

I. COURSE TITLE: American Literature 1870-1920

Contact Information

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Office Hours:

- T/R 9:15-11:00 & 3:30-4:45
- Zoom Hours M/W 3:00-4:00
- Other times by appointment.

Course Information

3 Credit Hours
WEB

Disenchantment and Its Discontents

English 631.01 | Fall 2021



Willa Cather Memorial Prairie in Red Cloud, NE || Georgia O'Keeffe, *Church Steeple* (1930)

II. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PREREQUISITE(S):

An intensive study of selected works of the period and their historical and critical context, with an emphasis on American Realism and Naturalism.

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Students who successfully complete ENG 631 will be able to:

- demonstrate familiarity with aesthetic, historical, and cultural characteristics of American literature from 187-1920, and with critical discourse surrounding that literature;
- demonstrate sophisticated close reading and rigorous critical analysis of a wide variety of American poems, short stories, and novels;
- explain how various works of American literature from 1870-1920 relate to their historical and cultural contexts (especially contexts pertaining to secularization and religion), and to identify debates over how these texts and their contexts interact;
- describe the diversity of American literature from 1870-1920, 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:

“The fate of our times,” argued Max Weber in his 1919 essay “Science as a Vocation,” is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the ‘disenchantment of the world.’” Explaining what he means by “disenchantment,” Weber describes a progression that largely resembles the gloss students receive when they cover the realist, naturalist, and modernist periods of American literary history in a survey course. “Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations. It is not accidental that our greatest art is intimate and not monumental, nor is it accidental that today only within the smallest and intimate circles, in personal human situations, in pianissimo, that something is pulsating that corresponds to the prophetic pneuma, which in former times swept through the great communities like a firebrand, welding them together.”

In this course, which concentrates primarily on American literature written between 1870 and 1920, we will consider how “disenchantment” affected the literature of the period, how this literature contributed to this spirit of “disenchantment,” and how literature sometimes responded to, metabolized, and, occasionally, transfigured the “disenchantment of the world” into the very “prophetic pneuma” that, according to Weber, had retreated from public life to personal relations. Guided by our reading of Willa Cather, Charles Chesnutt, Kate Chopin, W.E.B. DuBois, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Pauline Hopkins, William Dean Howells, Henry James, Sarah Orne Jewett, James Weldon Johnson, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Wallace Stevens, Mark Twain, Edith Wharton, and others, we will consider how American literature at the turn of the twentieth century simultaneously depicted the “disenchantment of the world” and gave voice to disenchantment’s discontents.

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

- A. read all assigned texts carefully, commenting on all readings via online class discussion;
- B. submit one recorded presentation and respond weekly to classmates’ presentations;
- C. write two short essays (close reading and critical summary); and
- D. develop a self-directed, research-based final project (either a seminar paper or a pedagogy based project) that links the course content to their own needs and interests.

“We live in an unusual time for Americanists. The country is in the midst of a conservative revolt...embroiled in an angry controversy about religious issues. [...] Of all this, Americanist literary and cultural critics have little to say. Alarm bells go off at the mention of belief and the public sphere. For many, the Inquisition or the Holocaust is always just around the corner, and, indeed, I’m among them, for we are all dangerously prone to force our beliefs upon others. But I also think that we, as Americanists, have allowed our fear at such a prospect to disable our scholarship. We have, in fact, produced very little work of interest on religion and American writing. [...] A question facing American literary scholars at the turn into the twenty-first century is whether we want to persist in evading the larger culture’s religious concerns.”

Jenny Franchot, “Invisible Domain: Religion and American Literary Studies” (1995)

This is an **asynchronous** online course, meaning that we will not have scheduled meetings as a class. There are, however, regular deadlines built into the course. If your fall schedule will require some flexibility with these deadlines, please keep me informed with as much notice as possible.

Despite being an online class, this will still be a *discussion-driven*, not lecture-driven, course. I will occasionally post short videos and notes to Canvas in order to provide background information or explain confusing concepts. For the most part, however, our conversation will take place on the Canvas discussion board. I will also be available throughout the course to meet one-on-one via Zoom.

