Course Description: “A close study of American literature from 1945 to the present. The course will cover literary schools of the period and major authors such as Salinger, Vonnegut, Ellison, Carver, Ginsberg, O’Connor, Morrison, Barth and Williams.”

For this semester, we will be studying a type of literary evolution. Specifically, I have chosen several different movements, textual formats, and literary elements that appear in the literature of the last sixty years. In doing so, my goal has been, for each, to choose an early text/author that is exemplary of this school/format/element (specifically, in most cases, an author at the start of the period) and then paired that author/work with another author/text that comes much later in the period (21st century) that is or can be read as directly responding to this previous work. The ultimate goal of this study will not only be to introduce you to important schools and authors of the last 70 years, but to also highlight such schools have evolved and transformed; in other words, to enforce the idea that writing and literature is not just about a shared conversation between reader and text but also between authors. Of course, in the last seventy years of American belles lettres there have been a large number of movements and I have chosen a select few to focus on during the course of the semester.

As you can imagine, this will be an intensive, discussion based course. I have chosen particular texts and while there may be outside criticism that inter-connects some of the pairings (for example that of John Barth and David Foster Wallace), there will be less direct criticism recognizing other pairings. The expectation that I have is that students will stay on top of our readings and come to class not only having completed the readings for that period but with questions and points of discussion. While there will be periods and times when I lecture and introduce broader concepts, the greater amount of time will be spent in critical conversation with the class.
**PLOs:** As this course may be taken to fulfill a requirement within the English major, the following Program Learning Outcomes will be achieved:

1. The student will demonstrate the ability to read **complex** texts, closely and accurately.
2. The student will demonstrate the ability to **comprehend** both traditional and contemporary schools/methods of critical theory and apply them to literary texts to generate **relevant** interpretations.
3. The student will demonstrate knowledge of literary history in regard to particular periods of American literature.
4. The student will demonstrate ability to **effectively** conduct literary research.
5. The student will demonstrate the ability to write clear, grammatically correct prose for a variety of purposes in regards to literary analysis.

**Learning Outcomes:** Specifically, the above goals will be met through the more specific/class centered outcomes:

1) Students will be reintroduced to the concepts of American Modernism, but will focus more on the theoretical and literary aspects associated with post-WWII American Fiction. This will include: postmodernism, minimalism, “war literature,” the grotesque, and neorealism. This will be accomplished through the reading of primary (literary) and secondary (theoretical) sources that are attached to each unit.

2) Beyond being introduced to these periods, and specifically the theory heavy school of Postmodern American fiction, students will display their ability to engage these complex ideas and still be able to analyze the works at hand, connect these works to their literary and cultural moment, and, finally, judge the success/failure of said works/theories. This will be accomplished through the completion of essay assignments.

3) Students will display their ability to conduct primary and secondary research through the completion of a seminar project. This research will require that students are able to make use of the library catalog and on-line indexes. Furthermore, it will be expected that these papers are clean of stigmatized errors, show correct use of MLA citation, and, finally, provide a coherent and original argument that is supported with developed literary analysis.

**Required Texts:**
Barth, John. *Lost in the Funhouse.*
David Foster Wallace, “Westward the Course of the Empire Takes Its Way” from *Girl With the Curious Hair*
Raymond Carver, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*
Phil Klay, *Redeployment*
Sherwood Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio*
Donald Ray Pollock, *Knockemstiff*
Flannery O'Connor, *Wise Blood*
Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead*

Finally, throughout the semester, I will supply students with copies of secondary readings and short works. It is expected that you do not lose these handouts, and that you bring these handouts to class so that we can refer to them throughout the semester. At times, these handouts will be provided electronically and you will be expected to print them out or bring them to class on an electronic device.

**Grade Determination:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Grades</th>
<th>Semester Grades</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: 100-90</td>
<td>A: 500-445</td>
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<tr>
<td>B: 89-80</td>
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<td>F: 59-0</td>
<td>F: 295-0</td>
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**Major Course Assignments:**

*Short Critical Essays:* At the start of the semester, I will break the class into groups. As you will see from the calendar, every INDIVIDUAL student is responsible for completing two response essays throughout the semester. As opposed to having every student responding to the same stories, I have broken the class apart so that only so many students will respond to each particular pairing. Once you have been broken into groups, it is important that you study your calendars to see when YOU will have your INDIVIDUAL papers due.

