



INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN LITERATURE: PROTEST & DISSENT

INSTRUCTOR: Kym Weed

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OFFICE LOCATION: Greenlaw 322 or the HHIVE Lab (GL 524)

OFFICE HOURS: Mondays & Wednesdays 9:00-11:00 a.m. in GL 322 and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The United States was founded through dissent; the tradition of collective action has shaped the country and its literature ever since. An introduction to American Literature, then, can also be an introduction to the protests that shape and in turn are shaped by American literature and culture. In this course, we will read a range of American literary texts while focusing on the tradition of protest and dissent that runs from the American Revolution through the 1992 Los Angeles riots.

Course readings will sample texts across time and space to help us define American Literature, protest, and dissent. We will think of literature and protest as broadly as possible to make connections across time to consider the rich literary history that continues to inform our contemporary moment. To do so, this course will focus on specific texts as well as the broader cultural narratives associated with them to consider the impact that American literature and culture have had on protest, dissent, and collective action (and vice versa). Rather than limit ourselves to the narrow genre of “protest literature,” we will read a variety of genres including novels, short stories, poetry, music, pamphlets, advertisements, magazine articles, investigative journalism, manifestos, and literary criticism.

Through our study of American literature we will attempt to answer the following questions:

- What counts as protest? How do cultural narratives shape our understanding of protests?
- How has literature been mobilized as a form of protest?
- What impact has dissent had on American Literature?
- Why have authors turned to literature, music, and other art forms to enact social change?

COURSE GOALS

1. Survey a broad range of texts and authors in American literature
2. Examine different forms of protests and literary production and learn how to relate apparently disparate works to one another
3. Understand the relationship between protests and literary and cultural production
4. Detect the cultural assumptions underlying writing from a different time or society, and in the process become more aware of one’s own cultural assumptions
5. Engage with classmates in writing and in person
6. Conduct primary and secondary source research
7. Examine conventions of literary studies writing and mimic those conventions in writing
8. Think creatively within and beyond literary studies, making some connections between the literary work and one’s own life

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Required Books – Available at Student Stores:

- *The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Shorter Eighth Edition* (Norton, 2012)
- Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660* (University of Washington Press, 2014)
- Toni Morrison, *Sula* (Vintage, 2004)

Recommended Books (Full texts will be available in PDF form on Sakai):

- James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATION

Reading Log: 10% -- Throughout the course, you will be responsible for recording your reaction to at least one text per week in a reading log that you will turn in at the end of the semester. You can keep your log in a separate notebook/composition book or using the Sakai blog feature. Each weekly entry should be at least 1-2 pages. While the log is informal, it should demonstrate a thoughtful response to the course material.

Presentation: 10% -- Note: Presentations may be in pairs/groups depending on course enrollment.

Historical Document: Choose a text from the syllabus and find a primary document related to it (poem, pamphlet, news coverage, poster, song, etc.). Your goal is to analyze the document as you would any other text on the syllabus. In a 10-minute presentation, you will present your findings to the class. Your presentation should briefly contextualize the document. In other words, explain the who, what, where, when, why of the document and explain how it relates to the course. The rest of the presentation should be used to close read the document, paying attention to the significance of *how* the document is written/designed.

Critical Précis: Choose a text from the syllabus and find a recent work of literary criticism or literary theory related to the text. This may be a journal article that analyzes the text or a foundational theoretical essay that you can apply to the text. In a 10-minute presentation, you will summarize the article, focusing on the argument and evidence, and offer your assessment of the piece, emphasizing the utility of the argument to our course.

Close Reading: 10% -- You will choose a short passage from one of the course texts to write a 3-4 page close read using the skills you learning in this class. Your ultimate goal is to interpret the narrative in some way, not to summarize it. In other words, focus on the how of the text in order to explain the ways that the text produces meaning. Your reading should include a clear, argument and thesis statement. Since this assignment is designed to get you to think critically about a text, you may not consult outside sources.

Research Paper: 20% -- You will turn in a non-graded paper proposal and outline in preparation for this assignment.

Literary Analysis: Using literary studies journal articles as models, you will complete a 6-8 page research paper that relates to the content of the course. The paper must contain an argument that is supported by a range of primary and secondary sources.

Scholarly Introduction: Write a 6-8 page scholarly introduction to one of the course texts (or a related text with instructor approval) or a collection of texts. The introduction should be

supported by a range of primary and secondary sources. If you choose to introduce a collection of texts, your introduction should also include a rationale for your selections.

Final Exam: 20% -- The exam will be cumulative and contain short answer and essay questions.

Discussion Leader: 5% -- You will have the opportunity to lead the class in discussion on the day's readings. Discussion leaders are responsible for preparing discussion questions and maintaining class dialogue. *More detailed assignment description to follow.*

Participation and Attendance: 20%

Consistent, critically engaged participation is crucial for a successful and productive course. While this course will contain some short lectures, it is primarily a discussion-based course. For this model to be successful, each student must come to class prepared and willing to communicate with the class. Being prepared includes coming to class having completed the assigned reading. In addition, you will be expected to be prepared with (1) all relevant texts (hard copies or electronic), (2) questions about the texts or other course material, (3) at least one passage or talking point, and (4) a positive attitude. You cannot participate if you are not in class; therefore, attendance is required (see Attendance Policy under Course Policies).

