English 346 - American Fiction
TTh 11:30-12:50, HH 336

Instructor: Kevin McGuirk
Contact: HH 263, x32419
Office hours: Tuesdays 1:30-3:30 and by appointment
Preferred method of contact: office hours

Description: A study of American fiction. The course is not a survey but we will read a variety of fiction from several periods. Among other matters we will be concerned with narrative (especially genre, point of view, style); gender; things; social history.

What I want you to get from the course:

An enriched sense of what the novel is as a material and social phenomenon.
The ability to respond with increased understanding to the formal and rhetorical dimensions of fiction.
Increased ability to identify areas of interest and ambiguity in fiction and to pose clarifying questions.
Knowledge of the basic tendencies and themes of American fiction.
Enhanced appreciation for relations between literary form and social history.
The ability to write more effectively and imaginatively about literature in general.

What I want you to do in the course:

Read every page of the works assigned.
Write about and discuss fiction frequently; formally, in tests, an essay, and an exam.
Ask questions in class: participate; listen to your peers.
Read out loud.
Take notes and make sure you grasp the major concerns of the course as well as the distinctive work of each novel or writer; write tests and an exam demonstrating this grasp.
Write an extended essay based on careful reflection, analysis, and revision.

Texts:

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, Dover
Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, Vintage
Paul Harding, *Tinkers*, Harper Collins
Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*, Dover
Willa Cather, *The Professor's House*, Vintage
Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*, Vintage
TBA
**Approximate Schedule of Readings:**

**ALWAYS BRING YOUR TEXT TO CLASS! **

May 3, 5 introductions; *The Scarlet Letter*

May 10, 12 *The Scarlet Letter*

May 17, 19 *Beloved*

May 24, 26 *Beloved*

May 31, June 2 *Tinkers*

June 7, 9 *The Age of Innocence*

June 14, 16 *The Age of Innocence; The Professor's House*

June 21, 23 *The Professor's House*

June 28, 30 *The Professor's House*

July 5, 7 *The Road*

July 12, 14 TBA

July 19, 21 TBA

July 26 review for exam

**Assignments and Values:**

1. participation: **10%**
2. presentation (solo or with a partner): **10%**
3. two tests: **10% each**
4. essay (due July 19): **30%**
5. final exam: **30%**

1. Everyone will receive a mark out of 10 for attendance and participation. Participation means regular attendance, preparedness (read the books!), comments and questions. The primary mode of the class will be lecture/discussion. I will use ACE only for sending messages to the class concerning test dates, schedule updates, and so on. The class is small enough for everyone to participate to some extent. I will frequently ask you for your views. I will invite questions about any aspect of the fiction we’re studying.
2. Everyone will give a presentation solo or with a partner. Sign up on Thursday, May 5th. The presentation should be about 10 minutes in length. You should choose a word or phrase, an object, or a passage that interests you and explain to the class what is interesting about the word, object, or passage. One of your aims will be to communicate your interest, highlighting what is arresting, edifying, stylistically striking, etc. Please note that expressive appreciation is not enough: you must explain your interest analytically. See me briefly to discuss what you’re doing before your presentation, and then give me a 100-word typed summary on the day of the presentation.

3. You will write two tests. Because the reading schedule is approximate, I have not indicated dates for the test. Test #1 will follow The Scarlet Letter and Beloved; Test #2 will follow Tinkers, The Age of Innocence, and The Professor’s House. Dates and details about the test dates will follow. A test on the rest of the material will comprise 1/3 of the final exam, or 10% of your final mark.

4. The essay (optimum 2000 words) will be your response to a topic assigned by me. It is due on Tuesday, July 19. I will aim to return marked essays to you on the last day of classes, July 26. More details to follow.

5. The exam will take place during the exam period. It will be comprised of two parts. The first will be much like tests written during the course; it will cover materials read following the last test and will be worth 10 marks out of 30. The second will be an essay discussing four novels in relation to a topic; it will be worth 20 marks. You will have the opportunity to prepare the second part of the exam ahead of time. A study sheet will be distributed in class on July 26.

**Policies:**

**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.

**Late papers:** 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, ethnically and legally. See UW Policy 71. See the Note below.

**Laptops:** I strongly discourage you from using a laptop in class. It is simply too easy to click to email, facebook, or other sites during class. Anyone would be tempted. And when you do things other than notetaking with your laptop, you’re not the only student mentally checking out: everyone around you will be distracted. Finally, the screen itself is a barrier between you and the class and therefore a barrier to participation. If you choose to use a laptop, I may require you to sit immediately in front of me or, if you appear to be surfing the internet, to close the laptop for the remainder of the course.
NOTE: The Faculty of Arts requires that the following information be included in course syllabi. Please read it carefully.

Academic Integrity:

**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/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/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/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/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/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm)

**Academic Integrity website (Arts):** [http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html)

**Academic Integrity Office (UW):** [http://uwwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/](http://uwwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/)

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

**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.