

English 3329-001 - Major Authors in American Literature

Instructor: Michael Compton
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Time: TR 11:20-12:45
Room: PT 211

Catalog Course Description

A focused study of several major American authors. The authors may represent a literary movement, a genre, or a shared/contrasting thematic focus within their works. May be repeated for a maximum of 6 credit hours with change in course content.

Extended Course Description

This course will introduce students to a specific group of American writers and guide them toward a more focused understanding of this group's reflection of and perspectives on American tropes, motifs, etc. Specifically students will be encouraged to identify the connections and disconnections present in the authors' works and note how these perspectives enhance their reading and understanding of major American authors. Germane to the course's discussions will be examinations of the ways in which race, class, gender, and conceptualizations of the "other" are debated within the space of American texts.

For this semester, our unifying theme will "Youth in 20th Century America," with the bulk of our material focusing on the latter half of the century, from the post-war era into the 1990s. Through novels, memoir, short stories, poems, and essays from a diverse group of writers, we will look at issues of family, identity, sexuality, and self-actualization from childhood to young adulthood. There will be two major papers, in addition to daily quizzes and written reflections.

Learning Outcomes:

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

-  demonstrate a specific understanding of the authors and the genre(s) studied in the course;
-  orally and verbally compose and present clear and insightful discussions of and responses to the literary texts assigned in the course;
-  clearly articulate an understanding of the interaction of American cultural, social, and political occurrences and their influence upon literary texts.
-  note the diversity of American literature.

Texts:

The Catcher in the Rye and *Franny and Zooey*, by J.D. Salinger

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, by Maya Angelou

Go Tell It on the Mountain, by James Baldwin

The Bell Jar, by Sylvia Plath

The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven and

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, by Sherman Alexie.

Additional texts by the above writers made available online and in handouts.