

Fall 9-1-2000

## ENLT 225.03: American Literature Since 1865

Gerry Brenner  
*The University Of Montana*

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Instructor: Gerry Brenner

Fall Semester, 2000

Meeting Times: MWF 11:10 a.m.-noon Room: LA 207 Course Request Number (CRN): 73549

Office Hours: Mon, Wed, Fri, 12-2; Fri, 3-4:30; and by arrangement. Instructor's Office: LA 126

Phones: 243-4462 (UM), 549-4541 (Home, not after 9 p.m., thank you) E-mail: [koala2@selway.umt.edu](mailto:koala2@selway.umt.edu)**Required Textbooks:**

*The Norton Anthology of American Literature* (Norton, Fifth edition, Vol. 2), eds. Baym, Franklin, et al.  
*Brenner's Short Interpretation Manual* (FacPac in UC Bookstore).

**Accessory Textbooks** (Recommended by department for English majors):

Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 3rd Edition).

Ross Murfin & Supryia M. Ray, eds. *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, (Bedford).

**Course Goals:**

To study with you a representative range of American writers and works—some classics, all provocative—hopeful they'll work your imagination, enlist your creativity, and challenge and improve your interpretive abilities.

To give you numerous opportunities to strengthen your skills as a critical (*i.e.*, a discerning, passionately attentive) reader, discussant and writer of texts, primarily through classroom discussion, weekly written assignments, two essays on individual works, and a final examination.

To foster a mutually respectful academic community, one engaged in interactive inquiry and lively discussion, tolerant of divergent and conflicting but co-existing interpretations, and open to diverse ideological perspectives.

To give you extensive exercise in applied and responsible reader-response theory and critical literacy (as opposed to cultural literacy), as well as intensive scrutiny of one public servant's pedagogical methods, educational ethic, and habits of mind—mine.

To better equip you with skills to read diverse texts, to interpret their meanings and significance, and to communicate efficiently and effectively alternative ways of responding to those texts, thereby better preparing yourself for life as a citizen in your country. One small proof of whether you achieve these skills (what educationists call "outcomes") will be your performance on assignments and the final exam.

**Course Requirements:**

**Attendance:** I'm sympathetic to legitimate reasons for missing scheduled classes: health problems, family emergencies, employers' crises, transportation malfunctions, and the like. For such occasions, please notify me before class or as soon after as possible so that I can record your absence as excused, if warranted. Otherwise I'll count it unexcused. After your **third** unexcused absence I no longer consider you an engaged student deserving my time, taxpayers' support, your classmates' indulgence, or the gods' favors. The final class grade record will show you've earned a grade of F, unless you take the necessary steps to formally withdraw from the class, which still may be with an F grade. I spell this out to candidly caution you against casual or habitual absenteeism. Note, too: I **don't** regard scheduling conflicts with other classes, a job, or pre-existing situations as legitimate excuses for absence.

I also look forward to the pleasure of meeting with each of you in my office—not an ogre's den—during the semester. If my scheduled office hours conflict with your schedule, we'll arrange a daytime meeting.

**Disabilities:** If you are a student with disabilities, please notify me of your status—and provide documentation—by no later than the end of the second week. I'll gladly negotiate with you to make necessary accommodations in the requirements, should they be necessary.

**Assignments:** Read and turn in—at the **beginning** of the class session for which they're assigned—all the assignments on the itemized texts (or *our* substitutions) in the calendar below. (Legible longhand is acceptable, typewritten preferred.) *Four notes:* 1) I'll grade down by a full grade all late work. 2) I'll return your weekly AISes—with my comments and grade—at the beginning of the class hour to one or more of your classmates before you'll get it returned to you. I do this to build a community, to bring the commendation and criticism of peer pressure to your work, to enable you to learn from your classmates' work, and to let you compare my standards and comments on your classmates' work with my standards and comments on yours. 3) I'll ask for your permission to copy your OIMEes to make them available in the Mansfield Library Reserve Room so that classmates can learn from instructional comparisons. 4) I'll expect you to come to class **every day** with at least one interpretation of the day's assigned text or texts; that is to say, while you'll be required to hand in an formal AIS according to the schedule below, I won't encourage "coasting"—letting your classmates shoulder the day's classwork. Be a good scout: prepared.

**Grading:** I'll record your final grade, not curved, on a **100-point** scale, comprising the following:

**20 points:** Beginning with the **second** week of classes, turn in each week an alternative-interpretations statement (AIS) *at the beginning of class* on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday. See *BSIM* for instructions, guidelines, and examples. For the first two weeks I'll comment and grade your AISes with pluses, checks and minuses; I'll switch to a five-point number system by week three (4 = A, 3 = B . . . 0 = F). At semester's end I'll average out these weekly assignments, but I'll determine your final grade on the basis of improvement, weighing late-in-the-semester AISes more heavily than earlier ones.

