

English 201Y.050: Introduction to American Gothic Fiction

Fall 2016, MWF 1:00-1:50 p.m., 014 Simpkins Hall

Professor: Dr. Timothy Helwig

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“From Charles Brockden Brown to William Faulkner, our fiction is a gothic fiction, nonrealistic and negative, sadist and melodramatic—a literature of darkness and the grotesque in a land of light and affirmation....Our classic literature is a literature of horror for boys.”—Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960)

This course has been designated a First Year Experience course and is intended to help you learn to think critically, understand multiple perspectives on issues, and improve your skills in research and problem solving. It will also provide an environment in which to apply the academic skills you learn and help prepare you to transfer those skills to your other courses.

Course Objectives

In this survey course, we will study how early American fiction authors— such as Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, Harriet Wilson, and Rebecca Harding Davis—employed the Gothic romance to explore the strengths and weaknesses, the hopes and anxieties, of the young American republic. From there we will consider how late 19th-century American fiction authors like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Edith Wharton, and Henry James adapted the Gothic to psychological explorations of madness, repression, and human subjectivity; we will study the unique form of the Southern Gothic in stories by William Faulkner and Truman Capote; and we will examine how contemporary fiction authors like Stephen King and Joyce Carol Oates use the Gothic to comment on the American Dream.

Required Texts

Faulkner, William. *As I Lay Dying*. New York: Vintage, 1991.

Jackson, Shirley. *The Haunting of Hill House*. New York: Penguin Books, 2006.

James, Henry. *The Turn of the Screw and Other Short Fiction*. New York: Bantam Books, 1983.

Melville, Herman. *Benito Cereno*. Bedford College Edition. Boston: Bedford Books, 2008.

Wilson, Harriet. *Our Nig*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2009.

NOTE: All additional texts are available as PDFs on our Western Online course site and are listed as (WO) on our reading schedule. Please print off the texts on Western Online, and bring the copies to class for discussion.

Course Policies

1a. Attendance and Class Participation. Although I will provide background and context for our reading at the start of each class period, the course will rely upon your active participation, including your own analysis and exploration of our texts. Because our class discussions depend upon everyone's thoughtful contributions, it is essential that you maintain regular attendance and that you come prepared

to discuss the reading material each day. Each student is allowed *seven* absences total. I do not expect or require students to explain nor document these absences, and I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. Students who have eight or more total absences will receive an automatic F for the course. Finally, chronic tardiness and/or absenteeism will negatively affect your class participation grade, so please arrive promptly to class.

1b. Laptop and Cellphone Policy. Typing on a laptop or texting on a cellphone is distracting to me and to your peers. Therefore, unless you have a documented reason that permits the use of a laptop for note taking, you are not permitted to use a laptop during class. Cellphones, which can play a valuable role in the event of an emergency, should be set to vibrate at the beginning of class. Cellphone texting during class is strictly prohibited and will result in dismissal from the classroom and the loss of a full letter grade of class participation for each infraction after an initial warning. In the event of a personal emergency, please excuse yourself from the classroom to use your cellphone.

2a. Essay Assignments. Over the course of the semester, you will write two essays in response to specific prompts. Each essay must develop a clear thesis statement and include appropriately documented evidence from the texts you are analyzing. Essays that are not turned in by the deadline will be docked one full letter grade for each class period that passes without submission; essays more than three class periods late will receive a "0." Finally, as a condition for passing this course, both essays must be turned in no later than the start of our final exam on December 14, 2016.

2b. Electronic Submission. Essays will be submitted electronically on Western Online, and the assignment sheets will review how to submit your essays. If you are unsure about how to submit your essay, please speak with me well before the due date. Because you will submit essays electronically, you should save your work in several formats (on a hard drive, on a flash drive, by emailing the essay to yourself). Technology problems are not an excuse for submitting an essay late. You will submit your essays as Word files (.doc or .docx); essays submitted in any other file format or corrupted files will be returned to you and considered late until re-submitted as a Word file.

