

**ENGLISH 427: STUDIES IN SOUTHERN LITERATURE  
COASTAL CAROLINA UNIVERSITY • SPRING 2011**

**Professor:** Dr. Daniel Cross Turner

**Office:** EHFA

**Office Hours:** TR 9:00-10:40 a.m., 12:10-1:30 p.m., 4:30-5:30 p.m., and *by appointment*

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**Required Texts:**

*The Literature of the American South* (Norton)

Flannery O'Connor, *A Good Man Is Hard to Find and Other Stories* (Harvest)

James Dickey, *Deliverance* (Delta)

Josephine Humphries, *Nowhere Else on Earth* (Penguin)

**Recommended DVDs:**

D.W. Griffith (director), *The Birth of a Nation* (1915)

Victor Fleming (director), *Gone with the Wind* (1939)

The Coen Brothers (directors), *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000)

**Course Description:**

English 427 is a critical study of the Twentieth-Century Southern literary tradition. The course examines regional interests shaping the emergence of a Southern literature and the distinctive characteristics of the literature, focusing especially on the writings of William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, Tennessee Williams, Robert Penn Warren, and Walker Percy.

**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.

**Grading Procedures:**

Your course grade will be determined as follows:

**Individual Presentation/Short Essay (15%):** Each student will sign up to do an individual presentation (10 minutes maximum) based on a particular author/work we are reading. Your presentation should detail relevant biographical and historical background on the author/text under study and should help establish the parameters of our discussion for that class period. You may elucidate critical perspectives on your chosen author/work as well as present trenchant close readings of particular passages. On the day you are scheduled to present on your topic, you will be required to turn in a typed, formal account of your presentation (3 pages).

**Midterm Exam (25%):** There will be an in-class midterm exam that will enable you to demonstrate your grasp of the course content to the midpoint of the semester. The exam will test your knowledge of specific authors and texts on the first half of our syllabus as well as your general understanding of literary modes and historical contexts during the periods covered.

**Research Essay (25%):** You will write one formal research essay (9-10 pages) for this course. For this paper, you should provide a clear and coherent analysis of one or more of the assigned texts on our syllabus. Again, your analysis should be cogently argued, mechanically proficient, and amply supported with detailed close readings that set forth your interpretation of evidence from the text, but it should also make use of outside research. Your final essay should contain a minimum of three legitimate scholarly sources (e.g., scholarly articles, book chapter, books) that you incorporate into your own argument about the work under study. You do not necessarily have to agree with your secondary sources; instead, you can critique their arguments in order to lend your interpretation more validity. To make sure you are headed in a productive direction before the paper is due, I will ask that you turn in a one-page prospectus outlining your intended topic for your research essay.

**Final Exam (25%):** During the scheduled final examination period, you will have an exam on the second half of our course assignments. The format will be essentially the same as the midterm, though the final exam may include an additional comprehensive essay question that asks you to connect aspects of the second half of the course with the first.

**Class Participation/Quizzes/Informal Writing Assignments (10%):** Vigorous and fruitful contribution to in-class discussion is not only requested, it is required...and graded. I expect you to participate actively and productively in class discussions. You should use this course to develop your oral communication skills in addition to your writing skills. Reading quizzes may be given at any time to gauge your level of preparation and your comprehension of the assigned texts. I will also give you informal writing assignments (sometimes during class, other times for homework) that will be recorded as part of your participation grade.

***Attendance Policy:***

I expect you to attend every class meeting. Any student who misses more than 25% of the total class meetings for any reason (according to the *College Catalog*) will receive an F on the course. Exceptions are outlined in the *Catalog*. **For a TR class, that means that more than 7 absences will result in an "F" for the course.** Students should keep a record of their absences and should not expect to be reminded by the instructor that they have missed an excessive number of classes. If you must be absent from class, you are responsible for finding out what you missed and fulfilling any assignments due. Find a reliable classmate and ask to borrow his or her notes for the missed day.