**40 points:** Hand in two Opposing-Interpretations Mini-Essays (OIMEes) of between 500 and 1500 words each. See *BSIM* for instructions, guidelines, and examples. Please note that your first OIME will not be full-fledged, for it will omit the second segment, in which you develop the evidence of your opposing interpretation. So I'll weigh that essay 15 points.

**30 points:** Take and pass an end-of-term, two-hour essay examination during Finals Week on selected works assigned during the term; you'll write one OIME and the second part of a second OIME.

**10 points:** Participate regularly in classroom discussions, verbally interacting with issues, texts, classmates, and me. Inasmuch as university education aims to prepare you for being a responsible citizen of the State, I, a public servant, would be remiss to allow you to be silent spectators in a class, regardless of "constitutional" shyness or reticence. But if you simply cannot participate "live," you may participate by end- or beginning-of-class written responses or, better, by turning in AISes more often than required.

**Specific AIS Assignments:** Beginning with the **sixth** full week of classes, I'll require you each week to turn in to me, *upon arrival in class*, a hand-written (legible) or typed-out Alternative-Interpretations Statement (AIS) on a text or the segment assigned on the calendar for the day's class session. Until that sixth week I'll require partial AISes, hoping to incrementalize the assignment, as you'll see below. Please note: I'll grade down all late, illegible, semi-literate, or regressive AISes—ones that rely on a previous class session's discussion.

During weeks **two and three** turn in, *upon arrival in class*, partial AISes that include only the first sentence and half of the second sentence—to include an epithet (for character, act, object or place, or text's genre), brief infinitive phrase (for character's motive or text's agenda), or short value statement on a topic (for text's idea).

During weeks **four and five** turn in, *upon arrival in class*, nearly complete AISes, ones that include sentences one and two, complete with precisng definition or rhetorical claim.

Between weeks **six and the end of the term**, turn in complete, three-sentence AISes that vary the kind of interpretation you focus on; my aim is to exercise you so that you'll be good at more than, say, alternatively interpreting only characters.

—During the **last four weeks** turn in four different kinds of AISes, in whichever order you choose, from the eight categories: character, act, object or place, genre, motive, agenda, and idea.

## Calendar:

Week	Date	Assignment
		<i>Read the Norton biographical headnotes AFTER reading the assigned text.</i>
1	Sept 6	Orientation.
	8	Read <i>Brenner's Short Interpretation Manual</i> (hereafter <i>BSIM</i> ): "Introduction," <b>Mark Twain</b> , "A Fable," and Chapters One: Reading Texts; Two: Interpreting Texts; Three: Cultural Shibboleths Against Interpretation; and Thirteen: Correction Symbols (1-29; 96-99).
2	Sept 11	<i>BSIM</i> : Chapters Four: Writing an Alternative-Interpretations Statements (AIS), Part One; and Six: Formulating Epithets (30-35; 46-52) and <b>Charlo</b> , "He has filled graves with our bones" (279-81).
	13	<i>BSIM</i> : Chapter Seven: Interpreting Objects and Places (53-56) and <b>Charlotte Perkins Gilman</b> , "The Yellow Wall-paper" (657-69).
	15	<i>BSIM</i> : Chapter Eight: Interpreting a Character's Motive and a Text's Agenda (58-64) and <b>Sarah Orne Jewett</b> , "A White Heron" (431-38).
3	Sept 18	<i>BSIM</i> : Chapter Nine: Interpreting a Text's Genre (65-69) and <b>John Oskison</b> , "The Problem of Old Harjo" (806-11).
	20	<i>BSIM</i> : Chapter Ten: Interpreting a Text's Idea (70-76) and <b>Jack London</b> , "To Build a Fire" (817-27).
	22	<i>BSIM</i> : Chapters Five: Writing an Alternative-Interpretations Statements (AIS), Part Two; and Eleven: Three Students' Alternative-Interpretations Statements (36-45; 77-83); and <b>Mark Twain</b> , "Story of the Old Ram" (25-28).
4	Sept 25	<b>Mark Twain</b> , <i>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> , Chapters 1-11 (28-66).
	27	<b>Mark Twain</b> , <i>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> , Chapters 12-20 (66-120).
	29	<b>Mark Twain</b> , <i>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> , Chapters 21-31 (120-71).
5	Oct 2	<b>Mark Twain</b> , <i>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> , Chapters 32- Chapter the Last. (171-216).
	4	<i>BSIM</i> , Chapter Twelve: Writing Opposing-Interpretations Mini-Essays (OIMEes) (84-95) and <b>Gertrude S. Bonnin</b> , "Impressions of an Indian Childhood" (848-59).
	6	<b>Gertrude S. Bonnin</b> , "The School Days of an Indian Girl" (860-70) and "An Indian Teacher Among Indians" (870-75).
6	Oct 9	<b>Henry James</b> , "Daisy Miller: A Study" (285-323).
	11	<b>Kate Chopin</b> , <i>The Awakening</i> , Chapter 1-21 (467-518).
	13	<b>Kate Chopin</b> , <i>The Awakening</i> , Chapter 22-39 (518-558).
7	Oct 16	<b>Robert Frost</b> , "The Pasture" (1117), "Mowing" (1117), "Mending Wall" (1119), "After Apple-Picking" (1127), and "The Wood-Pile" (1128).
	18	<b>Robert Frost</b> , "The Road Not Taken" (1128), "Birches" (1130), "Out, Out—" (1131), "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (1133).
	20	<b>Robert Frost</b> , "Departmental" (1136), "Design" (1137), and "Provide, Provide" (1138).
8	Oct 23	LAST DAY FOR TURNING IN YOUR FIRST OPPOSING-INTERPRETATIONS MINI-ESSAY, Parts 1 through 5, on one of these four texts: <b>William Dean Howells</b> , "Editha" (258-67), <b>Mary Austin</b> , "Walking Woman" (706-11); <b>W. E. B. Du Bois</b> , "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others" (719-28), or <b>Edgar Lee Masters</b> , "Margaret Fuller Slack" (939).