Reading Quizzes: 5% -- Occasionally, class will begin with a short quiz about that day's reading. Anyone who arrives late will receive a zero on the quiz. If you miss a quiz for a documented reason, that zero will be dropped from your quiz average.

COURSE SCHEDULE

**Readings and assignments may be revised based on course progress and student interests.*

Date	Readings
UNIT 1: CHALLENGING INSTITUTIONS	
Mon 1/11	Topic: Introductions & Course Expectations
Wed 1/13	Topic: Foundation of Dissent Readings: John Winthrop – “A Model of Christian Charity” (1630) – <i>Norton</i> pp. 90-102 Thomas Paine – from <i>Common Sense</i> (1776) – <i>Norton</i> pp. 323-331 Thomas Jefferson – from <i>Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson</i> (1776, 1829) – <i>Norton</i> pp. 337-344
Fri 1/15	Topic: The Legacy of the <i>Declaration</i> Readings: “Memorial of the Cherokee Council, November 5, 1829” – <i>Norton</i> pp. 595-600 Frederick Douglass – “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” (1852) – <i>Norton</i> pp. 1002-1005 Abraham Lincoln – “Address Delivered at the Dedication of the Cemetery at Gettysburg, November 19, 1863” – <i>Norton</i> pp. 745-748 Martin Luther King Jr. – “I Have a Dream” (1963) – <i>Norton</i> pp. 2577-2582
Mon 1/18	No Class

Wed 1/20	Topic: Captivity and the “Peculiar Institution” Readings: Mary Rowlandson – from <i>A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration</i> (1682) – Norton pp. 126-143 Harriet Jacobs – from <i>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</i> (1861) – Norton pp. 818-826
Fri 1/22	Topic: Student-Lead Discussion Readings: Harriet Jacobs – from <i>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</i> (1861) – Norton pp. 826-839
Mon 1/25	Topic: Jim Crow and Institutional Racism Readings: Richard Wright – “Ethics of Jim Crow Living” (1938) – PDF on Sakai James Baldwin – “My Dungeon Shook” (1962) – PDF on Sakai
Wed 1/27	Topic: Conducting Library Reading
Fri 1/29	Topic: Japanese-American Incarceration Readings: Miné Okubo – <i>Citizen 13660</i> (1946)
Mon 2/1	Topic: Uplift through Education Reading: Booker T. Washington – from <i>Up from Slavery</i> – Norton pp. 1631-1641 W. E. B. Du Bois – from <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> (1903) – Norton pp. 1715-1731 Zitkala Sâ – “The School Days of an Indian Girl” (1900) - Norton pp. 1823-1825
Wed 2/3	Topic: Passing Readings: James Weldon Johnson – <i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> (1912) – PDF on Sakai (Ch I – X)
Fri 2/5	Topic: Student-Lead Discussion Readings: James Weldon Johnson – <i>The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> (1912) – PDF on Sakai (remainder)
Mon 2/8	Topic: Challenging Aesthetic Traditions Readings: Walt Whitman – from <i>Leaves of Grass</i> (1855) – Norton pp. 1005-1067 Emily Dickinson – selected poetry (1858-1884) – Norton pp. 1189-1214
Wed 2/10	Topic: Challenging Aesthetic Traditions: Modernism Readings: T. S. Eliot – <i>The Wasteland</i> (1922) – Norton pp. 2003-2006, 2009-2022
Fri 2/12	Paper 1 Draft Workshop

Mon 2/15	<p>Topic: Art as Protest: The New Negro/Harlem Renaissance</p> <p>Readings: W. E. B. Du Bois – “Criteria for Negro Art” (1926) and “Of the Coming of John” (1903) – PDF on Sakai Alain Locke – “Art or Propaganda” (1928) – PDF on Sakai</p> <p>Paper 1 due</p>
Wed 2/17	<p>Topic: Art as Protest: The New Negro/Harlem Renaissance</p> <p>Readings: Langston Hughes – selected poems (1921-1949) and “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” (1926) – <i>Norton</i> 2221-2229 and PDF on Sakai Richard Wright – “The Blueprint for Negro Writing” (1937) – PDF on Sakai</p>
Fri 2/19	<p>Topic: Student-Lead Discussion</p> <p>Readings: Richard Wright – “The Man Who Was Almost a Man” (1939) – <i>Norton</i> pp. 2244-2253</p>
UNIT 2: PROTEST AT HOME	
Mon 2/22	<p>Topic: Assimilation and Immigration</p> <p>Readings: Sun Sin Far (Edith Maud Eaton) – “Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian” (1909) – PDF on Sakai Maxine Hong Kingston – from <i>The Woman Warrior</i> (1976) – <i>Norton</i> pp. 2690-2699</p>
Wed 2/24	<p>Topic: Crossing Borders</p> <p>Readings: Gloria Anzuldúa – “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” (1999) – <i>Norton</i> pp. 2704-2713 Lê Thi Diem Thúy – “California Palms” (1998) – PDF on Sakai</p>
Fri 2/26	<p>Topic: Student-Lead Discussion</p>
Mon 2/29	<p>Topic: Gender on Trial</p> <p>Readings: Cotton Mather – from <i>The Wonders of the Invisible World</i> (1692, 1693) – <i>Norton</i> pp. 149-155 Benjamin Franklin – “The Speech of Miss Polly Baker” (1747) – <i>Norton</i> pp. 242-244 Margaret Fuller – from <i>The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men. Woman versus Women</i> (1843) – <i>Norton</i> pp. 749-760</p>
Wed 3/2	<p>Topic: Community of Women</p> <p>Readings: Susan Glaspell – <i>Trifles</i> (1916) – <i>Norton</i> pp. 1926-1936</p>
Fri 3/4	<p>Topic: Student-Lead Discussion</p>
Mon 3/7	<p>Topic: “The Madwoman in the Attic”</p>