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

VII. TEXTS AND RESOURCES:

Required Texts:

- Cather, Willa. *My Ántonia*. (Norton, 2015.) ISBN: 978-0393967906
- Chesnutt, Charles. *The Marrow of Tradition*. (Norton, 2012.) ISBN: 978-0393934144
- Chopin, Kate. *The Awakening*. (Norton, 2017.) ISBN: 978-0393617313
- Howells, William Dean. *The Rise of Silas Lapham*. (Norton, 1982.) ISBN: 978-393044335
- James, Henry. *Tales of Henry James*. (Norton, 2003.) ISBN: 978-0312424091
- Phelps, Elizabeth Stuart. *The Gates Ajar*. (Penguin, 2019.) ISBN: 978-0143133919
- Twain, Mark. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. (Norton, 2018.) ISBN: 978-0393284171
- Wharton, Edith. *The House of Mirth*. (Norton, 1990.) ISBN: 978-0393959015
- Additional required readings will be posted as PDF files on Canvas.

VIII. EVALUATION AND GRADING PROCEDURES:

Grades in this course will be assigned through a simplified form of specifications grading. This system enables grades in a course driven by reading, writing, and discussion to hinge on a student's overall contribution to the class instead of the accumulation of points from assignment to assignment. Your final grade for the course will be based on the following assignments, each of which will have a separate assignment sheet with details and due dates. Instead of percentages or letter grades, assignments will receive one of the following assessments: "exceeds expectations," "meets expectations," "does not meet expectations," or "unacceptable."

- Regular participation in Canvas discussion groups, including weekly responses to instructor's prompts and classmates' comments.
- One recorded presentation and weekly responses to classmates' presentations.*
- Two short papers: close reading essay and critical summary essay (~3 pages each).
- One research-based final project (12-15 page paper or alternate pedagogy project).

*The recorded presentation and weekly responses receive only "meets" or "does not meet expectations."

Grades for the course will be distributed as follows:

B: Consistent, weekly participation in Canvas discussion groups. All assignments meet expectations.

A: All requirements for a B, plus thorough and exemplary participation in Canvas discussion groups. At least one of the following exceeds expectations: (1) both short papers, (2) the final project.

C: All requirements for a B, but either (1) weekly participation in Canvas discussion groups is insufficient, (2) one of the short papers is unacceptable or incomplete OR both do not meet expectations, (3) either the recorded presentation or weekly responses are unacceptable or incomplete, or (4) the final project does not meet expectations OR process components of the final project are incomplete.

D: All requirements for a C, but meets more than one of the criteria for reducing a B to a C.

E: Very little participation in Canvas discussion group, final project incomplete or unacceptable, OR both short papers incomplete or unacceptable.

I will post instructions for all writing assignments to Canvas. Assignments will be returned, with comments, through Canvas. (A graded assignment marked “3” in the Canvas gradebook exceeds expectations; “2” meets expectations; “1” does not meet expectations; and “0” is incomplete or unacceptable.) I will update your grades on Canvas regularly.

Policy on Revisions and Late Work:

Any essay that you submitted complete and on time may be revised as many times as you wish. 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. You may request an extension on any essay. Essays turned in with an extension will be graded as though they were submitted on time, but they cannot be revised. With the exception of emergencies, you must request an extension within 24 hours of the deadline.

IX. ATTENDANCE POLICY: As an asynchronous online course, there is no attendance policy. Regular participation in your Canvas discussion groups is required, however, and it is important that you keep up with all deadlines and notify me at any point that you are worried about falling behind.

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 STATEMENT:

The following statement shall serve as the official nondiscrimination statement of Murray State University for its Affirmative Action Plan and for all other purposes. This statement supersedes and replaces all others that may have previously existed in any other form or by

any other title in University policies, governance and other documents, internal and external communications, correspondence, and all other official materials:

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 with 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.

Inquiries 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) 809-6887; TDD: (270) 809-3361; Email: msu.titleix@murraystate.edu; or 2) to the Assistant Secretary of the United States Department of Education, U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20202-1100; Telephone: 1-800-421-3481 FAX: 202-453-6012; TDD: 1-800-877-8339; Email: OCR@ed.gov

XII. OTHER INFORMATION:

Face Covering/Mask Policy

Guidance and requirements for face masks may be revised as conditions change in the state and region. All students are required to abide by the University’s guidance and/or requirements for face coverings throughout the term of this course. Please visit the [Racer Restart](https://www.murraystate.edu/racerrestart/) (<https://www.murraystate.edu/racerrestart/>) page for the latest guidance on face coverings.

