

## **ENGL 669-M01 American Literature and Culture 1950-1990**

**Anne Dewey**

**Fall 2013**

**3 credits**

**Wednesday, 14:00-16:45**

**Office: San Ignacio Hall, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor**

**Office Hours: Monday, 9:30-11:30 and 14:00-16:00, Friday 9:30-11:30**

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course studies changing class, gender, and national identity in the US from World War II through the Reagan years by reading literary works from the period in the context of nonliterary texts. We will examine how authors respond to the economic, political, and cultural changes that accompany the US's active role as an international power in Cold War, Vietnam, and global scenarios, the growth of mass media, and increasing mobility and immigration. Economically, the post-war boom and shift from a predominantly working class to a corporate and consumer economy and substantial influx of immigrant labor into the working class demand redefinition of class and gender roles. Politically, the Cold and Vietnam Wars, struggles for social justice in Civil Rights, feminism, gay and minority rights, and emergence of youth movements test democratic ideals as well as the US's imperial status. Cold War surveillance, mass communication, and the emergence of the welfare state increase government intervention in private life, altering the relationship between public and private "spheres" and the identities associated with them. Culturally, the arts play a crucial role in movements for political and social change and in imagining social resistance and innovation (e.g., jazz and avant-garde esthetics). In reading works from a period whose characterization remains the subject of intense debate, we will work to understand how literature as institution and form responds to these changes and contributes to the way we imagine the present.

We will focus on literary and sociocultural responses to the following themes, among others:

- war, the Holocaust and the atomic bomb, and cultural memory
- the transition from Cold War and "containment" culture to globalization
- the growth of mass media and cyberculture
- the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power, and race relations
- the Sexual Revolution, feminism, gay rights, and backlash
- ecological consciousness
- the establishment of ethnic cultures and literatures
- formal changes in "postmodern" literature, driven by experimental innovation, literary forms of political poetry, and growth of ethnic literary traditions

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

Ralph Ellison. *Invisible Man*. 1952.

Vladimir Nabokov. *Lolita*. 1955.

Allen Ginsberg. *Howl and Other Poems*. 1955.

Thomas Pynchon. *The Crying of Lot 49*. 1962.

Sylvia Plath. *Ariel: The Restored Edition*. 1965.

Malcolm X with Alex Haley. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. 1965.

Alice Walker. *Meridian*. 1976.  
Leslie Marmon Silko. *Ceremony*. 1977.  
Don DeLillo. *White Noise*. 1980.  
Lyn Hejinian. *My Life and My Life in the Nineties*. 1980. (2013).  
Toni Morrison. *Beloved*. 1987.  
Jessica Hagedorn. *Dogeaters* 1990.

## COURSE OUTCOMES

This course's "cultural studies" approach enables students to understand how literature responds creatively to social issues of its time and how literary genre and formal innovation structure this response. By analyzing works of post-World War II literature in the context of the period's nonliterary writing and of recent theoretical studies, students will be able both to identify key themes of concern during the decades themselves and reflect on the reception of this period's literary history through themes on which current scholarship focuses. Students will contribute to the constitution of this literary history in formulating their own research focus and project for the final paper.

## SCHEDULE OF READINGS

### WEEK 1

Wednesday, September 4 Daniel Halberstam, *The Fifties*, Chs. 33  
Tom Englehardt, "Triumphalist Despair," from *The End of Victory Culture*  
Gwendolyn Brooks and Elizabeth Bishop poems

### WEEK 2

Wednesday, September 11 Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952), Chs. 1-19  
Ellison, "The World and the Jug," from *Shadow and Act* (1953)

### WEEK 3

Tuesday, September 17 **Last day to add/drop a class without grade of W**

Wednesday, September 18 Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952), Chs. 20-end  
David Riesman, "Political Persuasions" from *The Lonely Crowd* (1961)  
**Close reading presentation (5-8 minutes)**

### WEEK 4

Wednesday, September 25 Nabokov, *Lolita* (1955)  
George Steiner, "Night Words" and "Postscript"  
from *Language and Silence* (1970)  
(reading continued on next page)

Carolyn Dean, "Empathy, Suffering, and Holocaust 'Pornography'," from *The Fragility of Empathy*  
Michel Foucault, from *The History of Sexuality*

## WEEK 5

Wednesday, October 2 Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems* (1955)  
Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (1962)  
Betty Friedan, from *The Feminine Mystique* (1963)  
Timothy Melley, "The Culture of Paranoia," from *Empire of Conspiracy*  
Proxy Server: Joshua Gamson on celebrity culture, "The Unwatched Life is Not Worth Living," *PMLA* 126.4: 1061-1070.  
**First paper due, 4-5 pp.**

