

E 338: American Literature: From 1865 to the Present
The American Dream

Spring 2010

MWF: Please see course catalog

PAR: Please see course catalog

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Wilks

Office: PAR 108

Office hours: Available upon request

Course Description

Using F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and Joseph O'Neill's critically acclaimed *Netherland* (2008) as historical bookends, this course will explore post-Civil War American literature through the concept of the "American Dream." Our central concern will be that of how national perceptions of individual success and collective belonging have changed from the late nineteenth century to the twenty-first. Are there limits—social, economic, and otherwise—to the self-fashioning that is central to this dream? How did the suburbanization of the 1950s and 1960s alter U.S. notions of the ideal life? Finally, how have immigration and globalization reshaped not only what is means to "arrive," but also what it means to be "American"? Indeed, can one still speak of such a nationally specific concept in our post-9/11, "borderless" world?

Texts

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925)

Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959)

Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (1984)

Gish Jen, *Mona in the Promised Land* (1996)

Joseph O'Neill, *Netherland* (2008)

Requirements

Course requirements include:

***Papers:** Two short papers, the first of which will be turned in as a complete, 4-page rough draft, revised, and resubmitted for a final grade. All papers must be formatted according to the guidelines of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, available in libraries and bookstores.

***Reading responses:** Short responses on assigned readings. You do not have to address everything in the reading; unless I give you a specific question or topic, you may write on whatever in the reading interests you. You may be asked to share your reading response with the class. I will collect them at the end of class, and they will be graded with a **check** (you did it), **check-plus** (you are really *thinking* and *asking* questions), or **check-minus** (did you really read the assignment?). Responses will not be accepted late, and they should be typed (1-2 double-spaced pages).

Grading

Two short papers (4 pages each)	40%
Final exam	25%
Reading responses/quizzes	20%
Rough draft of first paper (4 pages)	15%

Plus/minus grading will be used. The grading scale can be found on the course Blackboard site.

University Policy Notes

*** Academic Integrity**

"A fundamental principle for any educational institution, academic integrity is highly

valued and seriously regarded at The University of Texas at Austin, as emphasized in the standards of conduct. More specifically, you and other students are expected to 'maintain absolute integrity and a high standard of individual honor in scholastic work' undertaken at the University (**Sec. 11-801**, *Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities*). This is a very basic expectation that is further reinforced by the University's **Honor Code**. At a minimum, you should complete any assignments, exams, and other scholastic endeavors with the utmost honesty, which requires you to:

- acknowledge the contributions of other sources to your scholastic efforts;
- complete your assignments independently unless expressly authorized to seek or obtain assistance in preparing them;
- follow instructions for assignments and exams, and observe the standards of your academic discipline; and
- avoid engaging in any form of academic dishonesty on behalf of yourself or another student."

This passage quoted from and additional information available at http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

*** Disabilities**

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, by calling 471-6259.

*** Religious holidays**

A student who misses an examination, work assignment, or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day will be given an opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence, provided that he or she has properly notified the instructor. It is the policy of the University of Texas at Austin that the student must notify the instructor at least 14 days prior to the classes scheduled on dates he or she will be absent to observe a religious holy day. For religious holy days that fall within the first two weeks of the semester, the notice should be given on the first day of the semester. The student will not be penalized for these excused absences, but the instructor may appropriately respond if the student fails to complete satisfactorily the missed assignment or examination within a reasonable time after the excused absence.

**Schedule
(subject to change)**

Week One

January 20 Introduction and course description
January 22 Historical Background: Late 19th and Early 20th Century

Week Two

January 25 The Idea of the American Dream
January 27 Horatio Alger (excerpt)
January 29 Horatio Alger (excerpt)

Week Three

February 1 *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. I-III
Response 1
February 3 *The Great Gatsby*, Ch. IV-VI

February 5	<i>The Great Gatsby</i> , Ch. VII-IX
Week Four	
February 8	Peer Review Paper 1 (draft) due
February 10	Historical Background: Post-WWII and the 1950s
February 12	Documentary screening
Week Five	
February 15	Documentary (cont'd) Paper 1 (final) due
February 17	Bonner, <i>Frye Street & Environs</i> (excerpt)
February 19	Brooks, <i>Maud Martha</i> (excerpt)
Week Six	
February 22	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> , Act I Response 2
February 24	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> , Act II
February 26	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> , Act III
Week Seven	
March 1	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> (screening)
March 3	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> (screening)
March 5	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> (screening)
Week Eight	
March 8	Historical Background: Late 20 th Century
March 10	Viramontes, "The Cariboo Café"
March 12	Díaz, <i>Drown</i> (excerpt)
Week Nine	
March 15-19	Spring Break
Week Ten	
March 22	<i>The House on Mango Street</i> : "The House on Mango Street"-"Darius & the Clouds" Response 3
March 24	<i>The House on Mango Street</i> : "And Some More"-"Geraldo No Last Name"
March 26	<i>The House on Mango Street</i> : "Edna's Ruthie"-Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes"
Week Eleven	
March 29	Peer Review Paper 2 (draft) due
March 31	Instructor-student conferences
April 2	Paper 2 (final) due
Week Twelve	
April 5	Jin, <i>A Good Fall</i> (excerpt)
April 7	<i>Mona in the Promised Land</i> , Ch. 1-4 Response 4
April 9	<i>Mona in the Promised Land</i> , Ch. 5-8

Week Thirteen

April 12

Mona in the Promised Land, Ch. 9-10

April 14

Mona in the Promised Land, Ch. 11-Epilogue

April 16

Historical Background: The American Dream in the 21st Century**Week Fourteen**

April 19

Cricket 101: James

April 21

Cricket 101: *Lagaan* (clip)

April 22

Netherland, pp. 3-63**Response 5****Week Fifteen**

April 25

Netherland, pp. 63-131

April 27

Netherland, pp. 131-200

April 29

Netherland, pp. 200-256**Week Sixteen**

May 3

TBA

May 5

Final exam review

May 7

Final reflections; evaluations