***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 you 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 Dishonesty 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.*

***Course Overview:***

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 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 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. In addition to fiction, poetry, and drama, we will also analyze some iconic films about the South, including D. W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation*, Victor Fleming’s *Gone with the Wind*, 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).

**\*\*\*You will have the chance to meet Josephine Humphreys and Natasha Trethewey when they visit campus during February for the Conference in Honor of Charles Joyner.**

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**Assignment Schedule:**

- R 1/13:           **Literatures of Slavery and the Plantation**  
 John Pendleton Kennedy, *Swallow Barn; or, A Sojourn in the Old Dominion* (1832)  
 Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845)  
 Edgar Allan Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839), “The Gold-Bug” (1843), “The Black Cat” (1843), and “The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether” (1845)
- R 1/20:           **Unlosing the War: The Ideology of the Lost Cause**  
 D. W. Griffith, *Birth of a Nation* (1915)  
 Henry Timrod, selected poems  
 Sidney Lanier, selected poems  
 Andrew Hudgins, selected poems  
 Natasha Trethewey, selected poems
- R 11/27:         **Culture Wars: The Vanderbilt Fugitives and After**  
 H. L. Mencken, “The Sahara of the Bozart” (1920)  
 Allen Tate, selected poems  
 Donald Davidson, selected poems  
 F. Scott Fitzgerald, “The Ice Palace” (1920) and “The Jelly-Bean” (1920)
- R 2/3:           **Representing “The Worst American State”**  
 Richard Wright, “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow” (1937)  
 William Faulkner, “An Odor of Verbena” (1938)  
 Eudora Welty, “A Curtain of Green” (1941)  
 Robert Johnson, selected blues lyrics (1936)  
 Bob Dylan, “Mississippi” (2001)

- R 2/10:           **Reconstructing Reconstruction**  
 Victor Fleming (director), *Gone with the Wind* (1939)  
 Margaret Mitchell, excerpts from *Gone with the Wind* (1936)  
 Alice Randall, excerpts from *The Wind Done Gone* (2001)
- R 2/17:           **\*\*\*Midterm Exam (25%)**  
 \*\*\**Conference in Honor of Charles Joyner*
- R 2/24:           **The Art of the Grotesque and the "Sick" South**  
 Erskine Caldwell, selected stories from *Kneel to the Rising Sun* (1935)  
 Excerpts from Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White, *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937)  
 Flannery O'Connor, *A Good Man Is Hard to Find and Other Stories* (1955)
- R 3/3:             **New South or No South?**  
 Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947)
- R 3/10:           **Primitive Cool? Southern Primitivism**  
 James Dickey, *Deliverance* (1970)  
 Robert Penn Warren, selected poems  
 Allison Adele Hedge-Coke, selected poems  
 Jason Ockert, selected fiction
- R 3/17:           **Spring Break**
- R 3/24:           **O Faulkner, Where Art Thou?**  
 The Coen Brothers (directors), *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (2000)  
 \*\*\***Prospectus due**
- R 3/31:           **Transouthernisms: Southern/Global Poetries**  
 A. R. Ammons, selected poems  
 Charles Wright, selected poems  
 Dan Albergotti, selected poems  
 Brenda Marie Osbey, selected poems  
 Derek Walcott, selected poems  
 Yusef Komunyakaa, selected poems
- R 4/7:             **Documenting The Real/Reel South**  
 LeAnne Howe, *Spiral of Fire* (2006)  
**Southern Popular Culture**
- R 4/14:           **Love and War**  
 Josephine Humphries, *Nowhere Else on Earth* (2000)
- R 4/21:           **Songs of the South**  
 Louis Armstrong, Leadbelly, Hank Williams, Elvis, Johnny Cash, the Rolling Stones,  
 Dolly Parton, Lucida Williams, Southern hip hop/Dirty South rap, the Athens scene, etc.  
 \*\*\***Formal Research Essay (25%)**
- Official Exam Period:    \*\*\***Final Exam (25%)**