English 346 - American Fiction
MWF 11:30-12:20, HH 150

Spring 2009

Instructor: Kevin McGuirk
Contact: HH 263, x32419
Office hours: M 1-3 and by appointment

Description: A study of American fiction. Among other matters, we will be concerned with narrative technique, style, point of view, etc.; the idea of the American novel; literariness; gender; things; social history; economics; insides and outsides of official life.

Texts:

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, Dover
Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*, Signet
Willa Cather, *The Professor's House*, Vintage
Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, Vintage
Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*, Vintage

Approximate Schedule:

May 4, 6, 8 introductions

May 11, 13, 15 The Scarlet Letter

May 20, 22 The Scarlet Letter; “The Customs House” (Scarlet Letter)

May 25, 27, 29 The House of Mirth

May 31, June 3, 5 The House of Mirth; The Professor’s House

June 8, 10, 12 The Professor’s House

June 15, 17, 19 The Grapes of Wrath

June 22, 24, 26 The Grapes of Wrath (novel + film [screening time and place TBA])

June 29, July 3 Beloved

July 6, 8, 10 Beloved

July 13, 15, 17 The Road

July 20, 22, 24 TBA

July 27 review for exam
Assignments and Values:

1. presentation (solo or with a partner): 10%
2. in-class writing – quizzes etc.: 30%
3. essay (due July 20): 30%
4. final exam: 30%

1. Everyone will give a brief presentation (10 minutes maximum) solo or with a partner. Option 1: choose a word or pair of words from a text under discussion for analysis. The word may be important or marginal to the meaning of the work. Option 2: choose a passage from the text under discussion for recitation. Explain to the class why the passage is of interest. In the second week of class, a sign-up sheet will be distributed.

2. I will ask you to write in class frequently. Writing may take the form of a quiz at the beginning or end of class, a sight passage, a summary, a reflection linking the literature to real life, a creative work, etc. This assignment will be evaluated holistically; that is, you will get a mark out 30 for all the work. The mark will reflect general perspicuity, preparedness, insight, clarity, and improvement over the course of the term.

3. The essay (maximum 2500 words) will be your response to a topic assigned by me. It is due on Monday, July 20. I will aim to return marked essays to you on the last day of classes, July 27. More details to follow.

4. The exam will take place during the exam period. It will be comprised of sight passages and essay questions. You will have the opportunity to prepare an essay question ahead of the exam proper. A study sheet will be distributed in class on July 27.

Contact:

I would rather see you during office hours or after class than hear from you by email. Please feel free to see me to discuss anything related to the course. My office hours are for you. I would especially like to see you as you prepare your presentations and papers.

Late policy:

Don’t hand your paper in late. An extension of a day or two can be negotiated in conversation with me ahead of the due date. A request for an extension longer than a few days will have to be supported by appropriate documentation.

Plagiarism:

Outside the university, plagiarism is “actionable,” that is, you can be sued for it. Educate yourself about plagiarism and don’t commit plagiarism. It is a serious offence, ethically and legally. See UW Policy 71.

Course objectives: handout to follow.