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English 461: Special Topics in Southern Literature
THE SOUTHERN CITY IN AMERICAN LITERATURE
MW 1:00 – 2:15 (January 23 – May 10)

Though Huck Finn “light[s] out to the territory” at the end of Twain’s account of his travels, many heroes and anti-heroes have found their (mis)fortunes in the American city. This class considers their vastly different fates in conversation with the simultaneous risks and pleasures of urban space. Critical and theoretical readings from the class engage with the long history of anti-urbanism in the United States, which extends from Thomas Jefferson’s sense that “the mobs of great cities add just so much to support of pure government as sores do to the strength of the human body” to contemporary political discourse’s investment in “small-town values” as an index of American character. The course engages with critical readings on the nature of cities, in order to consider definitional questions about the distinction between cities, suburbs, and rural sites. We turn to representations of the city as a place of both surveillance and freedom, liberation and constraint, deprivation and abundance. We begin with readings from the archive of urban planning – which is curiously fixated on New York City and Boston – and move to literary representations of Southern cities, including Charleston (through J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur’s *Letters from an American Farmer*), Savannah (through John Berendt’s *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*), Atlanta (through James Baldwin’s *Evidence of Things Not Seen*), and New Orleans (through Andrei Codrescu’s writing). These texts will help us to unsettle the notion of the region as inherently linked to rurality; in order to explore the association of “rural” and “South,” we will also explore the dominantly rural literary genre of the Southern gothic through the work of Flannery O’Connor. Writing for this class includes a collaboratively-written spatial analysis of a site in the Memphis-Forrest City Combined Metropolitan Statistical Area (the 41st largest Metropolitan Area in the U.S.), an in-class midterm examination, an analytical paper that offers a close reading of one of O’Connor’s short stories, and a cumulative take-home final exam.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- James Baldwin, *Evidence of Things Not Seen* ISBN: 9780805039399
- John Berendt, *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* ISBN: 9780679751526
- Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* ISBN: 9780679741954
- Flannery O’Connor, *The Complete Stories* ISBN: 9780374515362
- A notebook in which you take notes by hand

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Participation 20%

As an academic discipline, English is student-focused and debate-centered. As such, your participation is welcomed and expected. I favorably assess participation that provokes discussion and debate and evinces a willingness to engage with the difficulties of course readings, and unfavorably assess participation that forecloses conversation or treats difficult questions as though they are settled matters not worthy of debate. As the semester progresses, you may request progress reports that assess your

participation strengths and weaknesses. Please note that participation cannot be replaced with another assignment. Whether you are passionate about the subject or indifferent to it, aggressive or shy, expert or novice, you are expected to intervene in class conversation. Moreover, class participation cannot be made up if you are absent, so you should regard every absence as a deficit to your overall participation grade.

In order to facilitate participation, we write *everyday*, a practice that offers you notes in front of you so that it doesn't feel as though you're unready when you're called on. When you keep up with these assignments, you do more than participate; you will find that you have rough drafts for essay questions on both the midterm and the final. You will also find that your notebook becomes an excellent study guide.

In-Class and Shorter Writing Assignments	10%
Timed in-class writing assignments (some of which will be announced and some of which will be surprises) provide you with practice and rough drafts for the larger assignments to come. Your rough drafts are also counted as shorter, for-credit writing assignments. You get credit for writing and submitting them, and zero credit for failing to write and submit them in accordance with assignment guidelines.	
Single-Authored Literary Analysis (March 8 , March 27)	20%
You will write a literary analysis (characterized by close reading of figurative language and symbolism, not simply plot) of one of Flannery O'Connor's short stories. The literary analysis will be about 1,000 words, and will require you to curate literary criticism of the story through our library's databases of peer-reviewed scholarship in literary studies.	
Collaborative Travelogue (April 12 , April 26)	10%
The class will take advantage of our own urban location. With a partner chosen by me, you will tour a site in the Memphis-Forrest City Combined Metropolitan Statistical Area. Please note that this title is a legal designation offered by the United States Census Bureau (www2.census.gov). Data about it is broadly available on their website. After partner groups have concluded the tours, they will write a walking tour, travelogue, or spatial analysis of that site, considering the gaps and omissions in conventional descriptions of their space. The eventual writing assignment will be 1,500 words.	
Midterm Examination (March 1)	20%
The midterm exam will include a combination of quote identification, definition of terms, and essay questions. Educational research suggests that students do not retain information from forced-choice questionnaires (e.g. true/false and multiple choice), so you might expect everything <i>except</i> those means.	
Final Exam	20%
Similar to the final exam, with a stronger emphasis on essay questions.	

