

ENGLISH 254: SIX AMERICAN NOVELS
FALL 2015: THURSDAYS 16:00-18:45
FO 104 (AT LEAST FOR NOW)

JOHN ENGELL
FO 218
OFFICE HOURS: TH 13:30-15:00

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

English 254 involves reading six American novels—three pairs of two each—written between 1850 and 1970. We will discuss each novel in detail. Much class time will focus on student presentations and discussion of these presentations. Each student will complete three oral presentations, each accompanied by a handout of no more than one page, front and (if necessary) back, to be distributed at the beginning of the oral presentation. These presentations, typically four during a class period, should be no longer than fifteen to twenty minutes and should be clearly organized and focused. Topics for presentations will be distributed in class. On the date of each of her or his presentations, the student presenter will turn in to me a two page short essay focused on some very specific aspect of the topic of the presentation. Therefore, each student will complete three oral presentations and a two-page reading essay—these are not research essays—related to each presentation but with a tighter focus than the presentation.

In addition, each student will complete and turn in a research essay involving one or more of the novels we read and discuss. This essay should be approximately 10-12 typed, double-spaced pages in length and will include a Works Cited list.

I will discuss these oral and written assignments in more detail during our first meeting and during some subsequent meetings of the seminar.

READING/TEXT LIST (in the order to be read and discussed):

Harriet Beecher Stowe. *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*. Norton Critical Edition.
Nathaniel Hawthorne. *THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE*. Norton Critical Edition.
Charles W. Chesnutt. *THE MARROW OF TRADITION*. Norton Critical Edition.
Edith Wharton. *THE AGE OF INNOCENCE*. Norton Critical Edition.
Eudora Welty. *THE OPTIMIST'S DAUGHTER*. Vintage International.
Kurt Vonnegut. *SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE*. . . . Dial Press Trade Paperback.

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH MISSION STATEMENT:

The written word grounds the Master of Arts in English & Comparative Literature. Its students learn to analyze literature and to write on literary topics at an advanced level. Students complete a rigorous program of courses that introduce them to cutting-edge research while training them to understand a range of theoretical and literary-historical frameworks for understanding literature. Before students earn a Master of Arts in English they pass a two-part comprehensive examination. They also may choose to write a thesis. Students have the option to engage in graduate study in rhetoric and to train as college-level writing teachers. The program also offers students pathways to prepare for doctoral work.

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH PROGRAM 'LEARNING OUTCOMES':

Students will demonstrate the following:

- an appropriate level of expertise in literary history, literary theory, and rhetoric;
- a high-level proficiency in literary research and in the synthesis of research'
- critical and analytical skills in the interpretations and evaluation of literary texts;
- a command of written academic English including the abilities to organize and present material in a cogent fashion; formulate and defend original arguments; employ effectively the language of their discipline; and write under time constraints;
- a reading knowledge of at least one foreign language.

GRADING:

Three Oral Presentations	30%
Three 2-page Reader Response essays accompanying Oral Presentations	30%
Research Essay of 10-12 pages	40%

I'll say more about these assignments during seminar meetings. Written and oral assignments meet the first four Learning Outcomes for the M.A./English.

CALENDAR: All seminar meetings on Thursdays beginning at 16:00.

AUGUST

20TH Introduction to the class, to required texts; a general discussion regarding the American Novel

27TH UNCLE TOM'S CABIN: 4 student presentations; discussion

SEPTEMBER

3RD UNCLE TOM'S CABIN: 4 student presentations; discussion

10TH THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE: 4 student presentations; discussion

17TH THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE: 4 student presentations; discussion

24TH THE MARROW OF TRADITION: 4 student presentations; discussion

OCTOBER

1ST THE MARROW OF TRADITION: 4 student presentations; discussion

8TH THE AGE OF INNOCENCE: 4 student presentations; discussion

15TH NO CLASS; I will be on the east coast.

22ND THE AGE OF INNOCENCE: 4 student presentations; discussion

TENTATIVE TOPICS FOR RESEARCH ESSAYS DUE

29TH THE OPTIMIST'S DAUGHTER: 4 student presentations; discussion

NOVEMBER

5TH THE OPTIMIST'S DAUGHTER: 4 student presentations; discussion
DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH PAPER TOPICS AND WORK TO DATE

12TH SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE; 4 student presentations; discussion

19TH SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE; 4 student presentations; discussion

DECEMBER

3RD STUDENT PRESENTATIONS ON RESEARCH ESSAYS

10TH (DURING EXAM PERIOD) RESEARCH ESSAYS AND PORTFOLIOS
INCLUDING ORAL PRESENTATIONS AND SHORT ESSAYS DUE; PARTY

ENGLISH 257

ENGELL FALL 2015

FOLLOWING ARE 16 TOPICS FOR ORAL PRESENTATIONS & SHORT ESSAYS FOR THE FIRST NOVELS: UNCLE TOM'S CABIN & THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE. I WILL CONDUCT A SIGN-UP FOR THESE TOPICS ON 20 AUGUST

27 AUGUST: UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

Stowe as intrusive 3rd-person narrator: examples, the effect on the reader

Stowe's treatment/depiction of the Shelbys--father, mother, son--as slave owners

Stowe's treatment/depiction of Dan Haley and other slave traders and hunters in contrast to her treatment/depiction of the Quaker Community in Indiana

Stowe's treatment/depiction of Tom in Kentucky, in New Orleans, and on Legree's plantation

3 SEPTEMBER: UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

Stowe's treatment/depiction of Eva St. Clare

Stowe's treatment/depiction of her father, Augustine St. Clare

Stowe's treatment/depiction of Miss Ophelia and Topsy

Stowe's treatment/depiction of Legree, his plantation, and a few of its inhabitants

NOTE: We will also discuss the George/Eliza Harris plot, coincidence in the novel, Stowe's views regarding freed slaves, and the novel as polemical and political.

10 SEPTEMBER: THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE

Coverdale as 1st-person narrator: the effect of his voice and his views on the reader

Coverdale's depiction/treatment of place: Blithedale and Boston

Coverdale's depiction/treatment of Hollingsworth

Coverdale's depiction/treatment of Priscilla; his "confession" at the end of the novel

17 SEPTEMBER: THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE

Coverdale's depiction/treatment of Old Moodie and Westervelt

Coverdale's depiction/treatment of Zenobia

Coverdale's depiction/treatment of himself: truthful? deceptive? complex? ironic?

Coverdale's views regarding social reform, contrasted to Stowe's views

NOTE: We will also discuss this first pair of novels as explorations of profound political, social, and moral issues—all related to individual and national identity.