American Modernism

This summer we will be exploring texts produced by American writers between 1898 and 1945. This will take us from the beginning of the Spanish-American War through the end of World War II, allowing us to track the rise of America as a superpower as well as the ways this shifting political situation impacted American cultural production. Some of the thematic threads we will address include American expansionism, regionalism, the Harlem Renaissance, industrialization, and the fetishization of difficulty. Part of our work will involve deconstructing what (if anything) it means to label a text a work of “American modernism” given the porosity of national borders during the period and writers’ embrace of such divergent styles of formal experimentation.

Required Texts
All books are required, and can be acquired at the university bookstore.

*The Moon is Down* John Steinbeck (Penguin Classics) 978-0-14-018746-5

Course Expectations
Summer session involves intensive course study; each meeting is roughly equivalent to a week of classes during the regular academic year. It is therefore expected that students attend all class meetings. Those who miss more than 3 meetings will automatically fail the course. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. In the case of emergencies, you should contact your class dean. If you repeatedly arrive late for class, these tardies will be converted to absences. Plan ahead accordingly.

More than simply being present, I expect you to arrive each day having read all of the assigned material. By ‘read,’ I mean read critically. These are difficult texts; many of them were written with the specific aim of confusing readers. You may need to read texts multiple times before you have something to say about them (or specific questions to ask). **You should come with your own agenda, a set of questions or discussion points that you want us to address during our discussion. These notes may take whatever form you find most useful, but I reserve the right to collect and grade them unannounced.**

In addition to active and thoughtful participation, your formal work over the course of the term will consist of three close reading quizzes, a presentation, a midterm and a final essay. Quizzes will involve providing close readings of selected passages from texts we have discussed. For your presentation, you will prepare 3-5 discussion questions about a particular day’s reading, and guide the class through that discussion. The midterm will be
a combination of identifications and short writing prompts. Your final essay will be a 5 page, thesis driven analysis of a topic of your choosing pertaining to texts and/or issues we discuss over the course of the term. In fairness to all students, no extensions will be granted. Plan ahead accordingly.

As this is part of the advanced literature core, it is expected that you are familiar with the basic techniques of close reading and literary analysis. If this is not the case (or if you find yourself struggling with particular texts or assignments), you are responsible for seeking out additional help.

Finally, a good deal of this class will be structured around discussion. That means it is imperative that we create an environment in which everyone feels comfortable expressing his or her ideas. If you behave in such a way as to impede this free exchange, you will be removed from the classroom and counted as absent. Repeated incursions will result in course failure.

Grading
Fordham uses a letter grading system. For this course, grades will be assigned according to the following point values:

- B+ 87-89.9
- C+ 77-79.9
- D 65-69.9
- A >93-96.9
- B  83-86.9
- C  73-76.9
- F <65
- A- 90-92.9
- B- 80-82.9
- C- 70-72.9

Your course grades will be broken down according to the following percentages:
- Quizzes: 30% (10% each)
- Presentation: 10%
- Midterm Exam: 25%
- Final Paper: 35%

Grades for all assignments, as well as your running cumulative average, will be posted in the grading center of blackboard. I reserve the right to round up or down based on participation, so I highly encourage you to be an active member of class.

Fordham Policies and Resources

Inclusive Learning
Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, all students, with or without disabilities, are entitled to equal access to the programs and activities of Fordham University. If you have (or think you might have) a disability that will impact your participation in the activities, coursework, or assessment of this class, you may be entitled to accommodations. Contact the Office of Disability Services (O’Hare Hall, Lower Level 718-817-0655) to schedule an appointment and learn more about your options.

Whether or not you have documented accommodations, your success in this class is important to me. If there are aspects of the course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we can develop strategies
to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Also keep in mind that many campus resources you may find useful, such as the Writing Center (Walsh Library Reference Area Room 121, 718-817-0077), are available to all students, regardless of disability status.

Fordham offers free and confidential mental health services for students. If you are interested in learning more, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) (O’Hare Hall Basement, 718-817-3735) to make an appointment.

Academic Integrity
Fordham takes academic integrity very seriously. Violations fall under three main categories: submitting work that is not your own, submitting work that you have previously handed in for another class (without instructor approval), and failing to appropriately document your sources. Sanctions range from receiving an F on the assignment to being expelled from the university. If you plagiarize (or commit other acts of academic dishonesty) you will get caught. It isn’t worth it. Seek out assistance if you have questions about what constitutes an appropriate use of sources.

Reading Schedule

T May 30: Introduction, close reading, Washington from *Up From Slavery*, Du Bois from *The Souls of Black Folk*


R June 1: Pound from *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* 1685-1693, Dos Passos “Body of an American” 2346-2350, Cummings “my sweet old etcetera” 1862, “i sing of Olaf glad and big” 1863-1864, “the Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls” 1861, Lowell “Patterns” 1705-1707


W June 7: *Modern Times* (in class)

R June 8: McKay “If We Must Die” 2161, “The Lynching” 2162, “America” 2163, Cullen “Incident” 2115, “Yet Do I Marvel” 2117, “Scottsboro, Too, Is Worth Its Song” 2121,

M June 12: Larsen Passing 2170-2240, Hurston “The Gilded Six Bits” 2151-2160


W June 14: Citizen Kane (in class), Bernays from Propaganda 1671-1674

R June 15: Midterm


T June 20: Odets Waiting for Lefty 2381-2400

W June 21: Spellbound (in class)


M June 26: Zitkala-Ša from American Indian Stories (blackboard), Morning Dove from Coyote Stories 2439-2445, McNickle “Hard Riding” 2466-2472, Mathews from Sundown 2446-2458

T June 27: Kang from East Goes West 2611-2625, first draft of final paper due (peer review)

W June 28: Quiz 3, The Moon Goes Down, Keller (blackboard)

R June 29: Paredes “Ichiro Kikuchi” 2657-2661, HD from Trilogy 1819-1824, Eliot “Little Gidding” (blackboard) final paper due