

**The City in American Literature**  
**English 4996W: Honors Seminar**  
**Prof. Samuel Cohen**  
**University of Missouri**  
**Fall 2018**  
**MWF 10-10:50 a.m., Tate 101**  
**Office hours: T 1-3 p.m., F 11 a.m.-12 p.m.**  
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## **The Course**

This course is the first part of the two-semester Honors sequence in the English Department, and is intended to lead into the second part, the writing of the Honors senior thesis (English 4995, taken in the Spring term). The theme of this section is the city in American literature. We will read a variety of literary works from across American literary history that engage with the city as a place and as an idea; we will also read literary criticism and theory that is concerned with these works and with the city in literature, culture, and history. You will write two shorter exploratory drafts of critical papers and one longer research paper that can be expanded from one of these, or not, if you want to start something new. There will be assignments along the way before the final draft of the longer research paper is handed in at the end of the semester, including a proposal, an annotated bibliography, and a rough draft. Each student will also do a presentation on secondary material.

## **Policies & Procedures**

### Attendance & Punctuality

Attendance and punctuality are mandatory. Much of the material will be covered through discussion; we will also cover additional material, including videos, during class meetings. I don't post lecture notes or slides online and I don't provide them for students who are absent. You will be allowed five unpenalized absences; on the sixth absence, I will drop your final grade a step (B becomes B-, B- becomes C+, etc.). Every additional absence will result in another step drop.

### In Class

You will come to class having read the work assigned for that day. If we are reading a purchased text, you must bring that text. If we are reading something from Canvas, you must either bring a hard copy of the text or have it available to read on your laptop or a tablet (phones are not acceptable and should not come out of your pocket during class). If I see that you are surfing the web or using your laptop or tablet for something other than work for the class, you will be marked down as absent.

### Reading +

You will have to read a fair amount of material in this class, and it is important that you keep up. If you do not think you will be able to do so, consider another class. Also, the material we cover will sometimes be of a sensitive nature; if you have a problem with this sort of thing, you should not take this class, as you may not be excused from reading, listening to, and talking about this material.

### Assignments

Assignments will include two shorter papers (1000 words each); one longer research project, which will include a proposal, an annotated bibliography, a rough draft, and the final paper (4000 words); and a presentation. All written work will be submitted through Canvas.

### Grade

Your grade will consist of class participation (20%), presentation (5%), short papers (20% each), proposal (5%), annotated bibliography (5%), rough draft (15%), and final draft (30%).

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	94 – 100%
A-	90 – 93%
B+	87 – 89%
B	84 – 86%
B-	80 – 83%
C+	77 – 79%
C	74 – 76%
C-	70 – 72%
D+	67 – 69%
D	64 – 66%
D-	60 – 63%
F	0 – 59%

### Office Hours

I am available for one-on-one meetings with students during my office hours (T 1-3, F 11-12) and by appointment. If you have any questions concerning the reading or what we cover in class, please do not hesitate to come and talk with me. The door to my office (Tate 333) is open during office hours and you should feel free to come by (though appointments are suggested, as I'm so very popular.) If you can't make my office hours, email me to arrange an appointment at another time. As a last resort, try email, but I can't guarantee instant or after-hours replies.

### Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards breaches of the academic integrity rules as extremely serious matters. Sanctions for such a breach may include academic sanctions from the instructor, including failing the course for any violation, to disciplinary sanctions ranging from probation to expulsion. When in doubt about

plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, collaboration, or any other form of cheating, consult the course instructor.

### Students with Disabilities

If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need to make arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please let me know as soon as possible.

If disability related accommodations are necessary (for example, a note taker, extended time on exams, captioning), please establish an accommodation plan with the MU Disability Center, S5 Memorial Union, 573-882-4696, and then notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. For other MU resources for persons with disabilities, click on "Disability Resources" on the MU homepage.

### Intellectual Diversity

The University welcomes intellectual diversity and respects student rights. Students who have questions or concerns regarding the atmosphere in this class (including respect for diverse opinions) may contact the departmental chair or divisional director; the director of the Office of Students Rights and Responsibilities; the MU Equity Office, or [equity@missouri.edu](mailto:equity@missouri.edu). All students will have the opportunity to submit an anonymous evaluation of the instructor at the end of the course.

### Executive Order No. 38

University of Missouri System Executive Order No. 38 lays out principles regarding the sanctity of classroom discussions at the university. The policy is described fully in section 200.015 of the Collected Rules and Regulations. In this class, students may not make audio or video recordings of course activity, except students permitted to record as an accommodation under section 240.040 of the Collected Rules. All other students who record and/or distribute audio or video recordings of class activity are subject to discipline in accordance with provisions of section 200.020 of the Collected Rules and Regulations of the University of Missouri pertaining to student conduct matters. Those students who are permitted to record are not permitted to redistribute audio or video recordings of statements or comments from the course to individuals who are not students in the course without the express permission of the faculty member and of any students who are recorded. Students found to have violated this policy are subject to discipline in accordance with provisions of section 200.020 of the Collected Rules and Regulations of the University of Missouri pertaining to student conduct matters.