As noted above, these are short critical essays. The purpose of the essay will be to apply and explore concepts that we have been discussing during that particular pairing. When you look to the calendar, you will see that the assigned groups will have these short essays due on the day that we start the second book of the pairing. The reason for this is that the students completing the short essay should “begin” class conversation through the individual essays; in other words, you are encouraged to use source material that I provide in class and additional source material to bridge a conversation between the two texts.

Each of these essays is to be 4 pages in length (no more) and include a Works Cited page (this works cited page does not count as one of the four pages, it will be page 5). When writing your essay, you should assume that I too have read all the same works, and therefore summary of the different texts is not necessary. Instead, you should focus on developing a clear argument that is well-executed and supported through direct textual interpretation and analysis. Any essay that holds mainly to responding to the text(s) and conversations at hand or summarizing plot lines and implying connections will be graded accordingly. Each will be worth a possible 100 points.
Seminar Paper: The design of this course is to introduce students to different writers of the last 70 years through pairings of early and late writers; in most cases, writers who are either directly responding to another or writers who are participating in and bringing change to a specific literary trope or theme. As such, I have limited the potential topics for the seminar paper in an effort to ensure that your paper contributes to the ideas and writers that you have been exploring in the class.

At the end of the semester, every student will be required to submit a seminar paper. The paper is to be 8-10 pages in length and will be (1) a focused study on an additional work by one of the authors that we have studied, or (2) will focus on a pairing that we did not cover in class but will trace different ideas, or (3) a focused study on an author and text that we have not covered during the semester but comes from a list that I have provided. In any case, no matter the option you choose, you will be expected to make a clear and critical argument centered on the text(s) that you have chosen. The argument will be more complicated than those, which you have put forth in your shorter papers and will thus, require more “space.” In completing this paper and making your argument you will be required to make use of source material beyond the primary texts. While you are allowed to employ sources provided to you during the course of the semester, you will also be expected to do outside research and thus make use of additional sources. This paper will be worth 100 points, but will be counted twice.

Final Exam: The final exam for the course will focus on a single essay question interconnected O’Connor’s Wise Blood with Robinson’s Gilead. We will cover O’Connor’s text in class (this will be our last novel), but you will have to read Robinson on your own outside of class. This becomes the final in that I will ask you to form a specific conversation surrounding these two works.

Course Policies:
Attendance and Late Work:
While attendance may not be mandatory in all of your classes, I do hold to a strict attendance policy. As much of your success will depend on the deepening of your critical thinking and writing skills, attendance is imperative. This being said, you will be allowed three absences without receiving any penalty. However, with four absences, your final grade may be no higher than a B; with five absences, your final grade may be no higher than a C; with six absences, you will fail the course.

As for late work, I do my best to return all work in a prompt manner. In order to do so, though, I must have all assignments turned in on time. This being said, any assignment that is turned in late will be dropped one full letter grade for each day that it is late. Also, any work that is turned in late will take longer for me to return. Assignments will be turned in at the start of class, and any student turning in the assignment more than fifteen minutes after the class has begun will incur the penalty of one day late.

The only absences that will count as excused absences will be DOCUMENTED family emergencies, university sanctioned events (this only includes sport/team events and will only count if I have documentation from the “coach”), and extreme medical issues. An excused absence does not include absences due to doctor appointments, absences due to cold/flu,
absences for work, etc. In the case of any excused absence, you must remember that any work that is due that day is still due that day. The only exception for late work will be if the student has contacted me in advance and I have agreed to other arrangements.

*Academic Integrity (A-9.1):*
Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Stephen F. Austin State University defines academic dishonesty as:

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty**
Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at: [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp)

In terms of this class, any student caught blatantly and purposely plagiarizing or cheating will automatically receive 0 points for the assignment. Furthermore, the incident may be reported.

*Free Speech and Class Conduct:*
In order to help improve our critical thinking and writing skills, we will regularly engage in class discussions. The purpose of these discussions will be to recognize that while many of the students in the class may be on the same level in terms of age or year, there are different abilities in the classroom and different ways to look at an issue or piece of writing. In other words, one can always learn from his/her peers. In order for this to happen, we must respect one another. Therefore, while I will encourage students to share different opinions and will not stop individuals from disagreeing with one another, I will not allow any student to engage in the use of sexist, racist, or homophobic speech. Also, I will not allow any student to simply try to roll over or silence his/her peers.

