

English 166: American Literature Since 1945
(Theme: "Family Matters")

Spring Semester 2014
T TH 9:00 - 10:15
DMH 208
Section 1
Class # 24575

Professor Robert Cullen
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Office Hours Tuesday, 10:30
and by appt.

TEXTS *Rabbit, Run* by John Updike (1960)
 The Ghost Writer by Philip Roth (1979)
 Song of Solomon by Toni Morrison (1977)
 Fences by August Wilson (1986)
 A Thousand Acres by Jane Smiley (1992)
 Fuddy Meers by David Lindsay-Abaire (1998)
 Fun Home by Alison Bechdel (2006)
 August: Osage County by Traci Letts (2008)
 Sag Harbor by Colson Whitehead (2009)

PREREQUISITE: Upper division standing (60 units)

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Enumerated below are the department's five learning objectives and, in italics, selected ways in which this course will help students meet the objectives. 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, or rhetoric. *The course includes readings from three genres—novels, drama, and graphic memoir. Class discussion and papers will teach close reading. Styles and structures of works on the reading list are immensely varied.*
- 2) show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature. *This course is devoted to American literature. As noted above, it will cover multiple genres. It will include such iconic works as Rabbit, Run and Fences and will introduce students to some newer voices as well. Lecture portions of the class will call on feminist theory, genre studies, queer theory, and other critical approaches; research for the second assigned paper will of course be informed by theory as well.*
- 3) write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject. *The course requires two critical papers and a culminating project.*
- 4) develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively. *Research is optional for the first paper and mandatory for the second; papers will be evaluated for the scope, relevance, and usefulness of their research.*
- 5) articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts. *Relations among culture, history, and texts will be our daily concern in reading, discussion, and writing.*

PAPERS

Two papers are required. I will hand out specific assignments later, but the first paper (1000 words minimum) will call for a close reading of a narrowly defined portion of a text. The second (2000 words minimum) will call for a broader analysis of one or more of the works and will require modest research. Both papers must conform to current Modern Language Association style. Please, no faxed or emailed papers. In addition to giving me a hard copy of each paper, you must submit it within 48 hours of the due date to TurnItIn.com. Please set up an account right away if you have not done so already. I will provide a course number and password as the first due date approaches.

Except in extraordinary circumstances, late papers will be penalized as follows: papers turned in one day to one week late will be marked down one full letter grade (e.g. B to C); beyond one week papers will not be accepted. Any paper not turned in directly to me must be time-stamped by the English Department staff. (Do not put a paper under my door, in my mailbox, etc.) NO INCOMPLETES except in true emergencies.

PARTICIPATION AND QUIZZES

Participation and quizzes figure substantially into your final grade. Quizzes are designed primarily to encourage you keep you on schedule; they should not be difficult if you have read carefully. Quizzes may not be made up.

CULMINATING CREATIVE PROJECTS

Instead of a final exam, you will complete a minor project designed to encourage creativity and experimentation as well as demonstrate your engagement with our readings. We will brainstorm possibilities together, but projects could include the following: rewriting a fictional scene in dramatic form; turning part of a drama or novel into a screenplay; drawing/writing a few pages of your own graphic memoir; making a literary map (digital and interactive?); doing set or costume design for some portion of a play; imitating Updike's or Whitehead's prose style as you describe some event from your own life. For this assignment, effort will count more than results: it will be safe to try something new. You may be asked to make a brief report or demonstration during our final exam time slot on Monday, May 19; we will not start at the sadistic 7:15 a.m. time—more likely the merely cruel 8:00 a.m.

GRADING

Paper #2	45 %
Paper #1 (Close reading/analysis)	25 %
Creative Project	15%
Participation & Quizzes	15 %

ACADEMIC POLICIES

You are responsible for reading and understanding the SJSU academic policies available online: <http://www.sjsu.edu/english/comp/policyforsyllabi.html>

- 1/23 Enrollment and course introduction.
- 1/28, *Rabbit, Run*—first third, up to the sentence "Sun and moon, sun and moon, time goes."
 1/30 *Rabbit, Run*—second third, up to "The straight path is made smooth."
- 2/4 *Rabbit, Run*—finish novel.
 2/6 *Rabbit, Run*
- 2/11 *The Ghost Writer*—first half, through Nathan's long talk with his father at a bus stop.
 2/13 *The Ghost Writer*, finish.
- 2/18 *Song of Solomon*—Skip the Foreword, read Chapters 1-4.
 2/20 *Song of Solomon*—Chapters 5-9
- 2/25 *Song of Solomon*—Finish & read Foreword.
 2/27 *Song of Solomon*
- 3/4 *Fences*—Act I
 3/6 *Fences*—Act II
- 3/11 *A Thousand Acres*—Books One, Two. **PAPER #1 DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS.**
 3/13 *A Thousand Acres*—Books Three and Four
- 3/18 *A Thousand Acres*—finish: Books Five, Six, Epilogue.
 3/20 *A Thousand Acres*
- SPRING BREAK**
- 4/1 *Fuddy Meers*. The perfect play for April Fool's Day!
 4/3 *Fuddy Meers*
- 4/8 *Fun Home*—Chapters 1-3
 4/10 *Fun Home*—Chapters 4-5
- 4/15 *Fun Home*—finish.
 4/17 *August: Osage County*—Prologue and Act One
- 4/22 *August: Osage County*—Act Two
 4/24 *August: Osage County*—Act Three
- 4/29 *Sag Harbor*—Chapters One and Two.
 5/1 No class. I will be on a professional trip.
- 5/6 *Sag Harbor*—Chapters 3, 4, 5. **SECOND PAPER DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS.**
- 5/8 *Sag Harbor*—finish.
 5/13 Last class. **Creative Project Presentations [instead of exam]: M 5/19, time t.b.a.**