

I. COURSE TITLE: The American Novel

Contact Information

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Virtual Office Hours:

M 1:30-4:30
T 3:00-4:00
W 1:30-4:30
F 1:30-2:30

Course Information

3 Credit Hours
Zoom, MW 9:30-10:20 + WEB

American Fiction's Secular Faith

English 409 - Spring 2021



Image from John Huston's 1979 film adaptation of F. O'Connor's *Wise Blood*

II. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PREREQUISITE(S):

A study of the American novel from James Fenimore Cooper to William Faulkner. Prerequisites: ENG 321 or permission of instructor. May be taken concurrently by English area or major students.

(Note: The official bulletin description above is outdated and does not reflect the specific writers we will cover in this course.)

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Students who successfully complete English 409 will be able to:

- Demonstrate familiarity with the aesthetic, historical, and cultural characteristics of several influential American authors from the late nineteenth century to the present, and with critical discourse surrounding these writers;
- Demonstrate sophisticated close reading and rigorous critical analysis of a diverse array of major American novels;
- Describe the diversity of American fiction since the late nineteenth century, especially concerning race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and religion; and
- Engage in respectful and reasoned debate with others—classmates as well as published literary critics—about their interpretations of literary texts and contexts.

IV. CONTENT OUTLINE:

This course will cover American fiction from the the late nineteenth century through the present. We will read and discuss eight major American novels, along with numerous secondary materials—including philosophy, literary theory, and literary criticism—which will help us to contextualize our discussions. While our discussions will range across a variety of topics, the selected texts will focus most emphatically on the relationship between religion and secularization in the modern American novel.

How does modern American fiction reclaim, reject, or reimagine religious belief? "The novel is the epic of a world abandoned by God," wrote Georg Lukács in his 1915 theory of fiction. A century later, literary critic Pericles Lewis told a much different story about literature and religion: "Modern novelists frequently imagined their own work as competing with churches in terms of spiritual beauty and emotional power." English 409 will explore this debate through a sequence of American novels, spanning from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first, that rethink literature's relationship to religion in a secular age.

What happens when, upon accidentally time traveling to the Middle Ages, you try to impose the "Protestant work ethic" on feudal, Catholic Europe? How does a devout childhood in midcentury Harlem shape an adolescent's understanding of his racial and sexual identities? Why does an atheist nun try to redeem a professor of Hitler Studies from his misplaced faith in consumer culture? How can the spiritual crisis prompted by terminal illness cause an elderly minister to discern beauty in life's most trivial events?

Questions such as these serve as a principle of selection for our reading list, but that is only a starting point. Our conversations will veer in many directions, and what you find interesting in these texts will prove far more important to our study than the organizational scheme outlined here. I look forward to learning from the questions and connections you observe as we explore these texts together.

V. INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES: In this course, students will:

- A. Read the assigned texts carefully, contributing regularly to class discussion;
- B. Watch and respond to weekly online lectures and student presentations;
- C. Conduct independent research into one or more secondary critical sources, sharing findings in a recorded presentation; and
- D. Complete either three short essays or one original research paper.

As an upper-division seminar, this course will be almost entirely driven by classroom discussion, with virtually no in-class lecture. A seminar provides a forum for scholarly exchange among peers. Your success, and the success of our class as a whole, depends on each of you reading carefully, coming to class with ideas to discuss, and participating regularly.

VI. FIELD, CLINICAL, AND/OR LABORATORY EXPERIENCES: None

VII. TEXTS AND RESOURCES:

Required Texts:

- James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. (Vintage International, 2013.) ISBN: 978-0345806543
- Willa Cather, *The Professor's House*. (Vintage, 1990.) ISBN: 978-0679731801
- Don DeLillo, *White Noise*. (Penguin Classics, 2016.) ISBN: 978-0143129554
- Toni Morrison, *Paradise*. (Vintage, 2014.) ISBN: 978-0804169882
- Flannery O'Connor, *Wise Blood*. (FSG Classics, 2007.) ISBN: 978-0374530631
- Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead*. (Picador, 2006.) ISBN: 978-0312424404
- Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*. (Penguin Classics, 2006.) ISBN: 978-0143104919
- Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. (Norton Critical Editions, 2018.) ISBN: 978-0393284171
- Several secondary readings will be posted to Canvas as PDFs.

