

## Syllabus - ENGL 2328 Summer 2003 UTPB

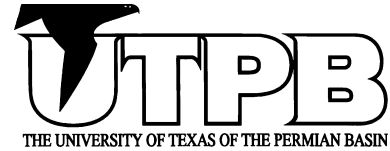
### **American Literature Since 1865**

M-Th 8:00am

Dr. Kenneth Sherwood

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Office: MB 429



A study of major and minor literary works. Students develop the skills of close reading, interpretation, and analysis while gaining insight into American literature, history, and culture. Reading, class discussion, and formal/informal writing assignments help students to think about how individual works and authors accept, rework, reject, and otherwise interact with dominant issues of their time.

### **Texts**

The Norton Anthology of American Literature (package 2, vols. C,D,E), Baym et al, eds.  
A Short Guide to Writing About Literature, Barnet and Cain, eds.

### **Other Resources**

ENGL 2328 Class Web Page ([www.utpb.edu/~sherwood/](http://www.utpb.edu/~sherwood/))

Norton American Literature Web ([www.wwnorton.com/naal](http://www.wwnorton.com/naal))

### **Requirements**

Participation and preparedness - engagement in class discussion; marginal notation; assigned posts to web discussion board. Also includes announced or unannounced reading quizzes, as well as any minor writing assignments completed in class or as homework.	20%
Exams - Mid-term and Final; open book; primarily paragraph and essay-length responses.	40%
Essays - moderate length analysis with draft and revisions; longer analysis with research, draft and revisions.	40%

Attendance is assumed. Each student is allowed three absences, beyond which the student's final average will be reduced 5% points per absence. Students who anticipate missing five or more classes for health, family, or other personal reasons should consider taking the class at another time. UTPB requires that students attending sponsored events (eg. athletes) be given the opportunity to make up work; a typed, 350-word discussion of assigned material will be expected within one week of such absences. Fairness requires that no exceptions be made.

## **Cheating, Plagiarism, and Collusion**

### **UTPB Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty**

*Students are expected to be above reproach in all scholastic activities. Students who engage in scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and dismissal from the university. 'Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.'* Regents' Rules and Regulations, Part One, Chapter VI, Section 3, Subsection 3.2, Subdivision 3.22. *Since scholastic dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the university, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced--*Student Discipline for Scholastic Dishonesty: A Guide for Administrators, Faculty, and Hearing Officers (28).

See also: [www.utpb.edu/UTPB\\_Student/Students/StudentLife/StudentService\\_Other/StudentGuide/main\\_student\\_guide.htm](http://www.utpb.edu/UTPB_Student/Students/StudentLife/StudentService_Other/StudentGuide/main_student_guide.htm)

Scholastic Dishonesty is a serious matter. I am savvy and vigilant in detecting students who use unattributed web sources, "collaborate" with fellows students, or utilize other "clever" methods to enhance their grades. Take the grade you honestly earn on an assignment. Should a classmate attempt to use your work, refuse; I make no distinction between cheaters and those who aid them. A plagiarized assignment will earn you a zero for the assignment and referral to the Vice President for disciplinary action.

### **Expectations, Workload, and Help**

*Each semester credit hour at UT Permian Basin represents a commitment on an average of three hours of 'out of class' preparation and one hour of class attendance (or its equivalent) per week. For example, enrolling in a three semester credit hour class commits the student to a total of twelve hours of work per week. Students who are employed or who have family responsibilities are especially encouraged to bear this commitment in mind and to seek guidance from their academic advisors in determining a suitable academic schedule*

(UTPB Undergraduate Catalog 2001-2003; 57).

This will be a challenging college course. We will discuss all major texts during class, but I expect that you will have closely read and reflected on them in advance. As in all literature courses, you must make the effort to draw your own inferences about the texts you read and be prepared to learn how to articulate and justify your interpretations. Make sure you schedule time for reflective reading; falling behind in the reading diminishes what you can gain from each class. I will expect that your written work, if not "original," will do more than simply reprocess what our class discussions and lectures presented. Also, it is assumed that you are familiar with the basics of composition. ENGL 1302 is a prerequisite. If you have not satisfied your general education requirements in writing, you must postpone this class until you have done so. I encourage you to meet with me for extra help or to discuss ways to enhance your learning. Please keep track of your grades. I prefer substantive discussions about the course content or your growth (strengths and weaknesses) to talk of your GPA and the generation of 'progress reports,' which is not the most efficient use of our time together.

### **Make-up Work, Computer Breakdown, and Other Exigencies**

Successful mastery of course material requires students to complete assignments in a timely fashion. Make-up work does not serve the learning process and so will not be permitted, except for tests missed because of family emergency or severe illness. Writing assignments should be handed in at the beginning of class on the day due; the grade of a late paper will be reduced by a 1/2-letter-grade for each day or portion of a day it is late; after one week, a grade of F will pertain, though the student should still submit a paper in order to avoid getting a zero. Should you unavoidably miss a class, be sure to convey any assignment to me: leave it in my HFA-office mailbox; use a classmate as courier; email it (sherwood\_k@utpb.edu); or fax 552-3280. Make paper and back-up copies of work done on computers. Begin work in advance of deadlines, so that you have time to troubleshoot disk errors, virus alerts, printer problems, etc. I know intimately how unreliable technology can be, but you are responsible for submitting work despite the gremlins and Murphy's Law.

**Cell Phones**

Please silence cell phones and beepers during class time.

*Further details about policies, procedures, and assignments are available in the FAQ and Calendar.*

## FAQ

### *What counts as good participation?*

Comments sharing insights, posing questions, and responding to classmates. Your readiness to participate in class (attentive listening, informed and thoughtful contribution to class and group discussions, raising of questions) is assumed. Informed and attentive participation is the key. Verbal contributions to class may be combined with electronic contributions to the web discussion.