	<p>Readings: Charlotte Perkins Gilman – “The Yellow Wall-Paper” (1892) – <i>Norton</i> pp. 1668-1681 Edgar Allan Poe – “Ligeia” (1838) – <i>Norton</i> pp. 683-687, 692-701 William Faulkner – “A Rose for Emily” (1931) – <i>Norton</i> pp. 2178-2188</p>
Wed 3/9	<p>Topic: More Mad Women</p> <p>Readings: Toni Morrison – <i>Sula</i> (1973) – pp. 1-85</p>
Fri 3/11	<p>Topic: Student-Lead Discussion</p> <p>Readings: Toni Morrison – <i>Sula</i> (1973) – pp. 86-174</p>
3/14- 3/18	Spring Break
UNIT 3: TAKING TO THE STREETS	
Mon 3/21	<p>Topic: Poverty and Reform</p> <p>Readings: Stephen Crane – <i>Maggie: A Girl of the Streets</i> (1893) – <i>Norton</i> pp. 1765-1768 and PDF on Sakai (Ch I-XI)</p>
Wed 3/23	<p>Topic: Student-Lead Discussion</p> <p>Readings: Stephen Crane – <i>Maggie: A Girl of the Streets</i> (1893) – PDF on Sakai (remainder)</p> <p>Paper 2 Proposal due</p>
Fri 3/25	No Class
Mon 3/28	<p>Topic: Working Conditions and Labor Protests</p> <p>Readings: Rebecca Harding Davis – “Life in the Iron-Mills” (1861) – <i>Norton</i> pp. 1219-1246 Jacob Riis – from <i>How the Other Half Lives</i> (1890) – PDF on Sakai</p>
Wed 3/30	<p>Topic: Making Poverty Visible</p> <p>Readings: Barbara Ehrenreich – from <i>Nicked and Dimed</i> (2001) – PDF on Sakai John Steinbeck – <i>The Harvest Gypsies</i> (1936) – PDF on Sakai (First article)</p>
Fri 4/1	<p>Topic: Student-Lead Discussion</p> <p>Readings: John Steinbeck – <i>The Harvest Gypsies</i> (1936) – PDF on Sakai (remainder)</p>
Mon 4/4	<p>Topic: Counter-Culture Revolution</p> <p>Readings: Allen Ginsberg – <i>Howl</i> (1956) – <i>Norton</i> pp. 2538-2548</p>

Wed 4/6	Topic: HIV/AIDS and Act-Up Readings: Stonewall Documents (1969-1970) – PDF on Sakai Walter Rico Burrell – “ <i>The Scarlet Letter, Revisited: A Very Different AIDS Diary</i> ” (1991) – PDF on Sakai
Fri 4/8	Topic: Student-Lead Discussion
Mon 4/11	Topic: Imprisonment Readings: John Brown – Prison Letters (1859) – PDF on Sakai Martin Luther King, Jr. – from <i>Letter from Birmingham Jail</i> (1963) – PDF on Sakai
Wed 4/13	Topic: Individual and Collective Dissent Readings: Ralph Ellison – from <i>Invisible Man</i> (1952) – PDF on Sakai
Fri 4/15	Topic: Student-Lead Discussion Paper 2 Outline due
Mon 4/18	Topic: Black Power and Black Arts Readings: Malcolm X – from “The Ballot or the Bullet” (1964) – PDF on Sakai Hoyt Fuller – “Towards a Black Aesthetic” (1968) – PDF on Sakai Amiri Baraka – selected poetry (1961-1971) – PDF on Sakai
Wed 4/20	Topic: Race Riots Readings: Spike Lee, Dir. – <i>Do the Right Thing</i> (1989) Anna Deavere Smith – from <i>Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992</i> – PDF on Sakai
Fri 4/22	Topic: Student-Lead Discussion
Mon 4/25	Paper 2 Draft Workshop
Wed 4/27	Topic: Final Review Paper 2 due
Fri 5/6	Final Exam at 12:00pm Reading Log due