Recommended Websites, Books, and Resources:

- The OWL (Online Writing Lab) at Purdue (<http://ow.english.purdue.edu>)
- *MLA Handbook* (8th edition)

VIII. EVALUATION AND GRADING PROCEDURES:

Grades in this course will be assigned through a system that I call *math free grading*. A modified form of “contract grading,” this system is based on my belief that grades in a literature course driven primarily by reading, writing, and class discussion should hinge on a student’s overall contribution to the class, not an accumulation of points from assignment to assignment.

On a math exam, there is an obvious difference between a 95% and a 92%. One exam got more answers right than the other. But what’s the difference between a 95% and a 92% on an essay? This “math free grading” frees both of us from fussing over exactly how many points you receive on each assignment, emphasizing instead whether your performance on each assignment meets, exceeds, or does not meet expectations so that you can devote your attention to learning, questioning, and growing instead of just banking points.

Your final grade for the course will be based on the following assignments. You will receive a separate assignment sheet for each with details and due dates. Instead of percentages or letter grades, all assignments will receive one of the following assessments: “exceeds expectations” (3), “meets expectations” (2), “does not meet expectations” (1), or “unacceptable” (0).

- Consistent **attendance and participation**, updated on Canvas every 3-4 weeks.
- Weekly written **responses** to short online lectures and student presentations. *
- One recorded presentation discussing a scholarly article related to one of the class texts. *
- Formalist essay, 4-5 pages.
- Historicist essay, 4-5 pages.
- Presentist essay, 4-5 pages.

* The weekly responses and the recorded presentation will be graded as either meeting or not meeting expectations.

Grades for the course will be distributed as follows:

B: Attendance and participation meet expectations. The formalist essay, historicist essay, and presentist essay all meet expectations. Recorded presentation meets expectations. All written responses to lectures & presentations meet expectations, with no more than two exceptions. (You can also receive a B if **one** of these exceeds or does not meet expectations.)

A: All requirements for a B, plus **two** of the following **exceed expectations**: (1) attendance and participation, (2) the formalist essay, (3) the historicist essay, or (4) the presentist essay.

C: All requirements for a B, but **two** of the following **do not meet expectations**: (1) attendance and participation, (2) the formalist essay, (3) the historicist essay, (4) the presentist essay, (5) the recorded presentation, or (6) three or more written responses to lectures & presentations.

D: All requirements for a B, but either one of the following was unacceptable or incomplete OR three of the following do not meet expectations: (1) attendance and participation, (2) the formalist essay, (3) the historicist essay, (4) the presentist essay, (5) the recorded presentation, or (6) three or more written responses to lectures & presentations.

E: Two of the following were “unacceptable” or “incomplete” OR four of the following do not meet expectations: (1) attendance and participation, (2) the formalist essay, (3) the historicist essay, (4) the presentist essay, (5) the recorded presentation, or (6) three or more written responses to lectures & presentations.

I will update your grades on Canvas regularly, and it is up to you to check your grades. If you have a question about grades, please visit me during my virtual office hours.

Alternative writing assignment:

Any student who prefers to write **one** seminar paper (12-15 page research paper) in three stages (proposal, rough outline & bibliography, final paper) over the course of the semester may do so *instead of* writing the formalist, historicist, and presentist essays. Students who select this option should notify me no later than the third week of the semester. To accommodate the additional time spent on research, students selecting this option may **skip** one novel of their choice.

