

**English 2239-01  
Literature of the American South  
Spring, 2011**

**Dr. Ed Piacentino  
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**Office: 210 Norcross**

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**Office Hours: 9-10:15 MWF; 12:30-2 TTh;**

**Place: Norton 203**

**And by appointment**

**Time: 8-8:50 MWF**

**Phone:**

**E-mail:**

**Meeting**

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**Description:** Readings in the literature of the southern United States from colonization to the present, focusing on the historical and cultural contexts that shape the literary contours of the southern region. Some attention will be given to recent southern literature in a global context. Prerequisite: ENG. 1102 or 1103. 4 credit hours.

**4<sup>th</sup> Hour:** The course will meet 75 minutes two times per week. For the fourth hour, beginning in week 2 and concluding in week 13, you will complete a 10 short (300-400 word) writing assignment via Discussion Board on the Blackboard Intranet.

**Some Thematic Strands**

- The South before the South
- The formation of social structures and classes and a system of values in the South
- The relationship of individuals to the structures in society
- Race relations in the Old and New South
- The clash of the individual and the southern community
- The relationship between the southern writer and the community
- Changing perspectives in the portrayal of race, gender, and class
- The role of family
- Perspectives on the environment
- The concern with power and authority
- The emergence of Sunbelt and its concomitant effects on southern society and culture
- The decline in traditional values, the growth of urbanization and commercialization, new migration patterns, globalization, the destabilization and uncertainty associated with the postmodern South
- The South and the world community: global circuits and global reach

**Texts:**

William L. Andrews. et al, eds. The Literature of the American South

Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*  
Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Are Watching God*  
William Dodd White, *Lambs of Men*  
Shay Youngblood, *Big Mama Stories*  
Various e-texts accessible via Blackboard for this course

### **Goals and Objectives.**

**Goal 1.** The student should be familiar with the principal contributions of the writers studied to the development of the southern tradition in American literature.

**Objective 1.1** The student will orally discuss and write about the contributions of individual writers.

**Goal 2.** The student should be familiar with the major literary, historical, sociological, and cultural/intellectual backgrounds for each of the major periods of southern literature.

**Objective 2.1** The student will apply these backgrounds to the context of the works studied by including relevant information in essay assignments where such information will be appropriate.

**Goal 3.** The student should understand key literary modes, traditions, and themes common to the canon of southern writing.

**Objective 3.1** The student will complete all of the assigned readings and read all the Power Point introductions, author headnotes, period introductions, and other enhancements for this course.

**Objective 3.2** The student will write essays on various topics requiring an understanding of key literary modes, traditions, and themes commonly found in southern writing.

**Goal 4.** The student should become familiar with the changing relationship between the southern writer and the community.

**Objective 4.1** The student will read the introductory sections in the anthology to gain an understanding of the relationship between the southern writer and the southern community.

**Objective 4.2** The student will respond orally and in writing to questions and/or topics requiring knowledge about the relationship between the southern writer and the southern community.

**Goal 5.** The student should know the major stages in the evolution of the portrayal of African Americans in southern literature and be able to describe some of the factors of that prompted change in the depiction of race relations.

**Objective 5.1** The student will complete all the assigned readings treating the subject matter of race relations.

**Objective 5.2** The student will be able to discuss orally and write essays about the portrayal of African Americans in southern literature.

**Goal 6.** The student should be familiar with issues pertaining to gender, particularly relating to the portrayal of women in southern literature, and how

southern women writers perceive experience somewhat differently from their male counterparts.

**Goal 7.** The student should improve her/his writing skills, applying the principles of literary analysis.

**Objective 7.1** The student will analyze in essay format selected assigned literary texts by southern American writers read in the course, using several theoretical approaches or methodologies

### **Requirements and Final Grade Determination**

Class participation and Discussion Board Writings 25%  
Midterm Exam 25%  
Research Paper 25%  
Final Exam 25%

**The plus/minus grading system will be used to determine the final course grade. The final exam will consist of two parts: take-home essay questions and an in-class short response section.**

#### **Grading Scale.**

#### **Numerical Equivalents**

A: 90-100	A+ 98	C+ 78
B: 80-89	A 95	C 75
C: 70-79	A- 91	C- 71
D: 60-69	B+ 88	D+ 68
F: 59 and below	B 85	D 65
	B- 81	D- 61
		F 50 or a number

designated by the

instructor

**Attendance.** Good academic practice requires diligent class attendance and you are expected to attend all classes, since active class participation is encouraged. However, **5 cuts** will be allowed to accommodate illnesses and other emergencies. Moreover, you are expected to come to class prepared to participate actively in discussion, having read and thought about the assigned texts ahead of time. Power Points with reading prompts will be a regular feature of the course and will be posted on Blackboard (Content link); they should be read before class to get information on the backgrounds and cultural and socio-historical contexts. Important ideas and insights, which likely will be helpful to use in preparation for exams and the out-of-class essay assignments, will be explored.