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 Suite C104 in Oakley Applied Science and will be offering both in-person and remote services this year. On-call counselors are available 9:00-3:00 Monday through Friday for walk-in sessions. To schedule an appointment, email them at msu.counselingcenter@murraystate.edu. For more information, call them at 270-809-6851 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**. You can reach them at 270-809-2504 or visit their website at www.murraystate.edu/PsychologicalCenter.

Free mental health self-help resources are available through TAO Connect. To access them, simply go to us.taconnect.org/register and sign in using your Murray State email address.

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

The University will observe the guidance provided by the CDC for the need to quarantine following exposure. Information will be made available on the Racer Restart webpage (<https://www.murraystate.edu/racerrestart/>). **Students diagnosed with COVID-19 will contact their instructors and msu.studentcovidpositive@murraystate.edu immediately. Students instructed to quarantine due to exposure should also contact their instructors, and msu.studentcovidquarantine@murraystate.edu immediately.** Instructors may 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.

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

Check the Racer Restart webpage (<https://www.murraystate.edu/racerrestart/>) for the updated Racer Safe and Healthy Guidelines.

1. Get a COVID-19 Vaccine, in consultation with your healthcare provider.
2. Per the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), face masks are required for all individuals, both vaccinated and unvaccinated.
3. Keeping distance from others is especially important.
4. If you feel sick, stay home.
5. Regularly wash hands for at least 20 seconds and use hand sanitizer frequently.
6. Utilize MSU Health Services (call, visit, or tele-visit)
7. Get a flu shot.
8. Exhibit healthy behavior: Eat Well. Exercise. Get Plenty of Rest.
9. Make good choices. You have a personal responsibility to our campus community.

COURSE SCHEDULE – Subject to Change

*Indicates that the assignment is posted to Canvas as a PDF.

Week 1: August 17-20

Read:

- Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, *The Gates Ajar*.
- Cindy Weinstein, “Heaven’s Tense: Narration in *The Gates Ajar*.”*
- Jenny Franchot, “Invisible Domain: Religion in American Literary Studies.”*
- Excerpts from Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* and Claudia Stokes, *The Altar at Home*.*

Write: Introductions and discussion board responses by 11:59 p.m. on Friday, 8/20.

Watch & Respond: Lecture on American literary history and the “secularization thesis” by Friday, 8/20.

Week 2: August 23-27

Read:

- William Dean Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (3-197).
- Rudolph and Clara Kirk, “Howells and the Church of the Carpenter.”*

Write: Discussion questions by Wednesday, 8/25, replies by Friday, 8/27.

Watch & Respond: Classmate presentation by Friday, 8/27.

Week 3: August 30-September 3.

Read:

- William Dean Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (197-321).
- Fleda Brown Jackson, “A Sermon without Exegesis.”*

Write: Discussion questions by Wednesday, 9/1, replies by Friday, 9/3.

Watch & Respond: Classmate presentation by Friday, 9/3.

Week 4: September 6-10

Read:

- Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (7-227).
- Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation” and *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.*

Write: Discussion questions by Wednesday, 9/8, replies by Friday, 9/10.

Watch & Respond: Classmate presentation by Friday, 9/10.

Week 5: September 13-17

Read:

- Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (229-381).
- Mark Twain, *Letters from the Earth*.*
- Chapter 5 of Berkove & Csicsila, *Heretical Fictions: Religion in the Literature of Mark Twain*.*

Write: Discussion questions by Wednesday, 9/15, replies by Friday, 9/17.

Watch & Respond: Classmate presentation by Friday, 9/17.

Week 6: September 20-24

Read:

- Henry James: *Daisy Miller*, "The Pupil," "The Middle Years," and "The Beast in the Jungle."
- Sarah Orne Jewett, "The Town Poor."*
- Mary Wilkins Freeman, "A New England Prophet."*
- Zitkála-Šá: "The Soft-Hearted Sioux" and "Why I am a Pagan."*

Write: Discussion questions by Wednesday, 9/22, replies by Friday, 9/24.

