

**ENGLISH 599: GRADUATE INDEPENDENT STUDY
COASTAL CAROLINA UNIVERSITY • SPRING 2012**

Professor: Dr. Daniel Cross Turner

Office: EHFA 222

Office Hours: TR 10:20-10:40 a.m.; 12:10-1:30 p.m.; 3:00-4:20 p.m.; *and by appointment*

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SOUTHERN ACCENTS

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

ENGLISH 599 is an independent study in which the student will analyze an array of literary texts about the American South. The student will independently study how regional interests have shaped writing in/on the South. In addition, the student will produce a formal research essay (9-10 pages) that analyzes important questions of regional identity and distinctiveness as reflected in the literary texts under study.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

The instructional goals for this course include the following:

1. For the student 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.
2. For the student to explore the relation between these literary forms and contemporaneous intellectual, social, and political matters, including contested issues such as regional definition, nationalism, class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality.
3. For the student to expand her 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.
4. For the student to engage with an array of textual forms and styles.
5. For the student to improve her critical thinking and analytical skills.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

In order to successfully complete the course the student must:

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, influences, or challenges these.
3. Demonstrate, in writing and orally, understanding of important modes relevant to this span of Southern literary history through a documented research paper on a text or texts.
4. Read the work of published writers with an enhanced appreciation of artistic craft.
5. Communicate effectively and demonstrate an ability to comprehend and analyze written language through clear expression.
6. Make effective and appropriate authorial choices and be able to defend writing choices.
7. Use proper MLA documentation and format.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

The student is required to read and analyze multiple texts; to attend all scheduled meetings with the instructor and actively engage in discussion of the assigned texts; and to produce and deliver a formal research essay by the end of the semester.

The course grade will be determined as follows:

- **Research Essay (50%):** The student will write one formal research essay (9-10 pages) for this course. For this paper, the student will provide a clear and coherent analysis of one or more of the assigned texts on our syllabus. The essay should be cogently argued, mechanically proficient, and amply supported with detailed close readings that set forth the student's interpretation of evidence from the text. The essay should also make use of outside research, incorporating into its main argument a minimum of four legitimate scholarly sources (e.g., scholarly articles, book chapters, books, scholarly interviews).
- **Short Response Papers (25%):** Before each scheduled meeting, the student will turn in a short response paper (1-2 pages) on the texts assigned for that discussion session. No research is required for the response papers.

- **Class Participation/Informal Writing Assignments (25%):** Vigorous and fruitful contributions during discussion sessions are required and graded. The student will participate actively and productively in all discussion sessions. Doing so will develop oral communication skills in addition to writing skills.

GRADING SYSTEM (as outlined in the University Catalog):

Enrollment in a course obligates the student not only for prompt completion of all work assigned but also for punctual and regular attendance and for participation in whatever class discussion may occur. It is the student's responsibility to stay informed concerning all assignments made. Absences, whether excused or unexcused, do not absolve the student from this responsibility.

A (100-90), B+ (89-87) and B (86-80), C+ (79-77) and C (76-70), D+ (69-67) and D (66-60), and F (59-0) carry the traditional academic connotations of excellent, good, average, poor, and failing performance, respectively.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

The student is required to attend every discussion session. If the student collects **more than one unexcused absence**, she will be penalized by having her semester grade lowered by **one letter grade** for each additional absence (e.g., an A will be lowered to a B; a B will be lowered to a C; and so on). In addition, this instructor will impose a penalty, including assigning the grade of **F**, for **unexcused absences in excess of 25%** of the regularly scheduled discussion sessions. Absences and tardiness do not in any way absolve the student from the responsibility of completing all assigned work promptly. Excuses like work, family, and scheduled doctor's appointments will be declined. The only acceptable "excused absences" are noted in the CCU Catalog. These include documented cases of:

- incapacitating illness
- official representation of the University (excuses for official representation of the University must be obtained from the official supervising the activity)
- death of a close relative
- religious holidays

LATE WORK POLICY:

Unexcused late work will be penalized **one letter grade per day** including weekends and breaks.

Extensions for assignments are rarely given. Only in extreme cases (serious illness, death in the immediate family) will a student be permitted to turn in a late assignment without penalty. Be sure to notify me in advance if you feel you have a legitimate reason for missing a due date.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY:

I enforce a zero tolerance policy with respect to plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty.

Plagiarism cases may result in an "F" for the course. Always acknowledge the source for any idea that is not your own, including of course any online sources. An essential part of a liberal arts curriculum is learning to interpret the world in your own terms; plagiarizing violates this deep responsibility to express your own ideas in your own language.

FINAL DISCLAIMER:

The professor claims the right to make slight adjustments to this syllabus when necessary. Listed above are the general terms of our contract for this semester. Exceptions to the rules of the course are rarely given, so see me in advance if you feel you have legitimate extenuating circumstances. If you ever have any questions or concerns about the course or these policies during the semester, please feel free to get in touch with me in person, by phone, or by email. *If you are not available to meet during my office hours, we'll find a mutually agreeable meeting time.*

TOPIC OVERVIEW:

This independent study 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 literature 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 forms match up to the changing 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. In addition to more traditional literary genres (fiction, poetry, and drama), we will analyze some iconic films about the South, including Victor Fleming's *Gone with the Wind*, John Boorman's *Deliverance*, and the Coen brothers' *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* We will discuss these literary and cinematic texts 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).

