

## ENGLISH 435G: JUSTICE AND VIOLENCE IN THE GILDED AGE

Time: Thursday 3:30–6:20 p.m.

Classroom: Griffin

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.

Office: Griffin 250

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### COURSE OVERVIEW

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This seminar will survey realist and naturalist American fiction of the Gilded Age, a period termed as such to capture how rapid economic expansion in the United States masked increasing inequality. As industrialization, westward imperialism, Jim Crow, and immigration intensified as the nineteenth century drew to a close, concentrations of economic, social, and political power necessitated new genres of literary fiction. Realists and naturalists such as Charles Chesnutt, Kate Chopin, Theodore Dreiser, William Dean Howells, Frank Norris, Sui Sin Far, and Mark Twain attempted to unmask this increasing inequality by attending to the ordinary, highlighting the tragic injustices and violences of everyday life. This seminar will introduce a variety of methodological approaches to the field of American literary and cultural studies, including methods from critical race and ethnic studies, gender studies, genre studies, and class and labor studies.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

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Twain, Mark. *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Other Tales*. 1894. Ed. R. D. Gooder. New York: Oxford UP, 2009. Print. ISBN: 9780199554713.

Dreiser, Theodore. *Sister Carrie*. 1900. Ed. James L. West III. New York: Penguin, 1994. Print. ISBN: 9780140188288.

Howells, William Dean. *An Imperative Duty*. 1891. Ed. Paul R. Petrie. Peterborough: Broadview, 2010. Print. ISBN: 9781551119144.

### SOURCES AVAILABLE ON MOODLE

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Please bring a copy of these sources to class on the day they're assigned.

Budd, Louis J. "The American Background." *The Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism: Howells to London*. Ed. Donald Pizer. New York: Cambridge UP, 2002. 21–46. Print.

Campbell, Donna M. Introduction. *Bitter Tastes: Literary Naturalism and Early Cinema in American Women's Writing*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 2016. 1–17. Print.

Chesnutt, Charles W. "The Sheriff's Children" and "The Passing of Grandison." *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line*. Boston: Houghton, 1899. 60–93 and 168–202. Print.

Chopin, Kate. "Désirée's Baby." 1894. "The Story of an Hour." 1894. "A Pair of Silk Stockings." 1897. *The Complete Works of Kate Chopin*. Ed. Per Seyersted. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP,

2006. 240–45, 352–54, and 500–04. Print.
- Crane, Stephen. *The Monster. The Monster and Other Stories*. New York: Harper, 1899. 3–106. Print.
- Dawson, Melanie. “Emotions on the Grid.” Introduction. *Emotional Reinventions: Realist-Era Representations Beyond Sympathy*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2015. 1–34. Print.
- Dudley, John. “‘Life, Not Literature?’ Naturalism and Anti-Aesthetics.” *A Man’s Game: Masculinity and the Anti-Aesthetics of American Literary Naturalism*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2004. 1–15. Print.
- Harte, [Francis] Bret. “The Luck of Roaring Camp.” *The Luck of Roaring Camp, and Other Sketches*. Boston: Fields, 1870. 1–19. Print.
- London, Jack. “The Apostate.” 1906. *When God Laughs and Other Stories*. New York: Regent, 1911. 27–68. Print.
- James, Henry. “The Pupil.” *Longman’s Magazine* Mar.–Apr. 1891: 512–31 and 611–32. Print.
- Jewett, Sarah Orne. “A White Heron.” *A White Heron and Other Stories*. Boston: Houghton, 1886. 1–23. Print.
- Kaplan, Amy. “Realism and ‘Absent Things in American Life.’” Introduction. *The Social Construction of American Realism*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988. 1–14. Print.
- Michaels, Walter Benn. “The Writer’s Mark.” Introduction. *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1987. 3–28. Print.
- Norris, Frank. “A Deal in Wheat.” *A Deal in Wheat and Other Stories of the New and Old West*. New York: Doubleday, 1903. 3–26. Print.
- “Realism and Naturalism.” *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. 9th ed. Vol. C: 1865–1914. Ed. Michael A. Elliott. New York: Norton, 2017. 955–76. Print.
- Sui Sin Far. “In the Land of the Free” and “The Smuggling of Tie Co.” *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*. Chicago: McClurg, 1912. 161–78 and 184–93. Print.
- Wharton, Edith. “The Other Two.” *The Descent of Man and Other Stories*. New York: Scribner’s, 1904. 71–105. Print.

## COURSE COMPONENTS

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*Reading Quizzes:* The texts I’ve chosen for this semester will be both complex and challenging. I require that you read these texts carefully in order to be prepared to contribute to class discussion and to succeed on course assignments. I’ll randomly check your attendance in class and reading comprehension of the assigned material in the form of reading quizzes given at five unannounced points across the course of the semester. Reading quizzes cannot be made up at a later date.

*Research Essay Presentation:* You'll complete a presentation aimed at developing your confidence in speaking about your academic work. During our final class, you'll briefly present the argument of your research essay to the class. You may wish to distribute a handout or use the classroom's multimedia equipment, and you should plan to speak and field questions for roughly five minutes.

*Writing:* You'll undertake a variety of writing assignments over the course of the term aimed at developing your skills in academic writing. Please use Modern Language Association (MLA) guidelines and submit written assignments in hard copy.

