

HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Department of English and Cultural Studies

English 2824G 550: American Dreams/American Nightmares

Winter 2022

Wednesdays 6 30-9 30, W8

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Office Hours: Wednesday 5 30- 6 30 and any day by appointment

Prerequisite(s): At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020-1999 or permission of the Department.

Course Description: The Capitol Riot on January 6th, 2021 in the United States caused death and destruction and to many marked an end to the “peaceful transition of power” which had been a hallmark of American democracy.

This course looks at how the stories the United States tells about itself both forbid and are the enabling conditions of such a violent insurrection. The course examines how a country dedicated to a conception of “freedom” but founded on slavery will inevitably have tensions and contradictions in creating an identity. This issue is exacerbated for a nation-state that arose as part of a colonial project that largely ignored the rights and liberties of indigenous peoples.

In reading American stories from the earliest European arrivals to stories told by living authors, we will explore notions of freedom and American exceptionalism. A central focus of the course is how the African American presence informs those narratives even when African American characters are silenced. The course also examines how the narratives established in the decades immediately following the Second World War retain a strong hold on the American imagination.

Class Methods: The course follows a lecture format but discussion will be a part of every class session.. Students should come to class with their textbook, having read the work scheduled for that day, and should be prepared to participate in class discussion. In the final part of each class, the topics will be applied to contemporary concerns. Your attendance and participation are essential and each unexcused absence will result in an automatic reduction of 2% from the earned participation grade.

Course Objectives:

This course will help students develop as critical and creative thinkers and improve their expression of their ideas. By the end of the course, students should be able to identify various

movements in American literature and understand their aesthetic, political, and social importance. Students should recognize which founding stories of the United States remain meaningful to contemporary American society and how those original stories become altered and corrupted. Students will also seek to understand why and how some important narratives become marginalized. Students will improve their ability to write strong analytical essays about literature, and more fully understand the wide variety of American literature and its influence on past and present cultures. Ideally, students will also, through close engagement with the texts, better appreciate how literature can enhance their personal and academic lives.

Books:

DuBois, Johnson, Washington *Three Negro Classics*

Fitzgerald *The Great Gatsby*

Morrison *The Bluest Eye*

All other readings will be available either through the course OWL site or in handouts.

Evaluation: More details about each of the assignments below will be given in class.

Essay, due March 21 35%

Review Essay due no later than March 2 15%

Class work, participation, and attendance 15%

Final Exam 35%

Readings: All readings should be done before class on the assigned date and significant discussion is required of each member of the seminar. There may be a small amount of additional reading assigned during the semester and there will be online class discussion.

Week 1 January 5 Introduction to course and **Origin Stories:** Thomas Jefferson “Declaration of Independence”; Iroquois creation tale; excerpt from Mark Twain *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; excerpts Walt Whitman “Preface to Leaves of Grass”

Week 2 January 12 **Liberty, War and A More Perfect Union:** Abraham Lincoln “The Gettysburg Address”; Benjamin Franklin “Information for those Who Would to America”; “How a Great Empire May be Reduced to a Small One”; Thomas Paine from “Common Sense” and “The Crisis”; Jefferson “Letter to Peter Carr”; Jefferson “Letter to Peter Burwell”; Washington Irving “Rip Van Winkle”; Frederick Douglass “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro”

Week 3 January 19 **Religion:** William Bradford from “Of Plymouth Plantation” selections; Cotton Mather from “The Wonders of the Invisible World” selections; Anne Bradstreet “By Night When Others Soundly Slept”; “To My Dear and Loving Husband”; Phillis Wheatley “On Being Brought From Africa to America”; “To The University of Cambridge in New England”; Alice Notley “The Goddess Who Created this Passing World; Wallace Stevens “Sunday Morning”

Week 4 January 26 **Community:** Nathaniel Hawthorne *The Scarlet Letter* full text; Edgar Allan Poe “Sonnet, To Science”

Week 5 February 2 **Nature:** Ralph Waldo Emerson “Nature”, selections from “Self-Reliance,” selections from “The Poet; Henry David Thoreau selections from *Walden* ; Walt Whitman selections from “Song of Myself”, “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d”; Stephen Crane “The Open Boat”

Week 6 February 9 **Gender:** Elizabeth Cady Stanton “Declaration of Sentiments”; Emily Dickinson selected poems; Kate Chopin *The Awakening*; Charlotte Perkins Gilliam “The Yellow Wallpaper”

Week 7 February 16 **Race:** Thomas King excerpts from *The Inconvenient Indian* (handout); John Smith “The Romance of Pocohontas”; W.E.B. Dubois excerpts from *The Souls of Black Folks*; Booker T. Washington excerpts from *Up From Slavery*; Dudley Randall “Booker T. and W.E.B.”; James Weldon Johnson *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*.

