

San José State University
Humanities and the Arts/Department of English
English 255: “Thematic Studies of American Literature,” Spring 2013

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Office Hours: Monday: 3-3:45; Wednesday: 12:00-1:15; 3:30-4
Class Days/Time: Monday 4:00-6:45
Classroom: Health 405

Course Description: Making Modernism in Paris: “Paris was where the twentieth century was.” Gertrude Stein

In *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway writes: “You’re an expatriate. You’ve lost touch with the soil. You get precious. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed with sex. You spend all your time talking, not working. You are an expatriate, see. You hand around cafes.” That image has been fixed, Hemingway seeming to define an era. But it’s only a part of a complex story. This seminar examines the works of Americans who left America in the early part of the twentieth century, drawn to the continent, where life was cheaper and edgier. What drew them to this city and why is post-WWI Paris one of the centers of the Modernist movement? What nurtured their creative energy there? How did interactions/intersections nurture that creativity? These are some of the questions we will consider in this class, looking at the writers, their texts, their contexts (art and music and history) and the many “modernisms” that flourished in Paris.

Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

The goal of this course is to give students a grounding in modernist ideas as expressed primarily by expatriate writers living in Paris. The course will encourage in-depth discussion, student participation in research, clear writing, and making connections among writers and their historical/cultural milieu.

The Student Learning Objectives [SLO] of the Department of English and Comparative Literature are as follows:

Students will demonstrate the ability to

1. read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, and/or rhetoric;
2. show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American and World Literature;
3. write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and the nature of the subject;
4. develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively;
5. articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts.

Required Texts/Readings

Edith Wharton, *Age of Innocence*, 1920

Ernest Hemingway, *In Our Time*, 1925

Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*, 1926

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night*, 1934

Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, 1933

Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*, 1964

Ernest Hemingway, *The Garden of Eden*, 1986

Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood*, 1937

Course reader

Schedule (Note, in each class, the SLOs are 1, 2, 5)

January 28: Introduction, Film, *Paris The Luminous Years: Towards The Making Of The Modern*

February 4: Reader: Wharton, "A Backward Glance"; Wharton, *Age of Innocence*, through chapter XXI.

February 11: Wharton, *Age of Innocence*, complete. Hemingway, *In Our Time*, "Indian Camp" and "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife."

February 18: Hemingway, *In Our Time*, "The End of Something," "The Three Day Blow," "The Battler," "A Very Short Story," "Soldier's Home," "The Revolutionist."

February 25: Hemingway, *In Our Time*, complete.

March 4: Reader: Anderson, "Paris Notebook, 1921"; Cowley, "Significant Gesture." Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*, Chapters 1-12.

March 11: Reader: Loos, "Gentlemen Prefer Blonds." Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*, complete.

March 18: Reader: Hughes, "The Big Sea"; Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night*.

Spring Break: March 23-28.

April 1: **No Class: Caesar Chavez day. Campus closed.** Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night*, complete. Between March 18 and April 8, please schedule time for reading group to discuss second ½ of novel.

April 8: Reading group presentations on *Tender*: 4-5; Reader, ee Cummings, "Post Impressions" and "Vive la Folie," Cummings; Stein, *Autobiography*.

April 15: Stein, *Autobiography*.

April 22: Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*.

April 29: Hemingway, *The Garden of Eden*.

May 6: Barnes, *Nightwood*, 1-77.

May 13: Barnes, *Nightwood*, 78-170.

May 20: Exam scheduled: final presentations and dinner.

Classroom Protocol

I expect students to come to class on time, to refrain from texting or using computers (unless books are downloaded), to actively engage in discussion, to listen politely and attentively to their peers.

Assignments and Grading Policy

I. 500-word essays (5): 30% (SLO 1,3)

Every other week students will write a two-page essay on a focused issue in the text (note that this allows each student to have one “free” week).

Consider an issue that is thorny for you—a passage, a character, an idea, a reference. Explore that issue fully in two pages; it is important that you narrow your focus so that you can fully cover the issue in two pages. For this assignment, no critical sources on the author may be consulted. But you may reference historical/cultural sources. The purpose of this assignment is to practice close reading.