*Close Readings:* You'll complete two short writing assignments of 500 to 750 words aimed at developing your skills of close reading primary texts and turning observations into arguments. You may close read a passage or two from any primary text on the syllabus in each assignment.

*Abstract and Annotated Bibliography:* You'll write a short abstract of roughly 250 words that identifies your research question (and potentially your tentative answer to that question), the critical conversation to which you're responding, and the stakes/implications of your project. You'll also compile an annotated bibliography with eight source entries of roughly 150 words each. For each source, list a complete citation as well as a summary of the source's argument, how its argument relates to your other sources' arguments, and how you plan to position your argument in response.

*Research Essay:* You'll submit a roughly 3,000- to 3,500-word research article that makes a claim about an African American novel of the "nadir" and responds to a critical conversation within African American literary studies. Your previous assignments may serve as a foundation for this essay.

## **GRADE BREAKDOWN**

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Reading Quizzes	15%
Research Essay Presentation	10%
Close Readings	30%
Abstract and Annotated Bibliography	15%
Research Essay	30%

## **GRADE SCALE**

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- A: 100%–90%
- B: 89%–80%
- C: 79%–70%
- D: 69%–60%
- F: 59%–0%

While individual assignments may receive half letter grades (pluses or minuses), final grades are calculated according to the above scale.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

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*Cancellations/Weather:* Please check your email regularly in case of class cancellations. If class is canceled, I will send alternate directions via email.

*Disabilities:* I am committed to ensuring that students have access to the conditions that they need to succeed in my course. If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, please contact me as well as the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible. More information can be found at <https://disability.louisiana.edu>.

*Late Assignments:* I don't generally accept late assignments. That being said, life happens. If you have a situation, please contact me as soon as possible so that we can make alternate arrangements.

*Participation/Class Behavior:* This course will be conducted in a seminar style, meaning that participation from each student will be vital to everyone's success. Class discussion is a collective enterprise from which we all grow and from which we individually benefit on class assignments, so I expect that you will strive to be on time to and present in class, meaningfully contribute to our communal inquires and discussions, comport yourself with appropriate behavior and mutual respect for your classmates, and come to class with the assigned materials and having done the assigned reading. If electronic devices are fundamental to your learning process, please feel free to use them in seminar. That being said, please be mindful of your ability to distract yourself and others when using electronics for other purposes during class time.

*Plagiarism:* Because academic writing purports to create new knowledge, plagiarism is considered a serious ethical violation. For this reason, plagiarism of any kind will result in, at a minimum, a failing grade for the assignment, and, at a maximum, dismissal from the University. The University's official definition of plagiarism is as follows: "Plagiarism is a specific type of cheating. It occurs when a student claims originality for the ideas or words of another person, when the student presents as a new and original idea or product anything which in fact is derived from an existing work, or when the student makes use of any work or production already created by someone else without giving credit to the source. In short, plagiarism is the use of unacknowledged materials in the preparation of assignments." If you have any questions or concerns about plagiarism, please contact me.

*Writing Center:* The Writing Center employs tutors who can help students with their writing at any stage of the process—from brainstorming to polishing their final drafts. This service is free, and I recommend it for even the most confident writers. More information can be found at <http://english.louisiana.edu/about-us/publications-centers/writing-center>.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE	READINGS	DEADLINES
Thursday 8/29	Syllabus, Harte, "The Luck of Roaring Camp" (Moodle 1–19), Jewett, "A White Heron" (Moodle 1–23), and Budd, "The American Background" (Moodle 21–46)	
Thursday 9/5	Howells, <i>An Imperative Duty</i>	
Thursday 9/12	James, "The Pupil" (Moodle 512–31 and 611–32), Wharton, "The Other Two" (Moodle 71–105), and "Realism and Naturalism" (Moodle 955–76)	Close Reading #1
Thursday 9/19	Twain, <i>Pudd'nhead Wilson</i>	

Thursday 9/26	Crane, <i>The Monster</i> (Moodle 3–106) and Kaplan, “Realism and ‘Absent Things in American Life’” (Moodle 1–14)	
Thursday 10/10	Chesnutt, “The Sheriff’s Children” (Moodle 60–93) and “The Passing of Grandison” (Moodle 168–202) and Michaels, “The Writer’s Mark” (Moodle 3–28)	
Thursday 10/17	Chopin, “Désirée’s Baby” (Moodle 240–45), “The Story of an Hour” (352–54), and “A Pair of Silk Stockings” (500–04) and Campbell, Introduction (Moodle 1–17)	Abstract and Annotated Bibliography
Thursday 10/24	Norris, “A Deal in Wheat” (Moodle 3–26), London, “The Apostate” (27–68), and Dudley, “Life, Not Literature” (Moodle 1–15)	
Thursday 10/31	Theodore Dreiser, <i>Sister Carrie</i> (3–171)	
Thursday 11/7	No class meeting	Close Reading #2
Thursday 11/14	Theodore Dreiser, <i>Sister Carrie</i> (172–499)	
Thursday 11/21	Sui Sin Far, “In the Land of the Free” (Moodle 161–78) and “The Smuggling of Tie Co” (184–93) and Dawson, “Emotions on the Grid” (Moodle 1–34)	Research Essay Presentation
Thursday 12/5	No class meeting	
Monday 12/9 by 8 p.m.		Research Essay