Electronics Policy: Because our classroom community requires participation and engagement, I ask that you put aside laptops and electronic buzzings except for assignments that require them. No tablets, no laptops, no phones unless I ask you to use them. Every day, you should come to class with a copy of the reading and something to write with. If resources are a concern to you, please find a classmate with

whom you will share books and materials. Merely having the same materials in front of you builds community; electronic equipment – however ubiquitous and sometimes useful – tends to mediate our interaction. I understand that people use this equipment to study or to write, but they also forget and/or refuse to log-out of GoogleChat, Facebook, etc., and that provides in-class distractions that we simply cannot control for. Please put them aside unless otherwise instructed.

Environment, Community, and Respect: The key goals of our class sessions are to develop a sense of community, to facilitate growth in your knowledge of the topic, and to learn to draft ideas as well as writing– which means that your final draft of any given paper will not be the first and your first assumption about any idea will not be your last. In order to foster this environment, I encourage a classroom culture of mutual respect. If you are inattentive to me or your classmates, you are not offering respect, so I require that you minimize distractions. If you're sleeping, writing for another course, texting, or skipping class, I am unlikely to yell or chastise; however, I regard you as an adult who makes choices and accepts consequences. When you violate these requirements, you have chosen against your own success, and should expect low participation grades as a result. I also ask for respectful treatment. That means listening and speaking in the space of class discussion, taking assignment requirements seriously as you're writing and drafting, and accepting that my decisions about grading and assessment are ones that I take seriously, too. The gravity with which I treat my relationship to you should be reciprocated; as we approach the end of the semester, when you will have the opportunity to evaluate me, I will talk about the decisions that go into establishing parameters and guidelines for success. Hopefully, this will help you to consider whether or not the class has been a useful one.

Inclusion and Accessibility: Students who suspect that they need accommodations or exceptions to the policy guidelines above are encouraged to contact the Office of Student Disability Services (662-915-7128). The office will then contact the student's instructors to develop alternatives, but it is not the instructor's responsibility to make initial contact with the Office on the student's behalf.

Grading Scale: Based on my knowledge, expertise, and experience in the discipline of American literature, I assign a grade consistent with the University of Mississippi's grading scale: A 94-100; A- 90-93; B+ 87-89; B 84-86; B- 80-83; C+ 77-79; C 74-76; C- 70-73; D Below 70; F Below 60

Attendance, Tardiness, and Late Assignments: No late assignments will be accepted unless you have gotten an extension in advance; if you do not submit your papers on time, you will receive no credit for the assignments. Over the course of the semester, you may ask for *one extension* of no more than 3 days. If you require a second extension, I will levy penalties of a half-grade per day past the deadline.

Participation cannot be excused, so every absence should be considered a deficit. After four absences, you will lose a letter grade for each additional absence. After six absences, you will fail without question. Lateness of more than twenty minutes is a half-absence. If all your halves add up to three or five whole absences, the same penalties stand. Because my class is designed to make you consider your own responsibility for and agency within the learning process, I do not give you prior "permission" or post-hoc forgiveness for missing class. I expect you to make these decisions (with due consideration of penalties) on your own. I do not expect a flood of emails before and after absences that explain or make excuses; I am nonetheless counting and taking penalties. Before you leave on the first day of class, you should get the email addresses of two classmates who I consider your Sherpas. If you know you need to miss a class, email one of your Sherpas in advance and get them to take notes for you. If you have an unexpected absence, email one of them and ask for a summary of proceedings or class notes. Because I am not a student and therefore have a different role and position in the classroom community, I am not

in the best position to tell you what you missed on days that you're not here. If you ask me "what did I miss?", I'm likely to say "everything."

Meetings and Conferences: If you need to speak with me privately, make an appointment via email. With a few years of hindsight, I have noted that students get the most benefit from meeting in office hours with questions about assignments if they bring a **rough draft** with them. Otherwise, we are talking about hypothetical future work, which makes for less precise feedback. Like most writers and researchers, I don't see a distinction between writing and revision; writing involves multiple drafts. It's my policy to make appointments with students to review drafts, rather than to give them pointers on the drafts that they will eventually write. If you make an appointment to talk about an assignment, bring writing with you.

Academic Honesty: Do not steal, buy, or borrow someone else's paper to submit for a grade. Do not take text from another person's writing without attribution and citation. Do not submit the same paper for two classes, or otherwise take action that results in you earning the same credit hours for less work than other students are doing. If it seems like a too-good-to-be-true shortcut, it's likely to be academic dishonesty. Plagiarism will result in failure of this course, and often more severe academic sanctions from the University of Mississippi.

Accessing Online Materials: To access our course website, follow the steps listed below.

- From the Ole Miss homepage, <http://www.olemiss.edu>, click on the "Blackboard" link.
- On the Blackboard Login page, enter your Ole Miss WebID and password (this is the same information you use to register for classes and access your grades online), and click the "Login" button.
- Your "MY UM" page will open, listing all the Blackboard courses in which you are enrolled. Choose our course, English 461, from the list on the right side of the screen.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

In order to facilitate reading deeply, rather than simply broadly, we will sometimes have weeks with only in-class readings. During those weeks, I strongly recommend that you get *ahead* in your reading. The schedule is subject to change, but never without notice.

