td>Monday November 14</td>
<td><em>Ferris Bueller’s Day Off</em> (film viewing)</td>
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<td>Wednesday November 16</td>
<td><em>Ferris Bueller’s Day Off</em></td>
<td><em>Essay Proposal</em></td>
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<td>Monday November 21</td>
<td><em>Ferris Bueller’s Day Off / American Psycho</em></td>
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<td>Wednesday November 23</td>
<td><em>American Psycho</em></td>
<td><em>A Brief History of Neoliberalism</em> 159-168</td>
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<td>Monday November 28</td>
<td><em>American Psycho</em></td>
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<td>Wednesday November 30</td>
<td><em>Exam Review</em></td>
<td><em>Final Essay</em></td>
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Participation (10%)

Participation includes attendance as well as completing the preparatory work required to participate in each class. In other words, all readings must be completed before the relevant class, and attention should be focused on all lectures and class discussions. Your participation grade will be determined according to how you perform in these aspects. It is your active, regular, and above all, informed participation that will decide the majority of this mark, and not how often you attend or how many questions you ask or answer (though attendance is a prerequisite for participation).

Conduct: Students are expected to take an active role in their education in this course. This means that you will likely receive greater freedom than you have been offered in previous years of education. It also means that you will be expected to contribute towards a positive academic atmosphere, one that is attentive to everybody’s learning needs. A classroom is meant to be a place to learn and to debate, which means listening is as important as speaking. Furthermore, throughout this course we may be dealing with topics on which students may hold deep personal beliefs or opinions; all students are expected to treat fellow students and their opinions with respect. This does not mean we must all agree (in fact, lively discussion and debate are greatly encouraged); it simply means that you should show respect and tact when these differences of opinion arise. Keep in mind a tutorial discussion should focus on what we say, and not who we are. Students should maintain an open mind towards both their own views as well as the views of others in the classroom and at all times maintain a positive critical vocabulary. At no point will sexist, racist, or homophobic language or ideas be tolerated.

Test (15%)

The thirteenth meeting will be given over to a test of your familiarity of the material covered in the first section of the course. The test will be administered in class and you will have 1.25 hours to complete it. The test will cover key terms (short answer) and your ability to elucidate and evaluate important concepts (short essay).

Response Paper (15%)

The response paper will be 1000 words in length, double spaced. Working from a focused question, you will be asked to apply, and demonstrate the relevance of, a single theoretical text to a single creative text.

A detailed response paper sheet will be distributed in class well before the deadline.
Essay (35%)

The final essay will be 1800-2000 words in length, double spaced, excluding apparatus. Your paper should make liberal, but pointed, use of course material for reference. Any additional research must be okayed by the instructor. You will be required to submit an approximately one page proposal for the paper you intend to write. The final paper must be formatted using MLA guidelines.

A detailed essay assignment sheet will be distributed in class well before the deadline.

Final exam (25%)

The final exam will take place in the exam period and will cover material from the entire course. You will have 2.5 hrs to complete the exam.

Course policies

Late assignments will be penalized 2% per business day. Requests for extensions will be adjudicated on a case-by-case basis, but will only be granted if consultation takes place prior to the due date. Any requests made after the due date will require appropriate documentation.

University policies

Academic integrity: Members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. For more information, see http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/

Note on avoidance of academic offences: You are expected to know what constitutes an academic offence, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for your actions. If you need help in learning how to avoid offences such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask your TA or course instructor for guidance. You can also consult the helpful resources on the Faculty of Arts web page: http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html.

Discipline: When the commission of an offence is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy 71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the summary of Policy 71 which is supplied in the Undergraduate Calendar, section 1: http://www.ucalendar.uwaterloo.ca/0405/UW/policy_71.html. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your academic advisor and the Undergraduate Associate Dean.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) (other than a petition) or Policy 71 (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 (Student Appeals): http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm.
Grievances: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances), Section 4: http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm.

Note for students with disabilities: The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.