2c. Draft Workshops. You will participate in a draft workshop for each of the two essay assignments. You will be graded on your own draft, as well as your comments to your peers' drafts. Hard copies of your drafts and the draft worksheets will be turned in at the beginning of the class period immediately after the essay is due on Western Online. If you are absent, draft workshops can be made up for partial credit, but you must arrange this with me ahead of time.

3. Western Online Discussion Posts. Five times this semester, you will be asked to complete a short writing assignment related to that week's reading and to post your response to Western Online by the deadline. Each discussion post is worth 3% of your final course grade and must be submitted on time to receive credit. Each discussion post will be graded on a scale of 0-25, as per the rubric provided for you on our Western Online course space.

4. Academic Integrity. Academic integrity is an important part of our intellectual community at Western Illinois University; therefore, acts of plagiarism and cheating will result in failure for the course and referral for academic discipline. Please review the university's Student Academic Integrity Policy online at <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>.

5. Exams. You will have a mid-term exam and a cumulative final exam in this course.

6. Quizzes, which cannot be made up due to an absence or tardiness, may occur at the start of any class. Each of the twelve quizzes will consist of three questions about the day's reading assignment. At the end of the semester, I will drop your two lowest quiz scores.

7. Office Hours and Email. Over the course of the semester, you are encouraged to visit me during my office hours. They are available to you to use without setting up an appointment, although you are welcome to set up an appointment, too. If you are not able to meet during my office hours, please email me to set up an appointment. The best way to keep in touch with me during the semester is by email: I will respond to email inquiries within 48 hours. Over email you may make appointments to meet with me and you may ask questions regarding the assignments.

8. University Writing Center (UWC) offers students at any academic level collaborative, one-on-one consultation on writing projects from any discipline at any point in the writing process. We have four writing centers open on the Macomb campus for your convenience, and you can walk in or call to make an appointment: 3rd Floor of Malpass Library (298-2815), and satellite centers in 107 Simpkins Hall (298-1043), 108 Tanner Hall (298-3477), and Basement of Bayliss Hall (298-3624). See the UWC's webpage for more information: http://www.wiu.edu/university_writing_center/index.php

9. Disability Support Services: In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, disability@wiu.edu or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.

10. University values, Title IX, and other federal and state laws prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual assault/misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has been the victim of any of these offenses, we encourage you to report this to the Title IX Coordinator at 309-298-1977 or anonymously online at: http://www.wiu.edu/equal_opportunity_and_access/request_form/index.php. If you disclose an incident to a faculty member, the faculty member must notify the Title IX Coordinator. The complete Title IX policy is available at: <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php>.

11. Please review your **Student Rights and Responsibilities** online at www.wiu.edu/provost/students, and see me if you have any questions.

Breakdown of Final Grade

15% Essay #1

15% Essay #2

15% Mid-Term Exam

20% Final Exam

15% Western Online Discussion Posts

10% Class Participation

10% Quizzes

+/- Grading Scale

A.....93-100 C...70-72

A-....90-92 D+...68-69

B+...88-89 D....63-67

B.....83-87 D-...60-62

B-....80-82 F.....59 and below

C+...78-79

C.....73-77

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Please note that the assignments are subject to change based upon the needs of our class, and that you are responsible for keeping apprised of announced changes in the schedule.