## WEEK 6

Wednesday, October 9 Plath, *Ariel* (1965)  
Amy Hungerford, "Plath and Her Critics, 'Writing' and Life, from *The Holocaust of Texts*  
Elaine Tyler May, from *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War*  
(this day's reading continued on next page!)  
Deborah Nelson, "Confessions between a Woman and Her Doctor," from *Pursuing Privacy in Cold War America*  
Vietnam poetry (Levertov, Duncan, Komunyakaa)

## WEEK 7

Wednesday, October 16 Malcolm X, *Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965), Chs. 1-14  
James Baldwin, from *The Fire Next Time* (1962)

## WEEK 8

Wednesday, October 23 **Guest lecture 13:00, Padre Rubio Hall 1**  
**Manuel Herrero Puertas, "Freak Bodies Politic: General Tom Thumb and the Production of National Identity"**  
Malcolm X, *Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965), Chs. 15-end  
Todd Gitlin, "Women: Revolution in the Revolution," from *The Sixties*  
Black Woman's Manifesto" (1970)  
<http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/scriptorium/wlm/blkmanif/>  
Barbara Smith, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism" (1975)  
<http://webs.wofford.edu/hitchmoughsa/Toward.html>  
**Second paper due, 4-5 pp.**

## WEEK 9

Wednesday, October 30 Walker, *Meridian* (1976)  
bell hooks, "Black Women Shaping Feminist Theory," from *Black Feminist Criticism* (1984)

## WEEK 10

Monday, November 4 **Last day to drop a class and receive grade of W**

Wednesday, November 6 Silko, *Ceremony* (1972)  
Paul Gunn Allen, "Kochinnenako in Academe"  
Lawrence Buell, "Toxic Discourse" from *Writing for an Endangered World*

## WEEK 11

Wednesday, November 13 DeLillo, *White Noise* (1980)  
H. Bruce Franklin, "From Realism to Virtual Reality," from *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies*  
Toni Morrison, "black matters," from *Playing in the Dark*  
Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations"  
**Annotated Bibliographies due, 15+ sources—  
10-minute presentation of bibliography in class**

## WEEK 12

Wednesday, November 20 Hejinian, *My Life* (1980-)  
Todd Gitlin, "The Implosion" and "Fadeout" from *The Sixties*  
Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto"

## WEEK 13

Wednesday, November 27 Morrison, *Beloved* (1987)  
Ashraf Rushdy, "Master Texts and Slave Narratives" from *Neo-Slave Narratives*

## WEEK 14

Monday, December 2 **Rough draft of final project due, 15-20 pp.**

Wednesday, December 4 Finish Morrison, *Beloved* (1987)  
**Workshop on rough drafts**

## WEEK 15

Wednesday, December 11 Hagedorn, *Dogeaters* (1990)  
Gloria Anzaldúa, "La conciencia de la mestiza/Towards an New Consciousness" from *Borderlands*  
Lisa Lowe, "Decolonization, Displacement, Disidentification: Writing and the Question of History," from *Immigrant Acts*

## WEEK 16

Wednesday, December 18 **Final paper due, 15-20 pp., at least 10 sources**

### WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS AND ORAL PRESENTATIONS

**Class:** Graduate class discussion should be driven by lively participation in scholarly dialogue, airing original insights and questions, sharing scholarly knowledge, and listening constructively to fellow students. For each class, prepare a 5-10-minute presentation to prompt discussion on a topic of your interest. Consider close reading/questioning on a topic of your interest, exploration of a connection between the literary text and one of the other readings, a summary of an article related to the day's reading...

It should go without saying that attendance is essential. More than three unexcused absences could lead to failure in the course.

**Papers:** Paper assignments are open topic, although I will provide suggestions. In class, we will discuss paper ideas and troubleshoot challenges to scholarly writing. At least one paper must incorporate nonliterary texts, whether historical or theoretical. If you develop an interest early, you may write your shorter papers on your final paper topic.

**Annotated bibliography:** Annotated bibliography of 12-15 items (books, articles) on a theme of your choosing related to your final research project. This may (and probably will be) be interdisciplinary. The bibliography should include full citation of the item following MLA format and a brief (3-5 sentence) summary of the article's argument. Summary of your findings to be presented in class in a 10-minute presentation. All written work should follow the guidelines of the *MLA Handbook* for scholarly form and correct citation of primary and secondary materials.