### **The Texts**

Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*

Stephen Crane, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*

John A. Williams, *Butcher's Crossing*

Toni Morrison, *Jazz*

(all have been ordered through the university bookstore)

All other reading will be available on Canvas

## Schedule

### Week 1

Aug	20	Introduction
	22	Culler, <i>Literary Theory</i> Ch. 1 & 2
	24	Culler Ch. 3 & 4

### Week 2

Aug	27	Culler Ch. 5, 6, & 7
	29	Culler Ch. 8, 9 & Appendix
	30	Robert Lehan, <i>The City in Literature</i> "The City and the Text" (3-9), "From Myth to Mastery" (13-25), "The City and the Estate" (26-47)

### Week 3

Sep	3	Labor Day
	5	Lehan "The Inward Turn" (71-81), "The City and the Wilderness" (167-81)
	7	Crane, <i>Maggie: A Girl of the Streets</i> Ch. I-VIII (36-62)

### Week 4

Sep	10	Crane Ch. IX-XI (62-94)
	12	Crane Introduction (3-23), "In Darkest New York" (97-101), Jacob Riis, "The Problem of the Children" (128-32), William T. Elsing, "Life in Tenement Houses" (133-44), George Frederic Parsons, "The Saloon in Society" (174-83), "The Plight of the Working Woman" (195-98), Jacob A. Riis, "The Working Girls of New York" (202-07), "The Painted Cohorts" (263-66)
	14	Crane "Realism and Beyond" (302-05), Henry James, from <i>The Art of Fiction</i> (311-16), Hamlin Garland, "The Future of Fiction" (316-27), William Dean Howells, from "New York Low Life in Fiction" (333-38)

### Week 5

Sep	17	<i>First short paper due</i> Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"; Sara Teasdale, "The Lights of New York"; Edna St. Vincent Millay, "City Trees"; Robert Frost, "A Brook in the City"
	19	Williams, <i>Butcher's Crossing</i> Part One (5-64)
	21	Williams, Part Two, Ch 1-3 (65-118)

### Week 6

Sep	24	Williams, Part Two, Ch 4-5 (118-51)
	26	Williams, Part Two, Ch 6-8 (151-226)
	28	Williams, Part Three (227-74)

**Week 7**

- Oct 1 *Proposals due*  
 Carl Sandburg, "Chicago"; James Laughlin, "Above the City"; Frank O'Hara, "The Day Lady Died"  
 3 Jack Brenner, "Butcher's Crossing: The Husks and Shells of Exploitation"  
 5 Trevor Berrett, "Butcher's Crossing"; Blake R. Westerlund, "All in a Day's Work: John Williams's *Butchers Crossing* and Work's Dissatisfaction"

**Week 8**

- Oct 8 *Second short paper due*  
 Introduction to annotated bibliographies  
 Introduction to "Understanding the MLA International Bibliography on EBSCO: An Online Course"  
 10 No class; complete "What Is the MLA International Bibliography," "Searching," & "Limiting Searches and More Search Tips"  
 12 No class; complete "Peer Review" and "Understanding Results and Locating Full Text"

**Week 9**

- Oct 15 Morrison, *Jazz* (1-24)  
 17 Morrison (25-87)  
 19 Morrison (88-114)  
*Annotated bibliographies due*

**Week 10**

- Oct 22 Morrison (115-135)  
 24 Morrison (136-193)  
 26 Morrison (194-229)

**Week 11**

- Oct 29 Anne-Marie Paquet-Deyris, "Toni Morrison's *Jazz* and the City"  
 Geta LeSeur, "'Sweet Desolation' and Seduction in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*"  
 31 Catrin Gersdorf, "Nature in the Grid: American Literature, Urbanism, Ecocriticism"  
 Nov 2 Langston Hughes, "Harlem"; Robert Lowell, "For the Union Dead"; Mark Doty, "Broadway"

**Week 12**

- Nov 5 Toi Derricotte, "Blackbottom"; Francine J Harris, "what you'd find buried in the dirt under charles f. kettering sr. high school (detroit, michigan)"  
 7 Garrett Hongo, "Yellow Light"; Ross Gay, "To the Fig Tree on 9th and Christian"  
 9 Naomi Shihab Nye, "To Jamyla Bolden of Ferguson, Missouri"; Vievee Francis, "Anti-Pastoral"

**Week 13**

Nov	12	Paper conferences
	14	Paper conferences
	16	Rough Drafts due

**Week 14**

Nov	19	Thanksgiving
	21	Thanksgiving
	23	Thanksgiving

**Week 15**

Nov	26	Conferences/peer review
	28	Conferences/peer review
	30	Presentations

**Week 16**

Dec	3	Presentations
	5	Presentations
		Papers due