Dr. Horton's Workload Reduction Act of 2021:

Because 2021 looks like it's just going to be three 2020's in a trench coat, everyone is entitled to slack off a little bit during **one** novel of their choice. You still need to come to class, and you should still look up information about the novel and skim enough of it that you can contribute to our discussions, but you will not be expected to read it in its entirety, and you can feel free admitting (with no shame or penalty attached, formal or informal) that you didn't do the reading.

Policy on Revisions and Late Work:

Any essay that you submitted complete and on time may be revised as many times as you wish. Before revising your essay, submit a “revision request form” (on Canvas) and email me to notify me of your request. I will provide additional written feedback on the original essay. **Late or incomplete essays will receive no higher grade than “does not meet expectations,” and late / incomplete work may not be revised.**

Extensions:

Sometimes life interferes with your ability to turn in your best work. This is particularly true during an unprecedented global pandemic. You may request an extension on any essay. Extended essays will be graded as though they were submitted on time, but they cannot be revised. With the exception of emergencies, you must notify me within 24 hours of the deadline if you wish to receive an extension.

IX. ATTENDANCE POLICY Students are expected to adhere to the MSU Attendance Policy outlined in the current MSU Bulletin. You are a crucial part of our classroom community. Your absence deprives us of an intelligent and thoughtful voice. When you are present and participating, we value your point of view, your interpretation of the readings, your questions, and your insights. Therefore, attendance and participation are required.

Due to the unpredictable nature of the current COVID-19 pandemic, I have decided not to keep track of absences during the Spring 2021 semester. This does not mean attendance is optional. Without consistent attendance, you cannot participate, and without strong participation, your grade will suffer. What this does mean, however, is that I will not penalize you for missing class, but I expect you to communicate with me whenever you must miss class. It’s one thing if you miss class due to emergencies if you stay in regular contact with me; disappearing regularly with no notice, however, will cause your participation grade to fall below “meets expectations.”

Regardless of your reason for missing class, you are responsible for getting notes from a classmate and keeping up with the reading. You should not, in this or in any other class, email the professor to ask what we covered during the class you missed. (Or, worse, don’t ask: “Did we do anything important while I was gone?”) Attendance in a course like ours means more than just showing up and waiting for something interesting to happen. It goes without saying that no distracting or inappropriate behavior will be tolerated. This includes sleeping, texting, disruptive side conversations, doing homework for other classes, using a computer or other technology for purposes unrelated to the class, or arriving to class more than ten minutes late.

X. ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY:

Murray State University takes seriously its moral and educational obligation to maintain high standards of academic honesty and ethical behavior. Instructors are expected to evaluate students’ academic achievements accurately, as well as ascertain that work submitted by students is authentic and the result of their own efforts, and consistent with established academic standards. Students are obligated to respect and abide by the basic standards of personal and professional integrity.

Violations of Academic Honesty include:

Cheating - Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized information such as books, notes, study aids, or other electronic, online, or digital devices in any academic exercise; as well as unauthorized communication of information by any means to or from others during any academic exercise.

Fabrication and Falsification - Intentional alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise. Falsification involves changing information whereas fabrication involves inventing or counterfeiting information.

Multiple Submission - The submission of substantial portions of the same academic work, including oral reports, for credit more than once without authorization from the instructor.

Plagiarism - Intentionally or knowingly representing the words, ideas, creative work, or data of someone else as one's own in any academic exercise, without due and proper acknowledgement.

Instructors should outline their expectations that may go beyond the scope of this policy at the beginning of each course and identify such expectations and restrictions in the course syllabus. When an instructor receives evidence, either directly or indirectly, of academic dishonesty, he or she should investigate the instance. The faculty member should then take appropriate disciplinary action.

Disciplinary action may include, but is not limited to the following:

- 1) Requiring the student(s) to repeat the exercise or do additional related exercise(s).
- 2) Lowering the grade or failing the student(s) on the particular exercise(s) involved.
- 3) Lowering the grade or failing the student(s) in the course.