- 25 **Wallace Stevens**, "Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock" (1167), "Anecdote of the Jar" (1171), "Study of Two Pears" (1178), and "A High-Toned Old Christian Woman" (1166).
- 27 **Wallace Stevens**, "Sunday Morning" (1168) and "The Idea of Order at Key West" (1176).
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- 9 Oct 30 **William Carlos Williams**, "The Young Housewife" (1216), "Portrait of a Lady" (1217), "The Red Wheelbarrow" (1221), "This Is Just to Say" (1224), and "To Elsie" (1220).
- Nov 1 **Zora Neale Hurston**, "How It Feels To Be Colored Me" (1436) and "The Gilded Six-Bits" (1439-47).
- 3 **Genevieve Taggard**, "Everyday Alchemy" (1466), "With Child" (1467), "A Middle-aged, Middle-class Woman at Midnight" (1467), and "At Last the Women Are Moving" (1468).
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- 10 Nov 6 **John Dos Passos**, From *The Big Money*: "Newsreel 68," "The Camera Eye (51)," and "Mary French" (1512-32).
- 8 **Ernest Hemingway**, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" (1687-1704).
- 10 **Veterans Day Holiday**
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- 11 Nov 13 **Tennessee Williams**, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Scenes One-Five (1797-1831).
- 15 **Tennessee Williams**, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Scenes Six-Eleven (1831-1860).
- 17 **Amiri Baraka**, "Dutchman" (2126-39).
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- 12 Nov 20 **Muriel Rukeyser**, "Effort at Speech Between Two People" (1767-68), "Movie" (1768), "Alloy" (1769), "Who in One Lifetime" (1770), "Long Enough" (1771), and "Poem" (1772).
- 22, 24 **Thanksgiving Vacation**
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- 13 Nov 27 **William Faulkner**, *As I Lay Dying* (Darl-Samson) (1534-75).
- 29 **William Faulkner**, *As I Lay Dying* (Dewey Dell-Armstid) (1575-1604).
- Dec 1 **William Faulkner**, *As I Lay Dying* (Vardaman-Cash) (1604-30).
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- 14 Dec 4 **LAST DAY FOR TURNING IN YOUR FIRST COMPLETE OPPOSING-INTERPRETATIONS ESSAY**, on one of these five texts: **Dorothy Parker**, "The Waltz" (1462-65), **Barry Hannah**, "Midnight and I'm Not Famous Yet" (2265-73), **Elizabeth Bishop**, "The Fish" (2469-71), **Randall Jarrell**, "Next Day" (2507-09), or **James Dickey**, "Falling" 2579-83.
- 6 **Annie Dillard**, "Holy the Firm" (2281-2300).
- 8 **A. R. Ammons**, "Corson's Inlet" (2596-99), "The Dwelling" (2602-03), and from *Garbage* (2603-07).
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- 15 11 **David Mamet**, *Glengarry Glen Ross* (2315-48).
- 13 **Frank O'Hara**, "Ave Maria" (2654-55), **Galway Kinnell**, "The Porcupine" (2656-59), **James Wright**, "A Centenary Ode: Inscribed to Little Crow, Leader of the Sioux Rebellion in Minnesota, 1862" (2694-95), and **Robert Pinsky**, "Shirt" (2784-85).
- 15 **Clarence Major**, "An Area in the Cerebral Hemisphere" (2175-78).
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- 16 18 **Final Examination, 8-10 a.m.** Bring blue book(s) pen(s) and bluebook-sized, stamped and self-addressed envelope, if you wish me to mail your exam and final grade to you.