WEEK ONE

- 8/22 Introduction: The Emergence of American Gothic Fiction
- 8/24 **Student Questionnaire Due in Class.** J. Hector St. John De Crèvecoeur, *Letters From an American Farmer* (WO); Alan Lloyd-Smith, "What Is American Gothic?" (WO)
- 8/26 Washington Irving, "Rip Van Winkle" (WO); "Plot" in *A Short Guide to Reading Novels and Short Stories* (WO)

WEEK TWO

- 8/29 Washington Irving, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (WO); "Setting" in *A Short Guide to Reading Novels and Short Stories* (WO)
- 8/31 Edgar Allan Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart" (WO) and "The Black Cat" (WO); "Narrative Structure" in *A Short Guide to Reading Novels and Short Stories* (WO)
- 9/2 Edgar Allan Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado" (WO); "Point-of-View" in *A Short Guide to Reading Novels and Short Stories* (WO)

WEEK THREE

- 9/5 **Labor Day—No Classes**
- 9/7 **Western Online Discussion Post #1 Due.** Edgar Allan Poe, "Berenice" (WO)
- 9/9 Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher" (WO); "Artistic Unity" in *A Short Guide to Reading Novels and Short Stories* (WO)

WEEK FOUR

- 9/12 Nathaniel Hawthorne, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" (WO); "Character" in *A Short Guide to Reading Novels and Short Stories* (WO)
- 9/14 Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" (WO); "Theme" in *A Short Guide to Reading Novels and Short Stories* (WO)
- 9/16 **Class canceled: Western Online Discussion Post #2 Due by 11:59 p.m.**

WEEK FIVE

- 9/19 Herman Melville, "Bartleby, the Scrivener" (WO); "Motifs" in *A Short Guide to Reading Novels and Short Stories* (WO)
- 9/21 Herman Melville, *Benito Cereno*, pp. 35-72
- 9/23 Herman Melville, *Benito Cereno*, pp. 73-107

WEEK SIX

- 9/26 Rebecca Harding Davis, "Life in the Iron-Mills" (WO)
- 9/28 Rebecca Harding Davis, "Life in the Iron-Mills" (WO)
- 9/30 **Draft Workshop for Essay #1**
- 10/2 **Essay #1 Due on Western Online by 11:59 p.m.**

WEEK SEVEN

- 10/3 **Turn in Draft Materials for Essay #1.** Harriet Wilson, *Our Nig*, pp. 1-40
- 10/5 **Western Online Discussion Post #3 Due.** Harriet Wilson, *Our Nig*, pp. 41-80
- 10/7 Thomas Nelson Page, "No Haid Pawn" (WO)

WEEK EIGHT

- 10/10 Mid-Term Exam Preparation
- 10/12 **Mid-Term Exam**
- 10/14 **Fall Break—No Classes**

WEEK NINE

- 10/17 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (WO)
- 10/19 Edith Wharton, "The Lady's Maid's Bell" (WO); Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*, pp. 1-11
- 10/21 Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*, pp. 11-63

WEEK TEN

- 10/24 Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*, pp. 63-133
- 10/26 Henry James, "The Jolly Corner," pp. 485-527
- 10/28 Charles Chesnutt, "The Goophered Grapevine" (WO)

WEEK ELEVEN

- 10/31 William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, pp. 1-57
- 11/2 William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, pp. 58-99
- 11/4 William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, pp. 100-149

WEEK TWELVE

- 11/7 William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, pp. 150-217
- 11/9 William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, pp. 218-261
- 11/11 **Western Online Discussion Post #4 Due.** H. P. Lovecraft, “The Lurking Fear” (WO)

WEEK THIRTEEN

- 11/14 Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*, pp. 1-49
- 11/16 Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*, pp. 49-89
- 11/18 Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*, pp. 89-131

THANKSGIVING BREAK: NOVEMBER 21-25—NO CLASSES

WEEK FOURTEEN

- 11/28 **Western Online Discussion Post #5 Due.** Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*, pp. 132-182
- 11/30 Truman Capote, “Miriam” (WO)
- 12/2 Stephen King, “Children of the Corn” (WO)

WEEK FIFTEEN

- 12/5 Joyce Carol Oates, “The Hand-puppet” (WO)
- 12/7 **Draft Workshop for Essay #2**
- 12/9 Final Exam Preparation
- 12/11 **Essay #2 Due on Western Online by 11:59 p.m.**
- 12/14 **Final Exam, 1:00-2:50 p.m.**