If the disciplinary action results in the awarding of a grade of *E* in the course, the student(s) may not drop the course.

Faculty reserve the right to invalidate any exercise or other evaluative measures if substantial evidence exists that the integrity of the exercise has been compromised. Faculty also reserve the right to document in the course syllabi further academic honesty policy elements related to the individual disciplines.

A student may appeal the decision of the faculty member with the department chair in writing within five working days. Note: If, at any point in this process, the student alleges that actions have taken place that may be in violation of the Murray State University Non-Discrimination Statement, this process must be suspended and the matter be directed to the Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity and Access. Any appeal will be forwarded to the appropriate university committee as determined by the Provost.

XI. NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT:

Murray State University endorses the intent of all federal and state laws created to prohibit discrimination. Murray State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, age, veteran status, or disability in employment or application for employment, admissions, or the provision of services and provides, upon request, reasonable accommodation including auxiliary aids and services

necessary to afford individuals disabilities equal access to participate in all programs and activities.

In particular and without limiting the preceding and pursuant to and consistent with the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its regulations 34 CFR 100 et seq.; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and its regulations 34 CFR 104; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 USC 1681 et seq., and its regulations 34 CFR 106 et seq; and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and its regulations 34 CFR 110, Murray State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, handicap, or age in its educational programs and activities. This non-discrimination in education programs and activities extends to employment and admissions and to recruitment, financial aid, academic programs, student services, athletics, and housing. Murray State is required by Title IX and 34 CFR part 106 not to discriminate on the basis of sex and the prohibition against sex discrimination specifically includes a prohibition of sexual harassment and sexual violence. Examples of prohibited sexual harassment and sexual violence can be found in the “Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment” which can be accessed via the link referenced in Appendix I.

For more information concerning the application of these provisions may be referred to: 1) the Executive Director of Institutional Diversity, Equity and Access / Murray State University Title IX Coordinator, Murray State University 103 Wells Hall, Murray, KY 42071 Telephone: 270-809-3155 Fax: 270-8096887; TDD: 270-809-3361; Email: msu.titleix@murraystate.edu.

XII. OTHER INFORMATION

Student Face Covering/Mask Policy

- Students must wear face coverings/masks on campus, including but not limited to in-person classroom settings (classrooms are also required to be configured to achieve social distancing) unless exempted with documentation by a medical professional.
- Student documentation should be registered with the Office of Student Disability Services, which may offer classroom accommodations regarding the face covering/mask student policy. The Office of Student Disability Services is located at 423 Wells Hall. Office staff can be reached by phone at 270- 809-2018 or by email at kashlock@murraystate.edu.
- Failure to comply with the face covering/mask policy may result in the student being subject to the Murray State Student Disciplinary Procedure. This policy can be found here: <https://www.murraystate.edu/headermenu/administration/StudentAffairs/policies.aspx>.
- Students are not required to wear face coverings/masks in their residence hall room, in dining facilities upon receiving food/beverage, or in community restrooms/bathrooms.

Counseling Resources on Campus

Murray State University has two centers on campus that offer free and confidential mental health services for students. The University Counseling Center is located in Oakley Applied Science and will be offering primarily remote services this spring. You can call them at 270-809-6851, email them at msu.counselingcenter@murraystate.edu, or visit their website

at www.murraystate.edu/CounselingCenter. The Psychological Center is located in Wells Hall and will be offering primarily in-person sessions this spring. You can reach them at 270-809-2504 or visit their website at www.murraystate.edu/PsychologicalCenter.

In a crisis situation, or after hours, please contact Murray State Police at 270-809-2222 or call 911 if you are off campus. You can also call the 24-hour crisis hotline at 800-592-3980 or contact the Crisis Text Line at 741-741.

Students with Disabilities

Students requiring special assistance due to a disability should visit the Office of Student Disability Services immediately for assistance with accommodations. For more information, students with disabilities should contact the Office of Student Disability Services, 423 Wells Hall, Murray, KY 42071. Telephone: 270-809-2018 (Voice) 270-809- 5889 (TDD).