IN-CLASS PROCEEDINGS	HOMEWORK TO BE COMPLETED BEFORE THE NEXT CLASS
Section I: Where are we? January 23. Syllabus introduction. What is spatial analysis? In-class reading from James Howard Kuntsler.	Begin reading Jane Jacobs.
January 25. What is a city? In-class reading from Micaela di Leonardo.	Continue reading Jane Jacobs.
January 30. What is the South? In-class reading from Matthew Pratt Guterl.	Continue reading Jane Jacobs.
February 1. What is anti-urbanism? In-class reading from Thomas Jefferson.	Complete section 1 (the first 140 pages) of Jane Jacobs.
February 6. Begin discussion of Jane Jacobs, <i>The Death and Life of Great American Cities</i> .	Continue reading Jacobs.
February 8. Continue discussion of Jacobs.	

February 13. In-class writing assignment #1: Jane Jacobs . At 1:00pm on 2/13, a writing assignment will go live in our course's Blackboard. You will need to write and submit your response to jlg@olemiss.edu by 2:30. This assignment can be done at home, but it must be done during the hour and a half provided.	Select a short story from Flannery O'Connor's <i>The Complete Stories</i> . Your options are (a) "Everything That Rises Must Converge"; (b) "The Geranium," (c) "Judgment Day," (d) "Good Country People," or (e) "The Artificial Nigger." In order to complete writing assignment #2, you will need to have chosen and read your short story.
February 15. Research workshop on Flannery O'Connor's urban/rural visions. We will begin working towards research proposals. Before 2/15, you need to ensure that you have no issues logging into sites protected by WebID Authentication Requirements. You will not be able to complete the assignment without logging into our library databases.	Draft a 2 – 3 paragraph proposal for your literary analysis paper. This should include a tentative thesis about how the O'Connor short story you chose represents urban or rural space (as affirmative or negative, distinctly Southern or in resistance to regional norms) and a bibliography of 2 – 3 pieces of literary criticism that you can find on the MLA International Bibliography (a database available through our library website: http://www.libraries.olemiss.edu/uml/database/glossary/all).
Section II. Gothic South, Gothic City February 20. In-class reading from Jennifer Rae Greeson's <i>Our South</i> . Submit your research proposal.	Read J. Hector St. John De Crevecoeur's "Description on Charles-Town; Thoughts on Slavery; On Physical Evil; A Melancholy Scene" from <i>Letters from an American Farmer</i> (1782).
February 22. Continue discussion of Crevecoeur and Greeson. Receive feedback on your proposal.	Read selections from Greeson's <i>Our South</i> available on Blackboard.
February 27. Discuss Greeson.	Study for your midterm exam.
March 1. Midterm examination.	Read O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge"; "The Geranium," "Judgment Day," "Good Country People," and "The Artificial Nigger" if you have not yet done so.
March 6. Discuss Flannery O'Connor.	
March 8. Continue discussing Flannery O'Connor. Submit your literary analysis rough draft.	Read John Berendt's <i>Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil</i> .
March 13 – 15. Enjoy your Spring Break!	
Section III: Exotic City March 20. Receive feedback on your literary analysis rough draft. Discuss Berendt's <i>Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil</i> .	Read John Berendt's <i>Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil</i> .
March 22. Discuss Berendt.	Read John Berendt's <i>Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil</i> .
March 27. Continue discussion of Berendt. Submit your final literary analysis paper.	Finish John Berendt's <i>Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil</i> .
March 29. Continue discussion of Berendt.	

April 3. In-class reading: Michel De Certeau's "Walking in the City." Meet your partner for your collaborative travelogue.	Read selections from Wanda Rushing's <i>Memphis and the Paradox of Place</i> . Meet with your partner to determine the location of your walking tour / travelogue.
April 5. Class cancelled to facilitate collaborative writing assignments. In-class writing assignment #3 (to be conducted collaboratively). At 1:00pm on 4/5, a writing assignment will go live in our course's Blackboard. You and your partner will need to write and submit a collaborative response to jlg@olemiss.edu by 2:30. This assignment can be done at a location central for both of you (even if that's not on campus), but it must be done during the hour and a half provided.	Read Andrei Codrescu's "My City, My Wilderness"
Section IV: Urban Panics, Urban South	
April 10. Discuss Codrescu.	
April 12. Submit rough draft of your collaborative writing assignment. Continue discussing Codrescu.	Read James Baldwin's <i>Evidence of Things Unseen</i> .
April 17. Discuss Baldwin.	Continue reading Baldwin.
April 19. Receive feedback on your collaborative writing assignment. Discuss Baldwin.	Continue reading Baldwin.
April 24. Discuss Baldwin.	Continue reading Baldwin.
April 26. Submit your collaborative writing assignments. Conclude discussion of Baldwin.	
May 1. Receive prompts for your final exam.	
May 3. Review for your final exam. Goodbyes and evaluations.	
May 10. Final exam.	