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Books:

- William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (Vintage)
- Andrew Hudgins, *After the Lost War* (Mariner)
- Natasha Trethewey, *Native Guard* (Mariner)
- Richard Wright, *Uncle Tom's Children* (Perennial)
- Flannery O'Connor, *A Good Man Is Hard To Find and Other Stories* (Harvest)
- Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside* (University of Illinois Press)
- Elizabeth Allston Pringle, *A Women Rice Planter* (University of South Carolina Press)
- Julia Peterkin, *Black April* (University of Georgia Press)
- John Bennett, *Doctor to the Dead* (University of South Carolina Press)
- Genevieve Wilcox Chandler (collector), *Coming Through: Voices of a South Carolina Gullah Community from WPA Oral Histories* (University of South Carolina Press)
- Rebecca T. Godwin, *Keeper of the House* (St. Martin's)
- Kathryn Stockett, *The Help* (Putnam)

DVDs:

- Victor Fleming (director), *Gone with the Wind*
- John Boorman (director), *Deliverance*
- The Coen Brothers (directors), *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE:

Week 1: Southern Dialect(ics)

- Edgar Allan Poe, "The Gold-Bug" (1843).
- George Washington Harris, *Sut Lovingood: Yarns Spun by a "Nat'ral Born Durn'd Fool." Warped and Woved for Public Wear* (1867).
- Joel Chandler Harris, *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* (1880).
- Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884).
- Charles W. Chesnutt, "The Goophered Grapevine" (1887).

Week 2: The Southern Renaissance

- H. L. Mencken, "The Sahara of the Bozart" (1920).
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Ice Palace" (1920).
- Donald Davidson, "Sequel of Appomattox" (1938).
- Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (1935).
- John Ford (director), *Judge Priest* (1934)

Week 3: "The Worst American State"

- William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929).
- William Faulkner, "Pantaloons in Black" from *Go Down, Moses* (1942).
- Richard Wright, *Uncle Tom's Children* (1936).
- Eudora Welty, "Petrified Man" from *A Curtain of Green* (1941).
- Robert Johnson, selected blues lyrics (1936).

Week 4: Unlosing the War

- Victor Fleming (director), *Gone with the Wind* (1939).
- Margaret Mitchell, from *Gone with the Wind* (1936).
- Alice Randall, from *The Wind Done Gone* (2001).
- Andrew Hudgins, *After the Lost War* (1988).
- Natasha Trethewey, *Native Guard* (2006).

Week 5: The "Sick" South

- Erskine Caldwell, from *Kneel to the Rising Sun* (1935).
- Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White, from *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937).
- Flannery O'Connor, from *A Good Man Is Hard to Find and Other Stories* (1955).

Week 6: Gone Primitive

- Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947).
- John Boorman (director), *Deliverance* (1972).
- James Dickey, from *Deliverance* (1970) and selected poems.

Week 7: Waxing Poetic and Historic

- Charles Wright, selected poems: “Lonesome Pine Special” (1984), “Tennessee Line” (1995), “Chickamauga” (1995), “All Landscape Is Abstract, and Tends to Repeat Itself” (1997), “Polaroids” (2003), “Nostalgia” (2003), and “College Days” (2006).
<http://www.vqronline.org/articles/1997/winter/wright-all-landscape/>
http://www.storysouth.com/summer2005/wright_poems.html
http://storysouth.com/summer2005/wright_interview.html
- Dan Albergotti, *The Boatloads* (2008).
- Yusef Komunyakaa, selected poems: “Family Tree” (1984), “The Beast & the Burden” (1986), “Landscape for the Disappeared” (1986), “Hanoi Hannah” (1988), “Tu Do Street” (1988), “Facing It” (1988), “Mismatched Shoes” (1992), “The Goddess of Quotas Laments” (2000), and “Monticello” (2004).
- Derek Walcott, selected poems: “Origins” (1964), “Air” (1969), “Ruins of a Great House” (1962), “Verandah” (1965), “The Sea Is History” (1979), “The Arkansas Testament” (1987), and “Book I” from *Omeros* (1990).
- Natasha Trethewey, *Native Guard* (2006).

Week 8: PoSo South

- Jason Ockert, *Rabbit Punches* (2006).
- The Coen Brothers (directors), *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000).
- LeAnne Howe, *Spiral of Fire* (2006).
- The Rolling Stones, selected country/blues lyrics.
- Keith Richards, from *Life* (2010).

Week 10: Lowcountry Accents I

- Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (1984).
- John Bennett, *Doctor to the Dead: Grotesque Legends and Folk Tales of Old Charleston* (1946).
- Elizabeth Allston Pringle [Patience Pennington], *A Women Rice Planter* (1913).

Week 11: Lowcountry Accents II

- Julia Peterkin, *Black April* (1927).
- Genevieve Wilcox Chandler (collector), *Coming Through: Voices of a South Carolina Gullah Community from WPA Oral Histories* (2008).

Week 12: Contemporary Work

- Rebecca T. Godwin, *Keeper of the House* (1995).
- Kathryn Stockett, *The Help* (2009).