Email: msu.studentdisabilities@murraystate.edu. Our office will contact professors directly regarding any specific accommodation needs that may be applicable to their particular classroom setting.

Class Absence due to COVID-19

Students diagnosed with COVID-19 will contact their instructors and msu.studentcovidpositive@murraystate.edu immediately. Instructors will make adjustments to due dates or other course requirements to accommodate the severity of the illness and/or the availability of resources needed to complete tasks. If possible, students will continue to check Canvas regularly, and maintain regular communication with their instructors. COVID-19 positive students will be required to isolate for 10 days (or as directed by the individual's medical provider). Students may return to class at the end of the 10-day isolation period if they are symptom-free.

Students that have had close contact with or have had potential exposure to a COVID-19 positive person will contact their instructors and msu.studentcovidquarantine@murraystate.edu immediately to mark the start of the quarantine period. Students experiencing no symptoms and after Day 5, have a negative PCR test result and are still symptom-free are required to quarantine a total of 7 days. Students 1) experiencing no symptoms and do not get tested, or 2) have had symptoms, must quarantine for 10 days. Students may return to class at the end of the quarantine period, provided they are symptom-free.

For additional information about MSU Quarantine and Isolation Procedures, please refer to this site: <https://www.murraystate.edu/racerrestart/procedures.aspx>.

Starfish Student Success Network

Your success is important! This course is part of the Murray State University student success initiative that utilizes the Starfish Student Success Network. Starfish may be used to communicate with you about your academic progress and get you help if you need it. Throughout the term, you may receive emails regarding your attendance, course grades or academic performance. To benefit, it is important that you check your Murray State email regularly and follow through on recommended actions. You may also be contacted directly by others on campus who care about your academic success and personal well-being. This may include your academic advisor and staff from Student Engagement and Success and other student support offices across campus. Starfish provides you with the opportunity to “Raise Your Hand” if you need help. Take advantage of this and other features by logging into your Starfish account through myGate. More information can be found at murraystate.edu/starfish.

Racer Safe and Healthy Guidelines

1. Regularly wash hands for at least 20 seconds and use hand sanitizer frequently
2. Check your temperature daily
3. If you feel sick, stay home
4. Wear a face mask
5. Utilize MSU Health Services (call, visit, or tele-visit)
6. Practice social distancing
7. Keep your workstation/room sanitized
8. Get a flu shot
9. Exhibit healthy behavior
10. Download the Apple COVID-19 app (or similar app) for daily use
11. Eat Well. Exercise. Get Plenty of Rest.
12. Make good choices

XII. ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Accessibility and Inclusion: For critical thinking to thrive, our classroom must be an open and inclusive space for everyone. If you have accessibility needs, whether or not they are documented through the office of Student Disability Services, please feel free to contact me early in the semester so we can discuss the accommodations you need.

Electronic Communication: I regularly communicate with the class by sending announcements and reminders through email and Canvas. **You are responsible for any information sent to your Murray State email address or posted to our course Canvas site.** As a university student, you should plan to check your Murray State email at least once every 24 hours on weekdays and at least once over the weekend.

Pronouns: Canvas has recently updated its setting so that all users can easily establish their pronouns if they wish to do so. You can update your Canvas profile by going to your Canvas account, clicking “settings,” clicking “edit settings,” and selecting from the “pronouns” drop down menu. Canvas has provided a full tutorial at this link:

<https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/How-do-I-select-personal-pronouns-in-my-user-account-as-a/ta-p/456>.

Writing Center: The Racer Writing Center is located on the Main Floor of the Waterfield Library. The writing consultants offer free, one-on-one assistance with all aspects of writing, at any stage in the writing process, and for any class a student may be taking. To make an appointment, please call 809-2267, visit <http://libguides.murraystate.edu/writingcenter>, or drop by the center in the northeast corner of the Waterfield Library. Please take a copy of your assignment and any brainstorming or writing that you have completed with you. The Writing Center will not proofread (mark corrections on) papers or talk with you about grades.