The first half of the alphabet will hand in papers on even numbered class days (A-M). The second half of the alphabet will hand in papers on odd numbered class days (N-Z). We will begin each class with brief presentations of these essays: Each student will read a 3-sentence summary of his/her essay, directing the class to the passage, issue, character that is the central focus of consideration. Present your main points with verve and enthusiasm. You will be graded on the essay (idea, focus, evidence, prose) and on the oral summary (10% of the grade).

II. Essay on Cultural Context: 20% (SLO 5,3)

On the first day of class, we will see *Paris The Luminous Years: Towards The Making Of The Modern* a film on Paris in the 1920s. Select one artists/musician/issue that intrigues you, and in the second class, you will sign up for that topic. Research the background of that topic and write a 5-

page paper on the subject. Each student will sign up for a date to present his/her research

III. Seminar paper, 10 pages: 30%. (SLO 3, 4, 5)

Your final seminar paper is a literary analysis, focusing on an idea generated by the texts covered in class, citing research from at least three sources. The final essay is due on the last day of class, and students will present their research/thesis on the evening of the final exam, May 20 at 5:15-7:30. The essay is due that evening as well. The seminar paper will be graded for clarity, ideas, evidence, and structure.

In grading essays, I consider the following in assigning grades:

A and A-: A superior piece of writing. The thesis is clear, the topic focused, the language sharp, and the writing free of grammatical errors. The essay has originality and style, is elegant, thoughtful and persuasive. If research is included, it is relevant and clearly cited.

B+ and B: A good piece of writing, solid and clear. But it may lack the innovation and sharpness of the top category. The point is clear but could be supported with additional details. There may be minor spelling, typographic, and/or grammatical errors. But it is interesting enough to hold a reader's attention. If research is included, it is mostly solid and the paper draws from the research.

B- and C+: This paper meets the requirements of the assignment, but it does not go beyond. The point may be too broad or unsupported. Examples may be general rather than specific. There may be grammatical errors. The central idea may not be fresh. The writing may be wordy and vague. If research is included, scholarship might not be relevant, fresh or focused on the topic and hand. Citations may be infrequent, general.

C and below: These essays are unfocused, without a sharp thesis. Examples are general or the essay lacks examples. Research is not thorough. There may be serious grammatical errors. If research is included, sources may be general, unfocused, not cited properly.

IV. Oral work: Participation/reading group presentation/final presentation on May 20, 5:15-7: 20% (SLO 1, 2, 5)

At the heart of any good graduate seminar is discussion, both in-class and, of course, outside class. As a full participant, you should come to class with texts read and questions formulated. Please respectfully consider all viewpoints and ask thoughtful questions about your peers' short essays. All of this will enter into a participation grade. More specifically, I gauge your participation grade as follows:

6-7 points: Someone who has been a reliable and constant positive force in class, who has not missed classes, who poses questions about the reading, who responds thoughtfully to other students' comments. Oral presentations are lucid, to the point, well-rehearsed.

5-6 points: Someone who has been a reliable and constant positive force in class but may have missed one or two classes. Oral presentations are clear, mostly to the point, perhaps a little rough.

3-4 points: A mostly positive force in class but sometimes unprepared. Someone who has missed a few classes. Oral presentations are serviceable, might be more focused, might need more practice.

1-2 points: Someone who has not contributed because of poor attendance and poor participation and poor preparedness. Oral presentations not fully rehearsed, unclear.

Reading groups: At the beginning of the semester I will split you into 4 reading groups. The purpose of these groups is to discuss class reading outside scheduled class times as often as possible; the only assignment for these groups is due on April 8, at which time each group will report on one required meeting where the topic of discussion was *Tender is the Night*.

University Policies

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester's [Catalog Policies](http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html) section at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the [current academic calendar](http://www.sjsu.edu/academic_programs/calendars/academic_calendar/) web page located at http://www.sjsu.edu/academic_programs/calendars/academic_calendar/.

The [Late Drop Policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/>. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the [Advising Hub](http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/>.

Academic integrity

Your commitment as a student to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University's Academic Integrity policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S07-2.htm), located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/S07-2.htm>, requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The [Student Conduct and Ethical Development website](http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>.

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include your assignment or any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Policy S07-2 requires approval of instructors.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Disability Resource Center](http://www.drc.sjsu.edu/) (DRC) at <http://www.drc.sjsu.edu/> to establish a record of their disability.