Week 8 March 2 **Culture and Identity:** Toni Morrison excerpts from *Playing in the Dark* (handout); Toni Morrison *The Bluest Eye*; **Review essay due at start of class March 2nd**

Week 9 March 9 **Art:** Edna St. Vincent Millay selected poems; Ezra Pound excerpts from “Hugh Selwyn Mauberley”; Ginsberg “A Supermarket in California”; Ernest Hemingway “The Snows of Kilimanjaro”; Martin Scorsese “Life Lessons” film

Week 10 March 16 **Education and Social Mobility** Alexander Hamilton “The Federalist Papers number 15”; Lin Manuel Miranda *Hamilton* (excerpts to be watched); Harriet Beecher Stowe excerpt from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*; Rita Dove “Banneker”; Alice Walker “Everyday Use”

Week 11 March 23 NO CLASS **Essay due Monday March 21st at noon**

Week 12 March 30 **American Dream and Liberty:** Langston Hughes “Harlem”; “I, Too”; F. Scott Fitzgerald *The Great Gatsby*



Appendix to Course Outlines: Academic Policies & Regulations 2021 - 2022

Prerequisite and Antirequisite Information

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that they have not completed any course antirequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course

and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Pandemic Contingency

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, typically using a combination of synchronous instruction (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) and asynchronous material (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online at the discretion of the course instructor. In the unlikely event that changes to the grading scheme are necessary, these changes will be clearly communicated as soon as possible.

Student Code of Conduct

Membership in the community of Huron University College and Western University implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. While in the physical or online classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Please review the Student Code of Conduct at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/sites/default/files/Res%20Life/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Revised%20September%202019.pdf>.

Attendance Regulations for Examinations

A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations:

- 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.
- 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Review the policy on Attendance Regulations for Examinations here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/attendance.pdf.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf. The appeals process is also outlined in this policy as well as more generally at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsundergrad.pdf.

Turnitin.com

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the

purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

It is not appropriate to use electronic devices (such as, but not limited to, laptops, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

Statement on Use of Personal Response Systems (“Clickers”)

Personal Response Systems (“clickers”) may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning. Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else’s clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a self-reported absence form online provided that the absence is **48 hours or less** and the other conditions specified in the Senate policy at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf are met.

Students whose absences are expected to last **longer than 48 hours**, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds). The Student Medical Certificate is available online at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. **Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.**

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation. Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>.

Policy on Academic Consideration for a Medical/ Non-Medical Absence

- (a) **Consideration on Medical Grounds for assignments worth *less than 10%* of final grade: Consult Instructor Directly and Contact Academic Advising**

When seeking consideration on **medical grounds** for assignments worth *less than 10%* of the final course grade, and if the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported absences, the student should contact the instructor directly. The student need only share broad outlines of the medical

situation. The instructor **may** require the student to submit documentation to the academic advisors, in which case she or he will advise the student and inform the academic advisors to expect documentation. If documentation is requested, the student will need to complete and submit the [Student Medical Certificate](#). The instructor may **not** collect medical documentation. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation.

(b) Consideration on Non-Medical Grounds: Consult Huron Support Services/Academic Advising, or email huronsss@uwo.ca.

Students seeking academic consideration for a **non-medical** absence (e.g. varsity sports, religious, compassionate, or bereavement) will be required to provide appropriate documentation where the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence have not been met, including where the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported. All consideration requests must include a completed [Consideration Request Form](#). Late penalties may apply at the discretion of the instructor.

Please review the full policy on Academic Consideration for medical and non-medical absence at: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf. Consult [Huron Academic Advising](#) at huronsss@uwo.ca for any further questions or information.

Support Services

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation, students should email an Academic Advisor in Huron's Student Support Services at huronsss@uwo.ca. An outline of the range of services offered is found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>.

Department Chairs, Program Directors and Coordinators are also able to answer questions about individual programs. Contact information can be found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/contact/faculty-staff-directory/>.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your workload is not manageable, you should consult your Academic Advisor. If you are considering reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines. Please refer to the Advising website, <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/academic-advising/> or review the list of official Sessional Dates on the Academic Calendar, available here: <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/SessionalDates.cfm>.

You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP and/or Scholarship/Bursary eligibility.

Huron Student Support Services: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>
Office of the Registrar: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/>
Student Quick Reference Guide: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/#1>
Academic Support & Engagement: <http://academicssupport.uwo.ca/>
Huron University College Student Council: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/beyond-classroom/hucsc/>
Western USC: <http://westernusc.ca/your-services/#studentservices>

Mental Health & Wellness Support at Huron and Western

University students may encounter setbacks from time to time that can impact academic performance. Huron offers a variety of services that are here to support your success and wellbeing. Please visit <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life-campus/student-services/wellness-safety> for more information or contact staff directly:

Wellness Services: huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca

Community Safety Office: safety@huron.uwo.ca

Chaplaincy: gthorne@huron.uwo.ca

Additional supports for Health and Wellness may be found and accessed at Western through, <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>.