Watch & Respond: Classmate presentation by Friday, 9/24.

Week 7: September 27-October 1

Close Reading Essay Due by 11:59 p.m. Monday 9/27.

Read:

- Charles Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition* (5-117).
- Vincent W. Lloyd, "Managing Race, Managing Religion."*
- Intro of Reckson, *Realist Ecstasy: Religion, Race, and Performance in American Literature*.*

Write: Discussion questions by Wednesday, 9/29, replies by Friday, 10/1.

Watch & Respond: Classmate presentation by Friday, 10/1.

Week 8: October 4-6 (week shortened by fall break)

Read:

- Charles Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition* (118-195).
- Paul Lawrence Dunbar: "Sympathy," "We Wear the Mask," "The Haunted Oak," and "An Ante-Bellum Sermon."*
- James Weldon Johnson: "Art vs. Trade," "Lift Every Voice and Sing," and "A Poet to His Baby Son."*

Write: Discussion questions by Wednesday, 10/4, replies by **Monday, 10/11**.

Watch & Respond: Classmate presentation by **Monday, 10/11**.

Week 9: October 11-15

Final Project Prospectus Due by 11:59 p.m. Monday 10/11.

Read:

- Pauline Hopkins, *Hagar's Daughter: A Story of Southern Caste Prejudice*.*
- W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America*.*
- RaShell R. Smith-Spears, "Uplift Ideology and the Fluidity of Racial Categories in Pauline Hopkins's *Hagar's Daughter*."*

Write: Discussion questions by Wednesday, 10/13, replies by Friday, 10/15.

Watch & Respond: Classmate presentation by Friday, 10/15.

Week 10: October 18-22

Read:

- Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth* (5-142).
- Edwin Arlington Robinson: "Mr. Flood's Party," "Richard Cory," and "Supremacy."*
- Edna St. Vincent Millay: "Dirge without Music," "God's World," and "The Penitent."*
- Robert Frost: "Birches," "Out, Out—," and "The Oven Bird."*

Write: Discussion questions by Wednesday, 10/20, replies by Friday, 10/22.

Watch & Respond: Classmate presentation by Friday, 10/22.

Week 11: October 25-29

Read:

- Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth* (143-256).
- Chapter 4 of Kim, *Literary Epiphany in the Novel, 1850-1950: Constellations of the Soul*.*

Write: Discussion questions by Wednesday, 10/27, replies by Friday, 10/29.

Watch & Respond: Classmate presentation by Friday, 10/29.

Week 12: November 1-5

Read:

- Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*.
- Chapter 3 of Ferraro, *Transgression & Redemption in American Fiction*.*

Write: Discussion questions by Wednesday, 11/3, replies by Friday, 11/5.

Watch & Respond: Classmate presentation by Friday, 11/5.

Week 13: November 8-12

Read:

- Ezra Pound, “Envoi.”*
- Amy Lowell, “A Fixed Idea.”*
- HD, “Mid-Day.”*
- T.S. Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.”*
- Mina Loy, “Love Songs.”*
- Wallace Stevens, “Sunday Morning.”*

Write: Discussion questions by Wednesday, 11/10, replies by Friday, 11/12.

Watch & Respond: Classmate presentation by Friday, 11/12.

Week 14: November 15-19

Partial Draft of Final Project Due by 11:59 p.m. Monday 11/15.

Read:

- Willa Cather, *My Ántonia* (7-126).
- Pericles Lewis, Excerpts from *Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel*.*

Write: Discussion questions by Wednesday, 11/17, replies by Friday, 11/19.

Watch & Respond: Classmate presentation by Friday, 11/19.

Week 15: November 22-24 (week shortened by Thanksgiving break)

Read:

- Willa Cather, *My Ántonia* (127-179).
- Joseph C. Murphy, “Cather’s Ruskinian Landscapes: Typologies of the New World.”*

Write: Discussion questions by Wednesday, 11/24, replies by **Monday, 11/29**.

Watch & Respond: Classmate presentation by **Monday, 11/29**.

Week 16: November 29-December 3

Spend this week working on your final project.

Final Project Due by 11:59 p.m. Wednesday 12/8