Below is a chronological list of "canonical" American literary texts published since 1900. The faculty expects students to both study these works and be able to place them within a literary movement, such as Naturalism, Imagism, The Harlem Renaissance, Surrealism, Modernism, Beat Literature, The Theater of the Absurd, The Black Mountain School, Black Humor, or Post-Modernism.

1) Theodore Dreiser, Sister Carrie (1900)
2) Edith Wharton, The House of Mirth (1905)
3) Robert Frost, North of Boston (1914)
4) Willa Cather, My Antonia (1918)
5) Sherwood Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio (1919)
7) William Carlos Williams, Spring and All (1922)
8) Wallace Stevens, Harmonium (1923)
9) Jean Toomer, Cane (1923)
10) F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (1926)
11) Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises (1926)
13) Ezra Pound, "Cantos I-XXX" (1930)
14) Nathanael West, Miss Lonelyhearts (1933)
15) Zora Neale Hurston: "Characteristics of Negro Expression" (1934); Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937)
16) John Steinbeck, Grapes of Wrath (1939)
17) Richard Wright, Native Son (1940)
18) Tennessee Williams, A Streetcar Named Desire (1947)
19) Arthur Miller, Death of a Salesman (1949)
21) Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man (1952)
22) Vladimir Nabokov, Lolita (1955)
23) Flannery O'Connor, A Good Man Is Hard to Find and Other Stories (1955)
25) Jack Kerouac, On the Road (1957)
26) 1960s Poetry: Robert Duncan, The Opening of the Field (1960); Robert Creeley, For Love (1962); Sylvia Plath, Ariel (1966)
27) Joseph Heller, Catch-22 (1961)
29) LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka: Dutchman (1964); "Black Art"; "A Poem for Black Hearts"; "SOS"; "Three Movements and a Coda" (1969)
31) John Barth: "The Literature of Exhaustion" (1967), Lost in the Funhouse (1968)
33) Ishmael Reed, Mumbo Jumbo (1972)
36) Leslie Marmon Silko, Ceremony (1977)
39) Don DeLillo, White Noise (1985)
40) August Wilson, Fences (1987)
41) Octavia Butler, Dawn (1987)
42) Toni Morrison, Beloved (1987)
43) Louise Erdrich, Tracks (1988)
44) John Wideman, Philadelphia Fire (1990)
45) Tony Kushner, Angels in America (1991)
46) Dorothy Allison, Bastard Out of Carolina (1992)
48) Ann Patchett, Bel Canto (2001)