### *What can I expect on a test in a literature class?*

Generally tests balance paragraph and essay-length questions. They assess your reading comprehension, assimilation of significant concepts presented in the reading and during classes, and your ability to analyze and interpret texts.

### *What if I cannot develop my own interpretation of a literary work?*

Overstressing originality can make the process of developing your own reading seem quite daunting. Please consult the Barnet Guide to Writing About Literature for tips on developing ideas. Be sure you are reading actively, with a pencil in hand. While reading and during class, be ready to jot down ideas worth further exploration.

### *What if my interpretation of a work is wrong?*

I like to compare good interpretations to the arguments of good lawyers. Obviously, in an ideal courtroom, both prosecuting and defense attorneys make strong, informed and persuasive claims. They work with the evidence at hand to persuade a judge or jurors. Obviously, only one can have the "right" on his or her side, but both can make competent cases. The analogy is key too, because a good literary interpretation is not just an expression of a reader's feelings or intuitive response to a work; it must be expressed in a way designed to persuade others. Thus ultimately for most literature courses, exactly what your opinion is matters much less than how you arrived at it and how effectively you can communicate your reasoning.

### *Can I make up missed work?*

Students should expect to complete tests on the scheduled date. In cases of extreme illness or family emergency only, students may, upon documentation, complete a test the following class meeting. Minor work such as quizzes will not be made up; typically a quiz will be given at the start of a class. Other assignments will be accepted late but with a penalty.

### *What is marginal notation?*

If you have written nothing in the margins of a text, I will assume you have not read it. Almost all good readers literally interact with the texts they read by making notes in the margin. Students sometimes tell me that they prefer not to write in their books because they want to resell them. My first response is, don't! Hold onto them and you may decide to read them again some day. If you can't resist getting \$10 for a \$50 text, then

read with an erasable pencil (hi-lighting is useless anyway) or keep post-it notes handy and write on them. Yes, I'm serious about this!

*How do I access the class discussion list?*

Our class has an online discussion area accessible on a UTPB web server. If you have not previously used WebCT in a UTPB class, you will find it easiest to access the discussion area from my web page ([www.utpb.edu/~sherwood](http://www.utpb.edu/~sherwood)), which will also feature links to relevant resources. The discussion is password protected; if you have trouble accessing or registered late for the class, you will need to contact Reach directly for your account information. Consider the discussion list an electronic twin to our classroom discussion, with the advantage that you can work out your thoughts before "sending". Address the texts themselves, points raised in class discussion/lecture, or the ongoing web conversation. You may make an argumentative claim or raise a thoughtful question. Work with your classmates, reading their posts and responding, and you may gain further: picking up ideas for your paper or clarifying your knowledge of a text. I will browse your postings and occasionally participate in the discussion, but I will not grade each individual post. Participate weekly; you should not expect to make up for missed postings in the final week of class.

*Why do we have to buy and read the Barnett guide?*

Spending some time and effort thinking about what makes literature, how and why we read and analyze it, seems important to me for a few reasons. It should help you meet the course expectations; it may fill gaps left by prior literature classes; it gives us all a common vocabulary.

*What does he expect us to do when we read these assignments by ourselves?*

First, make marginal notation as you read, recording whatever observations you can on your own. It matters little whether your response is clever or confused; the first step to understanding is having a response. Second, do your best to make some sense of them; reading literature is less about getting the right answer than it is about one's experience of the text; if you wait for the professor to teach it before reading, you miss that experience.

## A Cultural Approach to American Literature

Over this semester, we will adopt a cultural approach in our reading of American literature since 1865. We will interpret and analyze texts within their historical context to better understand the way they reflect and shaped the values and ideas of their times. The term "culture" has come to be used in a dizzying variety of ways, according to the critic Stephen Greenblatt, including: the limited sense of high culture (opera, oil painting, classical music), the sociological sense (youth culture, aristocratic culture, mtv culture), and as a descriptive equivalent of civilization (to be cultured and not savage) (225). In cultural and literary studies of the last twenty years, many critics have helped to give a more specific or specialized meaning to the term so that it ultimately becomes more useful. Their notion of culture emphasizes "what appear to be opposite things: *constraint* and *mobility*" (225) or limitation and liberation. As one among many institutions that shape culture--others include religion, government, education--"Western literature over a very long period of time has been one of the great institutions for the enforcement of cultural boundaries through praise and blame" (226). As you read and prepare for discussion and other assignments this semester, I will ask you to keep in mind a series of broad "culturalist" questions that Greenblatt offers:

1. What kinds of behavior, what models of practice, does this work seem to enforce?
2. Why might readers at a particular time and place find this work compelling?
3. Are there differences between my values and the values implicit in the work I am reading?
4. Upon what social understandings does the work depend? [i.e. what ideas about the world, social order, history are taken as a given?]
5. Whose freedom of thought or movement might be constrained [or unleashed] implicitly or explicitly by this work?
6. What are the larger social structures with which these particular acts of praise or blame might be connected? (226)

As we read particular works, part of your job will be to participate in revising these questions to make them more specifically applicable to particular American poems, essays, stories, and plays.

Several of these questions (2, 3, 4) may also be useful for students who are accustomed to pleasure reading in which "good" books are those that are most compelling to readers in this "time and place" and because they mirror one's own "values" and picture of the world. Doubtless many of the characters, stories, themes, etc. you encounter this semester will interest, engage, and amuse you because you can "identify" with them; how intense it can be to encounter a mirror of one's own experience on the page. Yet the virtue of others will be precisely in the fact that they present values, difficulties, aspirations, and fears very different from your own. The cultural emphasis of the course will help us to see, discuss, and better understand such differences.