Additional Resources for Murray State Students:

Racers Helping Racers: The Racers Helping Racers is a food pantry for Murray State University students. To receive assistance, please bring your student ID (Racer Card) when coming to the food pantry. No questions asked! M/W/F 10AM-2PM

<http://www.murraystate.edu/campus/CurrisCenter/racershelpingracers.aspx>

Racer Oral Communication Center: The Murray State Communication Center is a complimentary service for all Murray State University students, faculty and staff and is dedicated to providing the necessary tools to help speakers excel academically, professionally and ethically in a diverse society. The Communication Center will provide resources to facilitate learning across all majors and disciplines through innovative technology, personalized services geared toward the individual's needs, and opportunities for assistance and feedback on presentations.

<http://libguides.murraystate.edu/comcenter/home>

Veteran and Military Student Success: We are ready to support our military families during their transition to student life. We are the point of contact on campus for all veteran issues. We will work hard to help you get the education you deserve and plan for the future you want. Let us help you prepare for the next chapter of your life. When you are ready for this all-important step, we are ready for you. In Wells Hall <https://www.murraystate.edu/students/veterans/>

Health Services: Murray State University's health services are provided by Primary Care Medical Center as of June 1, 2019. Health Services is located on the first floor of Wells Hall, facing the quad. A physician and staff will be on site during operating hours. Health services is available to faculty, staff and students. <https://www.murraystate.edu/campus/healthservices.aspx>

Angels Community Clinic: The Angels Community Clinic of Murray and Calloway County was established in 1999 to provide diagnostic and treatment services to those people who do not have medical insurance or financial resources necessary to pay for private insurance and/or medical care. Services that are offered at the Calloway County Health Department (Immunizations, Pap Smears, birth control, STD diagnosis and treatment) will not be duplicated. Students will be referred to the health department for those needs. We offer treatment of colds, flu, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression and other medical conditions. To be a patient at the Angels Community Clinic the MSU student would need to be a full time student (need a letter from the college stating that they are a full time student). If working, we would need check stub with year to date earnings (to identify low income), a picture ID is required (drivers license), or student ID, and a copy of lease or utility bill with the students name on them to substantiate residency in Calloway County. Our hours are Mon, Tues, Wed 8:30-4, Thurs 8:30-12. Closed Fri. Sat. Sun. It is best to call to reserve an appointment time. 270-759-2223 to be sure the Nurse Practitioner will be available at that time. <http://www.angelscommunityclinic.com/>

Women's Center: Via education, advocacy, resources, and services, the Women's Center supports and empowers women and men to unite as equal partners and become leaders on campus and beyond. The Center works every day to reduce violence against women and sex discrimination, to promote women's physical and mental health and well-being, and to generate dialogue about women, gender, and sexual politics. Ultimately, the Women's Center works to encourage each student to take personal responsibility for creating an environment that is safe, equitable, and healthy for men and women even beyond your time here at MSU. Located Oakley Applied Science building
<http://www.murraystate.edu/headermenu/administration/StudentAffairs/departments/WomensCenter/index.aspx>

Office of LGBT Programming: The Office of LGBT Programming provides support for the LGBTQ+ student community through services and educational programming. This support fosters a stronger campus environment that is safe for all people, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, allied, asexual, pansexual, and gender non-conforming students and Murray State employees. Located in Blackburn

<http://www.murraystate.edu/headermenu/administration/StudentAffairs/departments/lgbt/index.aspx>

Office of Multicultural Initiatives, Student Leadership & Inclusive Excellence: The mission of the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) is to advocate and encourage a campus environment that embraces diversity and helps students grow personally and academically. Our programs and services are designed to address the leadership development, cultural competency, curricular and co-curricular needs of our multicultural student population, to help them adjust to campus life and enjoy a successful college career. The Office seeks to enhance the retention, success, and graduation rates for multicultural students at Murray State University.

