

**ENGLISH 427-01: STUDIES IN SOUTHERN LITERATURE
COASTAL CAROLINA UNIVERSITY • FALL 2013**

Nowadays when a person lives somewhere, in a neighborhood, the place is not certified for him. More than likely he will live there sadly and the emptiness which is inside him will expand until it evacuates the entire neighborhood. But if he sees a movie which shows his very neighborhood, it becomes possible for him to live, for a time at least, as a person who is Somewhere and not Anywhere.

Walker Percy, The Moviegoer (1961)

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Course Instructional Objectives:

1. For students to develop critical thinking and writing skills in a collaborative intellectual environment;
2. For students to gain an overall understanding of some of the currents and countercurrents of Southern literature over the past century and a half by engaging with texts and genres germane to the region's literary history;
3. For students to explore the relation between these literary forms and contemporaneous intellectual, social, and political matters, including contested issues such as regional definition, class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality;
4. For students to expand their knowledge of Southern literature in its broader contexts by analyzing works in connection with theoretical arguments as well as with other cultural forms and artifacts, such as painting, photography, architecture, popular music, and cinema.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Articulate the characteristics (literary, historical, social, and cultural) of significant modes relevant to this span of Southern literary history;
2. Explain a work in relation to its historical contexts, illustrating how it reflects or challenges these;
3. Demonstrate, in writing and orally, understanding of important modes relevant to this span of Southern literary history through an individual presentation on an author/work as well as a documented research paper on a text or texts;
4. Demonstrate understanding of important modes relevant to this span of Southern literary history through successful completion of midterm and final examinations;
5. Use proper MLA documentation and format.

Required Texts:

Ron Rash, *Serena* (Ecco)

Daniel Wallace, *Big Fish* (Algonquin)

Natasha Trethewey, *Bellocq's Ophelia* (Graywolf)

Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (Vintage)

Recommended DVDs:

Gone with the Wind

A Streetcar Named Desire

The Night of the Hunter

Spirits of the Dead ("Toby Dammit")

Big Fish

Forrest Gump

Spiral of Fire

Pretty Baby

Bloody Homecoming
O Brother, Where Art Thou?
Serena
The Road

Course Overview/Specific Topic: “The Cinematic South”

This course will explore contested representations of “Southernness,” formulated within as well as outside the region, in a diversity of literary and cultural texts. The U. S. South has often been described as a place of cultural backwardness, religious fanaticism, economic destitution and class struggle, and gender as well as racial intolerance. In the diverse textualities under scrutiny, we will encounter a range of modes germane to Southern literature and culture, from the pastoral to the gothic and grotesque, and from the primitive to the “postsouthern” and even the transnational or global South. Part of our task will be judging to what degree these modes match up to the changing history of the South as it is in process of becoming increasingly “Americanized,” even globalized. The texts for the course respond to a history that encompasses an agricultural society based on chattel slavery, the upheavals of the Civil War and Reconstruction, the racial terrors of the “Jim Crow” South, the spread of industrial and consumer forms of capitalism as well as urban and suburban areas, the rise of the Civil Rights Movement and federally mandated desegregation, and the influx of mass media and pop culture. Mindful that there was/is not merely one South, but many Souths, we will examine the region’s sheer diversity: socioeconomic (e.g., yeoman farming, plantation economy, industrial mills), geographic/ecological (e.g., from the mountains of Appalachia to the South Carolina lowcountry, from the pine forests of Arkansas to the swamps of Florida, from the rural hills of southwest Virginia to the urban centers of Atlanta and New Orleans) and ethnic (e.g., Native American, Appalachian, Gullah). We will consider the South not in isolation, but in connection with other regions.

This course will explore a series of films—many of which are considered iconic—about the South and its purportedly oppositional role in the national narrative. We will investigate how Southern cultures and histories have been represented in films and the ways in which these depictions have altered over the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. We will also examine how the changing nature of the cinematic South speaks to national and transnational transformations. While the primary work of this seminar will be to interpret the South as reflected—and/or invented—onscreen, we will also read and discuss a number of the literature sources that directly influenced these cinematic representations, so matters of multimodal adaptation will also be crucial to our discussions. In addition, we will read and discuss secondary sources relevant to the particular film under analysis and/or its socio-historical contexts. To give further depth and breadth to our analysis, we will also consider our films in conjunction with other cultural forms and artifacts, such as antebellum and Civil War daguerreotypes and paintings, documentary film footage, and music (including jazz, folk, blues, country, hip hop, and alt rock).

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE:

*****NOTE:** *You will be required to watch the assigned films **on your own time** at some point **before** we begin discussing a given movie in class. Your “homework” for these classes will include viewing closely the assigned film outside of class. When possible, I will place copies of our films on reserve at the Circulation Desk in Kimbel Library, but you may well want to rent or purchase your own copy so that you can see this on your own schedule and in your own setting.*

***WEEK 1:**

T 8/20: COURSE INTRODUCTION
 R 8/22: AFTERMATHS: THE CULT OF THE LOST CAUSE
 Sidney Lanier, “The Dying Words of Stonewall Jackson” (1865)
 Andrew Hudgins, selected poems from *After the Lost War* (1988)

***WEEK 2:**

T 8/27: (POST)PLANTATION AIRS
 †George Cukor/Victor Fleming, *Gone with the Wind* (1939)

- R 8/29: Margaret Mitchell, from *Gone with the Wind* (1936)
 Alice Randall, from *The Wind Done Gone* (2001)
 Melvin B. Tolson, "Gone with the Wind Is More Dangerous Than Birth of a Nation" *Washington Tribune* (1940)

