# The History of American Literature ~ S16

# Dong-A University English Language and Literature

**Professor:** Joe Carrier (email: cyanocitta@gmail.com)

**Office Hours:** Rm. 1116 by appointment.

**Texts:** 1. High, Peter B. *An Outline of American Literature*. New York: Longman, 1986. ISBN: 978-0-582-74502-5 [*OAL*]; 2. Hemingway, Ernest. *The Sun Also Rises*. New York: Scribner, 1926. ISBN 978-0-7432-3733-1 [*SAR*]; 3. Carrier, Joseph. A Textbook of American Literature. (distributed by instructor) [*TAL*]

**Course Website:** http://www.joeteacher.org/history-of-american-lit.html

**Course Description:**

 This course is designed to give the student an overview of the historical background of the major periods of American literature. We will attempt to understand how American writing informs an understanding of important historical developments in American history and how important events in history affected the thinking and writing of Americans in those times.

 We will also learn to look carefully at stories, essays, poems, speeches and other forms of literature, attempting to discover their meanings and how they are made. We will do this by analyzing narrative voice, characters, settings, plot, and other key components. Students will also be able to read carefully and seek out the deeper meaning behind the words.

 At the end of the course the student should have a general knowledge of the main movements of the American writing, the important authors and their works, and a general understanding of how American history affects American culture.

**Course Method:**

* **Assessment:** Final grades for this class are based on the following: Attendance: 20%; Quizzes, 20%; Participation and in class assignments, 20%; Mid-term Examination, 20%; Final Examination, 20%. The university dictates the use of a bell-curve to calculate final scores relative to other students. A: 50%; B, C, D, F: 50%. Please note that this policy may change without notice.
* **Attendance**: 5% will be deducted from the final grade for each absence. Points will not be deducted for absence if the student presents suitable written explanatory documentation (ex. Doctor's note). Late = absent (Each student will be allowed one “late” per semester). Five absences will result in a grade of “F”.
* **Participation**: You are expected to show up on time, prepared, every day. The classroom is a community in which every member must participate. If you have a comment or question, speak up. Your feedback might be exactly what another student needs to hear at that moment. Your question is probably on the mind of several other people anyway. It is *critical* that you help each other as much as possible. A major portion of your classroom participation grade will be based on your interaction with other students. Needless to say, respect and concern for the welfare of the individuals in this class and the class as a whole is paramount. Also: this class will be conducted entirely in English, although it is ok to explain something to another student in your native language if necessary.
* **Quizzes** will be given periodically to insure that the students are reading the assigned selections. A significant portion of the class grade is based on quiz scores so completing the weekly readings is critical. Quizzes will contain questions about the content as well as vocabulary words selected from the texts.
* **Examinations** will be given at the midterm and in the final week of the class. They will cover all of the material from the class including both the readings and lectures. The format of these exams will include traditional multiple-choice questions as well as short student writings.
* **Class discipline**: I want class to be fun, but it is everyone's personal responsibility to promote a professional and respectful learning environment. I would like the students to be especially considerate during the lectures. If students are talking, writing notes, playing on their cell phones, or sleeping it is a distraction to other students and makes the lecturer feel horrible. Please be considerate to the teacher and to other students by making a commitment to giving 100% of your attention during lectures. Also, I have a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism. If you copy the words or ideas of another person without telling who that person is and where they wrote it, that is academic theft. If you do this you will receive a zero for the assignment and possibly even an “F” for the course.

**Course Calendar:**

This coursework schedule is presented as a blueprint for our semester’s work but it may change a little.

Week One: Introduction.

Class One: Syllabus and Introductions. Lecture- "What is Literature, Why Should We Study It, and How?"

Class Two: Lecture- "America Before and After Colonization."

Week Two: Introduction to 19th Century Literature. Quiz Readings: *OAL*: 5-25

Class One: Lecture- "Conflicting Ideals: The Enlightenment and Puritanism- Faith vs. Reason" Texts: Edwards, Mather, Rousseau, and Payne.

Class Two: Lecture- "Introduction to Romanticism."

Week Three: Romanticism and Transcendentalism. Quiz Readings: *OAL*: 27-67 and “The Tell-tale Heart”

Class One: Edgar Allan Poe and American Gothic. Analysis: "The Tell-tale Heart." (Poe)

Class Two: Lecture- "Transcendentalism: Thoreau, Emerson, Fuller, B. Alcott, and the Peabody Sisters”

Week Four: Abolitionist Writings, Quiz Readings: *OAL*: 69-83 and “Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl”

Class One: Lecture- "Slavery in America"

Class Two: Harriet Jacobs Lecture. Analysis: “Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl” (excerpts)

Week Five: The Civil War. Quiz Readings: “An Incident at Owl Creek Bridge”

Class One: Lecture- "The Civil War in American Literature." Analysis: Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address”

Class Two: Ambrose Bierce Lecture. Analysis: "An Incident at Owl Creek Bridge."

Week Six: American Poetry in the 19th Century

Class One: Walt Whitman Lecture. Analysis: "Song of Myself."

Class One: Emily Dickenson Lecture. Analysis: Selected Poems of Emily Dickenson

Week Seven: America Expands: Naturalism, Realism, Regionalism. Quiz Readings: *OAL*: 84-107 and “A White Heron”

Class One: Lecture- "Woman in the Twentieth Century."

Class Two: Sarah Orne Jewett Lecture. Analysis: "A White Heron."

Week Eight: University Midterm

Week Nine: The First World War. Quiz Readings: *OAL*: 108-141; *SAR*: 1-92

Class One: Lecture- “American Modernist Perspectives”

Class Two: Ernest Hemingway Lecture. Analysis: *The Sun Also Rises*

Week Ten: America Between the Wars. Quiz Readings: *OAL*: 142-173; *SAR*: 93-154

Class One: Lecture- “The Oppression of the American Worker”

Class Two: *The Sun Also Rises* continued

Week Eleven: The Second World War. Quiz Readings: *SAR*: 155-235

Class One: Lecture- “Superpower: American Power and the American Ideal”

Class Two: *The Sun Also Rises* continued

Week Twelve: American Post-modernism. Quiz Readings: *OAL*: 174-193; *SAR*: 236-317

Class One: Post-modernism Lecture.

Class Two: *The Sun Also Rises* continued

Week Thirteen: The Beat Movement. Quiz Readings: “Howl”

Class One: Lecture- “The Beats”

Class Two: Alan Ginsberg Lecture. Analysis: “Howl”

Week Fourteen: The Vietnam War and American Counter-culture. Quiz Readings: *OAL*: 194-209

Class One: Lecture- “American Counter-culture”

Class Two: Lecture- “Music as Literature: Dylan, Hendricks, and the Who”

Week Fifteen: Contemporary Trends in American Literature. Quiz Readings: “The Most Beautiful Girl in Town”

Class One: Lecture- “The Rise of Self-Referential Literature”

Class Two: Charles Bukowski Lecture. Analysis: “The Most Beautiful Girl in Town.”

Week Sixteen: University Final

~IMPORTANT NOTE~

This class will require **a lot** of your time. You should expect to spend 10-12 hours per week studying for this class if you want to get a good grade. The readings for this class are designed to give you critical information about the historical background of American literary culture and to give you the opportunity to read important texts within the canon. In order to do well in this class you will need to devote a great deal of time and energy to your readings. I believe your hard work will pay off with a greater understanding of American literature and culture, in addition to improving your English reading ability in general.