**Discussion Boards.** As a means for generating dialogue in the form of reflections and reactions to assigned readings as a basis for class participation, and for creating possible ideas for the insight papers, we will use the Discussion Board tool of Blackboard. For a posting to be eligible for the maximum credit,

you will need to introduce a new point or idea and use at least one authoritative enhancement (reference to a relevant scholarly article, book, website) in your response. Over the course the semester, 10 prompts will be assigned with specific due dates for postings; and each prompt will be worth a possible of 10 points. Total points for the Discussion Board segment are 100. . Each discussion board response, which will be worth 10 possible points, will be evaluated according to the following criteria: **9–10**: Response reflects original and perceptive thinking, includes selected relevant support from texts to back up claims, exhibits clarity of expression, and includes some relevant enhancements from reliable Internet sources; **7–8** will be assigned to a response that shows a promising attempt at critical and/or creative thinking, some development of ideas, and at least one significant enhancement; **5–6** will be assigned to a response that is average, and although it may introduce some interesting ideas, it does not develop them specifically, clearly, and persuasively; **4 and below** will be assigned to a response that is unsatisfactory in virtually every respect and that suggests from the mediocrity of the response that the student has not read the text(s) and consequently has been unable to fulfill the expectations of the prompt. **0** for any response not posted by the weekly deadline **NO CREDIT WILL BE AWARDED FOR LATE POSTINGS.**

**Research Paper.** One research paper, 6 to 8 double-spaced typed pages, 11 or 12 point font, is required. Though from time to time, topics will be suggested in class, you are encouraged to create your own topic. All topics should be text based, meaning that the topic you generate should be thesis oriented and the possible argument you conceptualize should be derived from a close reading and gathering of evidence from at least one primary text assigned for this course. You can use two texts, but no more. Research from secondary sources (scholarly books, journal articles, authoritative web resources) is required from a minimum **of three (3) relevant secondary sources.** Concerning documentation, you must use the M L A Guidelines (7<sup>th</sup> edition of the MLA Handbook for Research Papers); a link to these guidelines is available on the HPU Libraries Webpage. A proposal, which will be explained in class, will be due on the second class meeting after the spring break, and the date for submission of the final draft of this paper is on the assignment schedule of this syllabus. **LATE PAPERS WILL BE PENALIZED A LETTER GRADE PER DAY.**

**Cell Phone and Computer Etiquette.** Cell phones should be turned and no text messaging is allowed during this class. Also, if you bring a lap top computer to class, surfing the web, checking your e-mail, accessing your Facebook or Twitter account, texting, etc. are absolutely prohibited.

**ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE** (You should also read individual author headnotes, section introductions to the various periods of southern literature, and Power Points (including the reading prompts) prior to reading the assigned texts)

W Jan. 12 Introduction to the course

F Jan, 14 **The South Before the South: Stories of Native Americans:** “The Creation of the Earth (1138); “The Daughter of the Sun” (1140); “How Rabbit Filed Deer’s Teeth” (1152); **Diaries:** Byrd, from The History of the Dividing Line (31)

M Jan. 17 Dr. Martin Luther King Holiday—no class

W Jan. 19 **The South Before the South.** Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, (Queries XIV, XVIII, XIX; 46, 52, 53); Bannecker, “Letter from Benjamin Bannecker to the Secretary of State” (55)

F Jan. 21 **The South Before the South.** Lawson, excerpts from A New Voyage to Carolina (B/b); Cook, from “The Sot–Weed Factor” (21)

M Jan. 24 **The Old South: Tradition, Community, Classism, Race.** “Beginnings to 1880” (6–13); Kennedy, from Swallow Barn (60) and Chaps.XVII, XIX (B/b); excerpts from Simms, The Yemassee , Vol I: Chaps VI, VIII; Vol. II: XXIII, XXV, XXVI (B/b)

#### **Assignment Schedule cont.**

W Jan. 26 **African American Perspectives of the Old South.** Simms, “The Lazy Crow: A Story of the Cornfield” (70; pay close attention to the African American cultural beliefs and practices); Jacobs, from Incidents in the Life of Slave Girl (125)

F Jan. 28 **African American and White Perspectives of the Old South.** J. C. Harris, “Free Joe and the Rest of the World” (291); “Where’s Duncan” (B/b)

M Jan. 31 **African American and White Perspectives of the Old South.** Harris, “Blue Dave” (B/b)  
Twain “A True Story” (257)

W Feb. 2 **White Patrician Perspectives of and attitudes toward African Americans.** Mary Chesnut’s Civil War (222); Gray, The Confessions of Nat Turner (B/b)

F Feb. 4 **The Old South from the Perspective of a Former Slave: Charles W. Chesnutt.** Chesnutt, “The Goophered Grapevine” (337); “The Wife of His Youth”(B/b)