<http://www.murraystate.edu/headermenu/administration/StudentAffairs/departments/OfficeofMulticulturalAffairs/index.aspx>

Office of Student Affairs: The Division of Student Affairs' primary concern is the student. This concern encompasses retention, welfare, and growth and development in all dimensions of student life including educational, vocational, social-cultural, civility and tolerance, psychological, values clarification and physical. <http://www.murraystate.edu/headermenu/administration/StudentAffairs/> Additional information about resources on campus and off-campus can be found here

<http://www.murraystate.edu/headermenu/administration/StudentAffairs/departments/counseling/resources.aspx>

Dr. Horton's Strategies for Student Success

1. **Always participate.** Answer questions. Ask questions. Respond directly to your classmates' ideas, not just to the instructor's questions. Remind all of us (including the instructor!) when we need to stop and think about something, to return to a previous issue, or to move to another topic.
2. **Bring everything to class.** You should always have a copy of the syllabus, the most recent writing prompt, your books, a notebook, and *a printed copy of the day's reading*.
3. **Read everything carefully and critically.** Take your time. Try not to read everything in one sitting or immediately before class. If it's a literary text, read passages out loud. Bug your friends and roommates by talking about what you are reading. Ask yourself how the text in front of you compares with other texts you have read and with your own knowledge of the world.
4. **Take notes when you read.** Highlight or underline passages that strike you as important. Write a small note next to it so you will remember why you marked it. Have a conversation with the text by writing your reactions, ideas, and questions in the margins. Keep a short list of ideas and questions that you think we should talk about in class.
5. **Take notes in class.** Did your classmate say something really profound? Write it down. Did your instructor ask a question that you want to spend more time thinking about? Write it down. Did someone use a word or a concept that you don't recognize? Write it down so you can look it up later. Did you just have a moment of inspiration, maybe an idea for your next essay? Write it down before you forget!
6. **Be respectful and inclusive.** Respond to everyone in the way you hope they will respond to you. No questions or ideas are dumb or off limits (with the exception of speech or actions which may create a hostile environment for others). On the other hand, there are also no perfect questions or unassailable ideas. We are always striving to think more deeply and reflect more broadly. A university course is an opportunity for all of us—including your instructor—to do that together.
7. **Disagree.** Don't be afraid to challenge someone else's ideas, *including your instructor's*. When you disagree with someone, speak up! But be prepared to give reasons and to explain why the rest of us should see it your way. Maybe you will change someone's mind. Maybe someone will change yours. But nothing will happen if you don't share what's on your mind.
8. **Take responsibility.** Be on time for everything. Submit all assignments by the due date. If you are confused or frustrated by an assignment, seek help—either from your instructor or the writing center. If life blows up on you and you desperately need an extension on an assignment, get ahead of it and ask well in advance—in person, if possible, but also in writing. Take ownership of your ideas and beliefs. Remember that you will only benefit from what you take seriously.
9. **Honor diversity.** In this class, we discuss a number of important issues. You and your classmates will have mixed reactions to these issues, and that's a good thing. Keep in mind, however, that what may be a matter of intellectual curiosity for you may be someone else's very personal experience. Everyone should feel comfortable being who they are and speaking their minds. This class is all about critical thinking, but critical inquiry does not require a critical attitude.
10. **Communicate with the instructor.** Fill out the course evaluation at the end of the semester. Check your Murray State email regularly for updates. Speak up whenever you have a concern.

COURSE SCHEDULE – Subject to Change

*All secondary readings can be found as PDF files on Canvas.

NOTE: WEB activities must be completed before each class meeting on the following Monday.