***WEEK 3:**

- T 9/3: **NEW PLACE OR NO PLACE?**
 †Elia Kazan, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951)
 R 9/5: Constantin Stanislavski, from *An Actor's Handbook: An Alphabetical Arrangement of Concise Statements on Aspects of Acting* (1924)
 Steve Vineberg, section on "Tennessee Williams" from *Method Actors: Three Generations of an American Acting Style* (1991)

***WEEK 4:**

- T 9/10: **SOUTHERN EXPRESSIONISM**
 †Charles Laughton, *The Night of the Hunter* (1955)
 Davis Grubb, from *The Night of the Hunter* (1953)
 R 9/12: *The Night of the Hunter*

***WEEK 5:**

- T 9/17: **THE AFTERLIVES OF EDGAR ALLAN POE POE POE POE POE**
 †Frederico Fellini, "Toby Dammit" from *Spirits of the Dead* (1968)
 Edgar Allan Poe, "Never Bet the Devil Your Head" (1841)
 R 9/19: Poe, "The Black Cat" (1843)
 Lesley Ginsberg, "Slavery and the Gothic Horror of Poe's 'The Black Cat'" in *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative* (1998)

***WEEK 6:**

- T 9/24: **MAGIC REALISM AND THE MYTHIC SOUTH**
 †Tim Burton, *Big Fish* (2003)
 Daniel Wallace, *Big Fish: A Novel of Mythic Proportions* (1998)
 R 9/26: Daniel Cross Turner, "The Magical Work of Fiction: An Interview with Daniel Wallace" *storySouth* (2009)

***WEEK 7:**

- T 10/1: **POSTSOUTHERN DYNAMICS: REGION AT WRIT'S END**
 †Robert Zemeckis, *Forrest Gump* (1994)
 Michael Kreyling, "Fee, Fie, Faux Faulkner" in *The Southern Review* (1993)
 R 10/3 *Forrest Gump*

***WEEK 8:**

- †T 10/8 **MIDTERM EXAM (25%)**
 R 10/10: **THE REEL/REAL SOUTH: SOUTHERN DOCUMENTARY**
 †LeAnne Howe, *Spiral of Fire* (2005)
 Eric Gary Anderson, "Rethinking Indigenous Southern Communities" *American Literature* (2006)

***WEEK 9:**

- T 10/15: **IMAGE/TEXT: FRAMING THE PAST**
 †Louis Malle, *Pretty Baby* (1978)
 Natasha Trethewey, *Bellocq's Ophelia* (2002)
 Images from *E. J. Bellocq: Storyville Portraits* (1970)
 *R 10/17: *Class visit/presentation on Bellocq's photography by art history expert, CCU Visual Arts Professor Dr. Elizabeth Howie
 Roland Barthes, from *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1980)
 Susan Sontag, from *Where the Stress Falls* (2001)

***WEEK 10:**

- T 10/22: **O FAULKNER, WHERE ART THOU?: BRANDING THE TRANSOUTH**
 †The Coen Brothers, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000)
- *R 10/25: *Class visit by Southern Studies scholar, Dr. Taylor Hagood (Associate Professor, Florida Atlantic University)
- *WEEK 11:**
- T 10/29: *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*
 *Class visit by Southern sociolinguistics expert and CCU English Professor, Dr. Daniel Hasty
- *W 10/30: *On-campus screenings of *Bloody Homecoming* (2013)
- R 10/31: **FRIGHT NIGHT: SPLATTER/HORROR SOUTH**
Bloody Homecoming
- *WEEK 12:**
- *T 11/5: *Class visit by CCU Theater Professor Steve Earnest, who stars in *Bloody Homecoming*
- R 11/7: **BLOOD MEMORY: REMEDIATING MACBETH**
 †Susanne Bier, *Serena* (2013)
 Ron Rash, *Serena* (2008)
- *WEEK 13:**
- T 11/12: *Serena*
 Elizabeth Rivlin, “The Ghost of Shakespeare in Ron Rash’s *Serena*” (2013)
- R 11/14: *Serena*
- *WEEK 14:**
- T 11/19: **LIVING HELL: THE END(LESSNESS) OF THE ROAD**
 †John Hillcoat, *The Road* (2009)
 Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (2006)
 George Monbiot, “Civilisation Ends with a Shutdown of Human Concern: Are We There Already?” *The Guardian* (2007)
- R 11/21: *The Road*
- T 11/26: **THANKSGIVING BREAK**
- R 11/28: **THANKSGIVING BREAK**
- *WEEK 15:**
- †T 12/3: **OPEN FORUM: THE CINEMATIC SOUTH AND POPULAR CULTURE**
 Choose a cinematic/literary/historical/pop culture item associated with Southern film and/or the culture or history of the South more broadly (e.g., film clip, advertisement, TV show, jazz, country, R.E.M., Gulf Coast, Blue Ridge, blues, Red States, rednecks, Borat, monument, memorial, GWTW action figure, brochure, Southern rock, NHL hockey, pick-up truck, painting, flag, Robert E. Lee’s horse’s grave, fiction, photograph, billboard, Robert Johnson, comic book, sharecroppers, BBQ, The Gourds, cowboy boots, Civil War re-enactor, Civil Rights marker, poem, quilt, South of the Border, college football, Dirty South, website, t-shirt) and help us understand its significance.
FORMAL RESEARCH ESSAY (9-10 pages; 25%)
- †**Official Exam Period: FINAL EXAM (25%)**