*Acceptable Student Behavior*
Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom.
In the case of this course, disruptive behavior will include the following: consistent use of cell phones/texting during class, consistent participation in side discussions that are not part of classroom dialogue, consistent problems with attending class on time and thus interrupting class proceedings, referring to your teacher or peers in an inappropriate way, physically threatening your teacher or peers, and completing homework assignments for another class. Students participating in such activities can be asked to leave the class and will be counted as absent.

*Withheld Grades:*
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.”

For the complete policy, http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/semester_grds.asp

*Students with Disabilities:*
To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building Room 325, 468-3004/468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices

*Homework and Written Assignments:*
During the semester, you will be expected to complete essays outside of the classroom environment. Each of these essays is to be typed, use 12-point font, and ONLY the essay should be double-spaced (DO NOT DOUBLE SPACE THE HEADER). The header of your essay must include your name, my name, the date, and the class number.

In the case of certain essays, you will be expected to make use of outside resources. When writing your essay, you are to display correct citation of any and all sources that are used. This means, you are to recognize outside sources when either using direct quotes or summarizing the ideas of another. Furthermore, since you will show in-text citation, your essays must also include a Works Cited page.

Finally, each of your essays should be viewed as academic writing. As such, it should be written in the academic voice (avoid the use of the first person unless instructed otherwise, avoid contractions, colloquialisms, text speak, etc.), be clean of stigmatized errors, display a clear thesis/supporting paragraphs/conclusion, and recognize all sources. Essays that do not comply with such standards will be graded accordingly.
Tentative Course Calendar

Tuesday, January 19th: Class introduction. Postmodernism  
Homework: Read handout (Ihab Hassan)

Thursday, January 21st: Hassan 
Homework: Read Barth’s “Literature of Exhaustion” handout

Tuesday, January 26th: Barth “Literature of Exhaustion”  
Homework: Read Barth’s Lost pages v-13 (“Foreword,” “Author’s Note,” and “Frame-Tale”)

Thursday, January 28th: Lost  
Homework: Read Lost through page 98

Tuesday, February 2nd: Lost  
Homework: Complete Lost

Thursday, February 4th: Lost. 
Homework: Read Curtis White essay (handout) and start reading Wallace “Westward”

Tuesday, February 9th: Essay. White. 
Homework: Complete “Westward.” Group One work on Essay One.

Homework: Keep

Tuesday, February 16th: Wallace  
Homework: Read essay on Minimalism and Robison stories (both handouts)

Thursday, February 18th: Minimalism, Robison stories  
Homework: Read Carver’s What We Talk About When We Talk About Love

Tuesday, February 23rd: Carver

Thursday, February 25th: Carver  
Homework: Read Englander handout “What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank.” Group Two work on Essay One.

Tuesday March 1st: Englander. Group Two turn in Essay One.

Thursday, March 3rd: Englander  
Homework: Read “The American Century”

Tuesday, March 8th: Luce’s “The American Century”  
Homework: Read War Poetry packet
Thursday, March 10th: Poetry packet.  
Homework: Read O’Brien “How to Tell a True War Story” handout

Tuesday, March 15th: Spring Break

Thursday, March 17th: Spring Break

Tuesday, March 22nd: O’Brien  
Homework: Read Redeployment. Group One work on Essay Two.

Thursday, March 24th: Easter Holiday

Tuesday, March 29th: Redeployment. Group One turn in Essay Two.

Thursday, March 31st: Redeployment  
Homework: Read assigned essay on the grotesque.

Tuesday, April 5th: The Grotesque  
Homework: Read Anderson

Thursday, April 7th: Winesburg  
Homework: Complete Anderson.

Tuesday, April 12th: Winesburg  
Homework: Read handout on “grit-lit.”

Thursday, April 14th: “Grit Lit”  
Homework: Read Knockemstiff. Group Two complete Essay Two.

Tuesday, April 19th: Knockemstiff. Group Two turn in Essay Two.

Thursday, April 21st: Knockemstiff  
Homework: Work on seminar papers and read Wiseblood.

Tuesday, April 26th: Turn in seminar papers. Discuss O’Connor.  
Homework: Read Wiseblood

Thursday, April 28th: Wiseblood

Tuesday, May 3rd: Wiseblood  
Homework: Read Glidead for final exam

Thursday, May 5th: Discuss final.  
Homework: Read Gilead for final exam.