M Feb.7 and W Feb. 9 **The Humor of the Old Southwest:** Hooper, “The Captain Attends a Camp–meeting” (161); Jones, “Cousin Sally Dilliard (B/b), Smith “A Consolate Widow” (B/b); Lewis, “The Struggle for Life” (B/b);Thorpe, “The Big Bear of Arkansas”; Harris, “Parson John Bullen’s Lizards” (B/b); Twain, “Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog” (B/b)

F Feb. 11 **The New South: Changing Perspectives about Southern Race Relations.** “The New South 1880–1940” (247–49); Page, “Marse Chan” (310); Chopin, “Desiree’s Baby” (301); Bonner, “The Gentlemen of Sarsar” (B/b)

M Feb. 14 **The New South: Regionalism and Beyond: The Precursors of the Southern Literary Renaissance.** “The New South 1880–1940” 249–53); Cable, “Belles Demoiselles Plantation” (277); Twain, from *Life on the Mississippi* (260–70); Glasgow, “Jordan’s End” (357)

W Feb. 16 and F Feb. 18 Chopin, *The Awakening*

M Feb. 21 **Midterm Exam (in part take home and the rest in class)**

W Feb. 23 . **The Southern Literary Renaissance: Critical Perspectives of the Region.** Mencken, “The Sahara of the Bozart” (369); **The Southern Agrarians.** “Introduction” to *I’ll Take My Stand* (391); Toomer, from *Cane*: “Becky” (427)

F Feb. 25 and M Feb. 28 **The Southern Literary Renaissance: Zora Neale Hurston** *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

W Mar. 2 **Cross Racial Understanding: “the common humanity that is in us all.”**

Wright, “Long Black Song” (556); Spencer, “Sharon” (802); Kenan, “The Foundations of the Earth” (1081)

### **Assignment Schedule cont.**

F Mar. 4 **The Changing South: Tradition and Identity Reevaluated.** Faulkner, “Dry September” (439) and “An Odor of Verbena” (447)

### **S P R I N G B R E A K**

M Mar. 14 **The Changing South: Tradition and Identity Reevaluated.** Faulkner cont.; Smith, from *Killers of the Dream* (469) and King, “I Have a Dream” (1134)

W Mar. 16 **The Changing South: Tradition and Identity Reevaluated.** Brown, “Strong Men” (517); “Remembering Nat Turner” (520); Wright, “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow” (548); Walker, “Everyday Use” (1018)

F Mar. 18 **The Fugitive Poets.** Ransom, “Bells for John Whiteside’s Daughter” (399); “Old Mansion” (400); “Janet Waking” (404); “Antique Harvesters” (398)

M Mar. 21 **The Fugitive Poets cont.** Tate, “Ode to the Confederate Dead” (478)

W Mar. 23 **Modern Southern Fiction.** Caldwell, “Kneel to the Rising Sun (B/b); Warren, “Blackberry Winter” (530)

F Mar. 25 **Modern Southern Fiction.** Gordon, “All Lovers Love the Spring” (432); Wolfe, from Look Homeward Angel (501)

M Mar. 28 **The Changing Southern Imaginary: New Landscapes in the Contemporary South.** “The Contemporary South: 1940–Present” (583–93) Welty, “A Curtain of Green” (619); Percy from The Last Gentleman (731) (583–93).

W Mar. 30 **The Changing Southern Imaginary.** Haley from Roots (783); O’Connor, “Revelation” (818)

F Apr. 1 and M Apr. 4 **The Changing Southern Imaginary.** Williams, A Streetcar Named Desire (631)

W Apr. 6 **The Changing South: Reconfiguring: Family, Race, Class, Gender, Marriage, Same Sex Orientation, etc.** Gaines, “The Sky Is Gray” (887); Osbey, “Ceremony for Minneconjoux” (1074)

F Apr. 8 **The Changing South: Reconfiguring: Family, Race, Class, Gender, Marriage, Same Sex Orientation, etc.** Sanchez, “for unborn malcolms” (939); “we a baddDDD people” (940); “elegy” (942); Giovanni, “The True Import of Present Dialogue, Black vs. Negro” (978)

M Apr. 11 and F Apr. 15 **The Appalachian South.** White, Lambs of Men

W Apr. 13 **Honors Day—no classes**

### **Assignment Schedule cont.**

M Apr. 18 **The Changing South.** Shine, Contribution (859); Angelou, from I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (853–58) **Research Essay is due by class time. Be sure to submit your essay to me as an attachment via e-mail. Be sure to select the option for a delivery receipt.**

W Apr. 20 **The Changing South.** Marshall, excerpts from Praisesong for the Widow (B/b or handout;(958); Allison, from Trash (1041–52)

F Apr. 22 Youngblood, Big Mama Stories

M Apr. 25 **Easter Monday—no class**

W Apr. 27 Big Mama Stories cont.

**Final Exam is Tuesday, May 3, 8:30–11:30 a.m.**

