

English 7/8391: The American Novel
Masculinity in the American Novel
Dr. Jeffrey Scraba
T 1:00-4:00 PT 317
Spring 2016

Course Description:

Through a survey of important texts from the 19th through the 21st century, we will examine how models of masculinity are produced in and reflected by developments in the American novel. Focusing on three major icons of American manhood—the frontier hero, the detective, and the traveler—we will explore how genre functions to construct masculinity, and how problems of race, gender, and class are mediated through the development of genre. The first objective of the course is to develop a theoretical and historical approach to the study of gender, paying particular attention to how structures of masculinity change and develop through our historical period. The second objective of the course is to consider how the American novel has produced structures of masculinity, paying particular attention to how aspects of genre—plot, characterization, imagery, rhetoric, and style—influence popular ideas of American manhood.

Texts:

Frontier Heroes:

- James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pioneers* (1823) (Penguin: 978-0140390070)
- John Rollin Ridge, *Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta* (1854) (Oklahoma: 978-0806114293)
- Owen Wister, *The Virginian* (1902) (Signet: 978-0451531575)
- Ishmael Reed, *Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down* (1969) (Dalkey Archive: 78-1564782380)
- Annie Proulx, *Brokeback Mountain* (1997) (Scribner: 978-0743271325)

Detectives:

- Dashiell Hammett, *Red Harvest* (1929) (Vintage: 978-0679722618)
- Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep* (1939) (Vintage: 978-0394758282)
- Chester Himes, *Cotton Comes to Harlem* (+ film) (1965) (Vintage: 978-0394759999)
- Michael Chabon, *The Yiddish Policeman's Union* (2007) (Harper: 978-0007149834)

Travelers:

- Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (1851) (Norton: 978-0393972832)
- Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn* (1885) (Norton: 978-0393966404)
- Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (2006) (Vintage: 978-0307387899)
- Toni Morrison, *Home* (2012) (Vintage: 978-0307740915)

Theoretical readings on gender and masculinity, including works by Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Eve Sedgwick, Leslie Fiedler, R. W. Connell, Todd Reeser, and Michael Kimmel, will be made available on ecourseware.