	Monday	Wednesday	WEB
Week 1 Jan. 18-22	NO CLASS MLK DAY	Introductions	Read: Scholarly excerpts by Michael Schmidt, Guido Mazzoni Jenny Franchot, and Dawn Coleman. * Lecture + response
Week 2 Jan. 25-29	Read: Mark Twain, <i>A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court</i> Pages 7-109	Read: Mark Twain, <i>A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court</i> Pages 111-193	Read: Max Weber, excerpt from <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i> * Lecture + response
Week 3 Feb. 1-5	Read: Mark Twain, <i>A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court</i> Pages 195-319	Read: Mark Twain, <i>A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court</i> Pages 321-381	Student presentation on article + response.
Week 4 Feb. 8-12 Essay 1 or Research Proposal due Sunday, 2/7 by 11:59 p.m.	Read: Willa Cather, <i>The Professor's House</i> Pages 3-81	Read: Willa Cather, <i>The Professor's House</i> Pages 82-155	Read: Pericles Lewis, excerpt from <i>Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel</i> * Lecture + response

Week 5 Feb. 15-19	Read: Willa Cather, <i>The Professor's House</i> Pages 159-257	Read: Flannery O'Connor, <i>Wise Blood</i> Pages 3-72	Student presentation on article + response.
Week 6 Feb. 22-26	Read: Flannery O'Connor, <i>Wise Blood</i> Pages 75-236	NO CLASS STUDY DAY	Read: Steve Pinkerton, excerpt from <i>Blasphemous Modernism</i> * Michael Warner, "Tongues Untied" * Lecture + response
Week 7 Mar. 1-5	Read: James Baldwin, <i>Go Tell It on the Mountain</i> Pages 3-101	Read: James Baldwin, <i>Go Tell It on the Mountain</i> Pages 102-176	Student presentation on article + response.
Week 8 Mar. 8-12	Read: James Baldwin, <i>Go Tell It on the Mountain</i> Pages 177-263	Read: Leslie Marmon Silko, <i>Ceremony</i> Pages 1-58	Student presentation on article + response.
Week 9 Mar. 15-19	Read: Leslie Marmon Silko, <i>Ceremony</i> Pages 59-186	Read: Leslie Marmon Silko, <i>Ceremony</i> Pages 187-244	Student presentation on article + response.
Week 10 Mar. 22-26 Essay 2 or Research Outline & Bibliography due Sunday, 3/21 by 11:59 p.m.	Read: Don DeLillo, <i>White Noise</i> Pages 3-104	Read: Don DeLillo, <i>White Noise</i> Pages 106-156	Read: Eugene McCarragher, excerpt from <i>The Enchantments of Mammon</i> * Lecture + response

Week 11 Mar. 29-Apr. 2	Read: Don DeLillo, <i>White Noise</i> Pages 159-244	Read: Don DeLillo, <i>White Noise</i> Pages 245-310	Student presentation on article + response.
Week 12 Apr. 5-9	Read: Toni Morrison, <i>Paradise</i> Pages 3-77	Read: Toni Morrison, <i>Paradise</i> Pages 81-138	Read: Vincent W. Lloyd, “Managing Race, Managing Religion” * Lecture + response
Week 13 Apr. 12-16	Read: Toni Morrison, <i>Paradise</i> Pages 141-266	Read: Toni Morrison, <i>Paradise</i> Pages 269-318	Student presentation on article + response.
Week 14 Apr. 19-23	Read: Marilynne Robinson, <i>Gilead</i> Pages 3-71	Read: Marilynne Robinson, <i>Gilead</i> Pages 72-154	Read: Simone Weil, excerpts from <i>Gravity and Grace</i> * Lecture + response
Week 15 Apr. 26-30	Read: Marilynne Robinson, <i>Gilead</i> Pages 155-247	Closing discussion	Student presentation on article + response.

Monday, May 3: Watch: *The Good Lord Bird* (Showtime) or approved alternative.

Essay 3 or Seminar Paper due by 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, May 6.