This course is an introduction to American literary and cultural studies through the examination of selected movements, moments, topics, or figures, drawing on both literature and other media. Our focus will be the erasure of the divide between “highbrow” literary forms and “lowbrow” material culture that occurs in the twentieth century. We will discuss how literature has changed its meanings, forms and functions by embracing popular forms of culture and by opening up to other media (film and graphic novels in particular). Furthermore, we will assess how works of fiction shape and convey American cultural themes and myths through written and visual languages, tackling issues of audience, authorship and narrative structure. Our main goal is to analyze the ways in which popular culture informs and transforms literature, and how literature reciprocally feeds on popular culture.

Required Texts:

- **Novels + Graphic Novel**

- **Movies (shown in class)**
  - Jack Clayton’s *The Great Gatsby* (1974, 144 min)
  - Tim Burton’s *Sleepy Hollow* (1999, 105 min)
  - Jim Jarmusch’s *Dead Man* (1995, 121 min)
  - Dennis Hopper, *Easy Rider* (1969, 95 min)

Course Readings (on coursepack):
- President Lyndon B. Johnson, Address at Johns Hopkins University: “Peace Without Conquest”
- Shepard, Sam. *True West*

Online Readings
- Zeitz, Joshua. “F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Age of Excess”
  [http://www.historynow.org/06_2008/historian5.html](http://www.historynow.org/06_2008/historian5.html)
- Lovecraft, Howard Phillips. “Supernatural Horror in Literature” (Introduction and section VII on Poe)
Assignments:

1) Midterm 20%
2) Quizzes 10%
3) Final Essay 30%
4) Creative Assignment 10%
5) Final Exam 30%

1) Midterm (20%) – February 24
This in-class exam will evaluate your knowledge of the works discussed up to that point in the course. More information will be given in class two weeks before the exam.

2) Quizzes (10%)
Throughout the term, you will take 4 (four) unannounced quizzes that will test your knowledge of the readings due on the day the quiz takes place. Each quiz is worth 2.5% of your mark. You will answer a set of questions that may take different formats, but they will mostly be multiple choices. If you miss a quiz, you will not be allowed to rewrite it unless you present a signed doctor’s notice covering for the day of absence. The purpose of the quizzes is to ensure that you continue to come to class prepared for discussion and to encourage a critical and analytical reading of the texts we will be studying.

3) Final Essay (30%) – March 24
Your final essay will be between 2000 and 2500 words, double-spaced, twelve-point font. Criteria for evaluation are written style; clarity of thought, coherence of argument, formal organization, quality of the evidence provided, comprehension of texts and concepts. Topics will be distributed earlier in class. You are allowed to develop your own topic but you must see me for approval before you start working on the essay. Failure to do so will result in penalties on your final grade.

4) Critical/Creative Assignment (10%) – March 31
This assignment gives you the opportunity to engage critically or creatively with the themes and concepts explored in the course. The assignment can be:
   a) A critical review of one work of art of your choice (a painting, a movie, a poem, a book, a video, a scene, a screenplay, and so on) that would fit into the thematic framework of the course. You can refer to items on the course to evaluate your chosen object of analysis; however, you must refer to the conceptual apparatus discussed in class. Your review must be between 600 and 700 words, compelling and condensed, formally written.
   b) A creative work, usually a 5-10min presentation or performance that relates to material on the course: a theatrical sketch, a Power Point collage, a video clip, a poem, a song, a painting, and so on. All presentations, performances and creative work must be accompanied by a 300-350-word written account of your aims and must refer to the conceptual apparatus discussed in class. You may discuss other options for this assignment with me. Collaborations are welcome and presentations/performances encouraged: they will all take place on the last day of class. A schedule will circulate earlier in class so that you can sign up for a time, which could however vary depending on the number and length of presentations. You are expected to have an idea in mind for this assignment by March 24.

5) Final Exam (30%) – TBA
It will cover all the texts we have studied. All material discussed in class will also be eligible for testing. More information will be given in class in the last two weeks of the course.
Course Policies

a) Late Penalties
If you submit your essay and/or critical/creative assignment after the deadline, 3% per day, including weekends, will be deducted from your mark. No assignments will be accepted for marking more than one week after the deadline (in which case the students will receive a zero for that assignment). Exceptions will be made only in the case of illness supported by a signed doctor’s note. Similarly, a student who fails to show up on the listed date of the midterm will be permitted to write it upon presentation of a signed doctor’s notice covering the day of absence.

b) Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 – Student Discipline, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosc/Policies/policy71.htm. Grievance: 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/infosc/Policies/policy70.htm. Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 – Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 – Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 – Student Appeals, http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosc/Policies/policy72.htm. Academic Integrity website (Arts): arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html; Academic Integrity Office (UW): http://uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ 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.

Schedule:

JANUARY

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<th>Date</th>
<th>TOPICS AND READINGS DUE</th>
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| Wed 6 | Introduction to the course.  
"High Culture" and "High Literature;"  
 Jack Clayton’s The Great Gatsby (movie) |
| Wed. 13 |  Jack Clayton’s The Great Gatsby (movie, contd.)  
Online Reading: Zeitz, Joshua. "F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Age of Excess"  
Francis Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby |
| Wed 20 | Francis Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (contd.)  
Gore and Horror:  
Online Reading: Lovecraft, Howard Phillips. "Supernatural Horror in Literature"  
(Introduction and section VII on Poe)  
Edgar Allan Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “The Cask of Amontillado" |
JAN
         ☐ Tim Burton’s Sleepy Hollow

FEBRUARY

DATE

TOPICS AND READINGS DUE

Wed 3  The Western Revisited:
       Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History”
       “The Problem of the West”
       Cormac McCarthy, Blood Meridian

Wed 10  Midterm Format Explained
        Cormac McCarthy, Blood Meridian (contd.)
         ☐ Jim Jarmusch’s Dead Man

Mon 15–
Fri 20
Wed 24

READING WEEK

Midterm Exam
African-American Epic:
         ☐ Steven Spielberg’s The Color Purple (selection of clips)

MARCH

DATE

TOPICS AND READINGS DUE

       Alice Walker, The Color Purple

Wed 10  Essay Topics Distributed
       The Beat Generation:
       Lyndon B. Johnson, Address at Johns Hopkins University: “Peace Without Conquest”
       Jack Kerouac, On the Road
         ☐ Dennis Hopper’s Easy Rider

Wed 17  Jack Kerouac, On the Road
       Debunking myths:
       Sam Shepard, True West

Wed 24  Final Essay Due in Class
       Sam Shepard, True West (contd.)
       Daniel Clowes, Caricature

Wed 31  Critical/Creative Assignment Due.
        Exam Format and Review of the Course