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LIT 110L.51D: Introduction to Literature

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Introduction to Literature—LIT 110.51D—Summer 2020 (online)

Contemporary American Fiction and Poetry

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Course Description:

This course serves as an introduction to reading and writing about literature. Through close reading, online discussion, and critical analysis of the novel, short fiction, and poetry, students will gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of how literary works function, both thematically and structurally, to reflect human experience and engage with cultural and social concerns. The fiction and poetry collections we will read in this course are all contemporary (published within the past fifty years) and share themes and motifs related to coming of age; racial, cultural and gender identity; the “American dream;” and death and loss.

This is an online asynchronous course, meaning we have no regularly scheduled class meetings. However, this is not a course in which you can work at your own pace. All of our coursework will be conducted through Moodle, and you will have daily due dates for readings, discussion assignments, reflective essays, and analytic essays. Our course will move week-by-week, with a new folder and discussion forum for each week’s work. Since this course is only six weeks in length, we will move at more than twice the pace of a regular semester, so keeping up with the material is essential.

Although I can’t hold face-to-face office hours due to our online format, please don’t hesitate to email me whenever you have questions about the course or about your work. I’m also happy to talk with you by phone or videoconference (Zoom, Google Meet, etc.). Please check your UM email regularly to receive communication from me about the course.

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify, analyze, and compare thematic content of contemporary American fiction and poetry.
- Identify, analyze, and compare stylistic approaches to contemporary American fiction and poetry.
- Contextualize a literary text based on awareness of the text’s author and the social/cultural/historical placement of the text.
- Write clearly and coherently in the genre of literary analysis.
- Understand and employ various approaches to literary interpretation and analysis

- and use literary terms related to the analysis of fiction and poetry.
- Use UM's library databases to find critical articles exemplifying ways in which literary scholars discuss the texts under study.
 - Use MLA format for citations of primary and secondary texts.

Since this is a UM-approved Intermediate Writing course, students will learn to apply the techniques of literary analysis in well-supported and well-structured critical essays. The learning outcomes for IW courses at UM are:

- Compose written documents that are appropriate for a given audience or purpose
- Formulate and express opinions and ideas in writing
- Use writing to learn and synthesize new concepts
- Revise written work based on constructive feedback
- Find, evaluate, and use information effectively
- Begin to use discipline-specific writing conventions (largely style conventions like APA or MLA)
- Demonstrate appropriate English language usage

Because it is an Intermediate Writing course, this course requires an electronic submission (via Moodle) of an assignment stripped of your personal information to be used for educational research and assessment of the University's writing program. Your paper will be stored in a database. A random selection of papers will be assessed by a group of faculty and staff using a rubric developed from the learning outcomes listed above. This assessment in no way affects your course grade or your progression at the University.

This course counts toward the Literary and Artistic Studies (L) General Education requirement at UM. Upon completion of a Literary and Artistic Studies course, students will be able to:

- Analyze works of art with respect to structure and significance within literary and artistic traditions, including emergent movements and forms
- Develop coherent arguments that critique these works from a variety of approaches, such as historical, aesthetic, cultural, psychological, political, and philosophical.

Texts:

The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison

CivilWarLand in Bad Decline by George Saunders

Bright Dead Things by Ada Limón

When I Grow Up I Want to Be a List of Further Possibilities by Chen Chen

Nightingale by Paisley Rekdal

If you order books online, be sure your order will arrive in time (see the course calendar).

Course Requirements:

Five brief (600 words) reflective essays contextualizing texts and/or presenting and responding to research

- Three analytic essays (1200 words)
- One revision of an analytic essay (essay #1 or essay #2)
- Participation in course discussion forums

All work must be submitted through Moodle. I will provide detailed written instructions for each assignment.

This course is most engaging and productive when it is primarily discussion-based, rather than lecture-based. I will post instructional materials on Moodle to guide our discussions, but your work in the discussion forums is essential and counts as a large percentage of your course grade.

Grading:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| • Reflective essays | (600 words) | 25% (5% each) |
| • Analytic essays | (1200 words) | 30% (10% each) |
| • Revised analytic essay | | 15% |
| • Participation in discussion forums | | 30% |

Late Paper Policy: Work should be submitted in Moodle by midnight on the day it is due. For each day that a paper is late, the grade for the paper will drop by 5 points (half a letter-grade).

Attendance: Your attendance will be measured by your participation in our discussion board activities. Please see the document describing the expectations and guidelines for discussion board work and the point system for participation.

Academic Honesty: All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the [Student Conduct Code](#). Plagiarism is the use of another person's words or ideas without attribution and is a violation of the Student Conduct Code. Since most plagiarism is accidental, rather than deliberate, we will spend some class time addressing the appropriate use of quoted (and other "borrowed") material.

Disability Accommodation: The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students. If you have a disability that affects your academic performance, and you are not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson Center 154 or 406.243.2243. I will work with you and DSS to provide appropriate modification.

Course Schedule:

Your weekly folders in Moodle will provide more specific reading assignments and discussion forum work on a daily schedule. The due dates below are subject to minor changes if necessary.

Week 1

Monday 7/6—Introduction to course

Tuesday 7/7—*The Bluest Eye*

Wednesday 7/8—*The Bluest Eye*, **Reflective essay #1 due**

Thursday 7/9—*The Bluest Eye*

Friday 7/10—*The Bluest Eye*

Week 2

Monday 7/13—*The Bluest Eye*

Tuesday 7/14—*CivilWarLand*

Wednesday 7/15— *CivilWarLand*, **Reflective essay #2 due**

Thursday 7/16—*CivilWarLand*

Friday 7/17—*CivilWarLand*

Week 3

Monday 7/20—*CivilWarLand*

Tuesday 7/21—**Analytic essay #1 due**

Wednesday 7/22—*Bright Dead Things*

Thursday 7/23—*Bright Dead Things*

Friday 7/24—*Bright Dead Things*, **Reflective essay #3 due**

Week 4

Monday 7/27—*Bright Dead Things*

Tuesday—7/28—*Bright Dead Things*

Wednesday 7/29— *When I Grow Up...*

Thursday 7/30—*When I Grow Up...*, **Reflective essay #4 due**

Friday 7/31—*When I Grow Up...*

Week 5

Monday 8/3—*When I Grow Up...*

Tuesday 8/4—*When I Grow Up...*

Wednesday 8/5—**Analytic essay #2 due**

Thursday 8/6—*Nightingale*

Friday 8/7—*Nightingale*, **Reflective essay #5 due**

Week 6

Monday 8/10—*Nightingale*

Tuesday 8/11—*Nightingale*

Wednesday 8/12—*Nightingale*

Thursday 8/13—**Analytic essay #3 due**

Friday 8/14—**Revised analytic essay #1 or #2 due**