

English 329  
Modern American Novel  
Spring 2012  
Rollins College

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## Modern American Novel

Bracketed by the two world wars and drawing on the literary influences of romanticism, realism, and naturalism, the modern American novel represents a fascinating historical moment and a changing literary aesthetic. Willa Cather, Ernest Hemingway, Zora Neale Hurston, William Faulkner, and John Steinbeck crafted novels with power and purpose, experimenting with the genre in unique ways. We'll study these authors and others, discussing the characteristics of novel writing and its place in the larger literary canon. As we define each movement and recognize their connections with each other, we will also consider how this literature speaks to times of societal and cultural change. An emphasis will be placed on close readings and historical contextualization.

### Course Requirements

The bulk of the coursework will revolve around the required readings and subsequent class discussions. Lectures and additional materials will help to supplement the primary texts, but successful participation in the course requires students to prepare for class by reading the assigned works and involving themselves in class discussions. **Weekly quizzes** will be given *at the start of each class* to measure your retention of the readings. These quizzes cannot be made up.

Students will also be required to write a one-page, double-spaced **reading response** on selected texts. These responses should act as an impetus for class discussion and will be graded on a check-plus, check, and check-minus basis. In these papers, you should construct a close reading of a selected work, focusing on word choice, point of view, and/or the way form affects content. While you do not need to summarize the material, you should use quotes from the work to back up your argument(s).

To satisfy your **class participation** grade, you will be expected to contribute to class discussion each period. You will also lead discussion on one of the readings with another student. To prepare, you should look to secondary sources and develop a list of discussion questions; these should be emailed to me on the Tuesday before class. While you might prepare a brief biography of the author and/or a conversation about the text's critical reception, your job is to lead the class in a discussion of the text. You should be prepared for some of your questions to fail so you will need to develop additional strategies to engage the class. A part of your grade, then, will be determined by the engagement of your classmates.

The course will also include a **midterm** and **final examination**. The former will focus on the texts we have discussed up to the midway point of the semester, while the latter will be cumulative, asking you to demonstrate knowledge on all the works we have studied in the

course. The exams will be divided into two parts: the first part will consist of short answer questions that force you to deal with selected texts individually and the second half will ask you to construct a longer essay focusing on multiple works.

Finally, you will construct a **researched essay** in which you will examine and analyze a text from the syllabus. The essay will be 8-10 pages and should incorporate at least three sources of scholarly criticism. Papers produced out-of-class must be typed, 12-point Times New Roman or 11-point Arial, double-spaced, and formatted according to MLA guidelines. Incomplete or late work will not be accepted.

### **Grades**

Your grade will be determined as follows:

Participation and Quizzes	15%
Response Papers	10%
Midterm Examination	25%
Final Examination	25%
Researched Essay	25%

For most assignments, you will be assigned numeric grades. The numeric grading scale and its letter equivalent is as follows: 100-94 A, 93-90 A-, 89-87 B+, 86-84 B, 83-80 B-, 79-77 C+, 76-74 C, 73-70 C-, 69-67 D+, 66-64 D, 63-60 D-, 59-0 F.

### **Required Texts**

Chandler, Raymond. *The Big Sleep*. New York: Vintage, 1992. ISBN: 0394758285

Faulkner, William. *The Sound and the Fury*. New York: Vintage, 1990. ISBN: 0679732241

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Scribner, 2003. ISBN: 0684801523

Hemingway, Ernest. *The Sun Also Rises*. New York: Scribner, 2006. ISBN: 0743297334

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. New York: HarperPerennial, 2006. ISBN: 0061120065

Larsen, Nella. *Passing*. New York: Norton, 2007. ISBN: 0393979164

McLain, Paula. *The Paris Wife*. New York: Ballantine, 2011. ISBN: 9780345521309

Steinbeck, John. *Cannery Row*. New York: Penguin, 2002. ISBN: 9780142000687

Handouts may also be distributed.

### **Policies**

Attendance is required at all class meetings. More than one absence *for any reason* will result in a grade reduction. If you have three or more absences, you will fail the course. If you must miss class, send work with a classmate; before the next class period, copy someone's notes and see me during my office hours to learn what you missed and how to prepare for the next session.

All English courses that commence *after 4:00 p.m.* follow the policies of the Hamilton Holt School. To meet the number of contact hours required for Holt courses, evening classes offered once a week must meet fifteen times during the semester. While Arts and Sciences classes cancel meetings for scheduled breaks (i.e. Fall Break), unscheduled breaks (i.e. Fox Day), and reading days, students enrolled in evening courses are required to meet during those times. In evening courses, final examinations will be administered during the fifteenth meeting of the semester.

In day courses, final examinations will be administered as designated by the Arts and Sciences final examination schedule.

Throughout the semester, it may be necessary for us to communicate via email. It is your responsibility to check your Rollins email account daily, especially before class begins. Class emails may be used to inform you of changes in the schedule, class cancellations, or other important announcements. You should also be adept at checking FoxLink to see an electronic copy of the syllabus, view announcements, and participate in additional web-based resources.

Academic honesty is essential for your successful completion of this course and is an integral part of the *Academic Honor Code*. Membership in the student body of Rollins College carries with it an obligation, and requires a commitment, to act with honor in all things. Because academic integrity is fundamental to the pursuit of knowledge and truth and is the heart of the academic life of Rollins College, it is the responsibility of all members of the College community to practice it and to report apparent violations.

The following pledge is a binding commitment by the students of Rollins College:

The development of the virtues of Honor and Integrity are integral to a Rollins College education and to membership in the Rollins College community. Therefore, I, a student of Rollins College, pledge to show my commitment to these virtues by abstaining from any lying, cheating, or plagiarism in my academic endeavors and by behaving responsibly, respectfully and honorably in my social life and in my relationships with others.

This pledge is reinforced every time a student submits work for academic credit as his/her own. Students shall add to all papers, quizzes, tests, lab reports, etc., the following handwritten abbreviated pledge followed by their signature:

*“On my honor, I have not given, nor received, nor witnessed any unauthorized assistance on this work.”*

Material submitted electronically should contain the pledge; submission implies signing the pledge.

Please remember: *plagiarism is illegal and dishonest*. Complete information on how to identify ideas, words, and larger passages drawn from other sources is available in Olin Library. When in doubt, ask me for clarification.

Rollins College is committed to equal access and does not discriminate unlawfully against persons with disabilities in its policies, procedures, programs or employment processes. The College recognizes its obligations under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 to provide an environment that does not discriminate against persons with disabilities.

If you are a person with a disability on this campus and anticipate needing any type of academic accommodations in order to participate in your classes, please make timely arrangements by disclosing this disability in writing to the Disability Services Office (box 2613) - Thomas P. Johnson Student Resource Center, 1000 Holt Ave., Winter Park, FL, 32789. Appointments can be scheduled by calling 407-646-2354 or email: [gridgeway@rollins.edu](mailto:gridgeway@rollins.edu).

## **Grading Criteria for Papers**

**Acceptable standards for college-level writing are defined by these virtues:**

### *Characteristics of an A Paper*

- Excellence in all respects—conceptual, rhetorical, grammatical. Highest quality work, revealing superiority of thought and insight as well as knowledge.
- Clear subject and framework of interpretation throughout.
- Keen understanding of needs and expectations of a particular audience.
- Skillful organization—unified, ordered, coherent, and complete.
- Variety: sentence type/length to meet rhetorical demands (topic & audience).
- Effective word choice—precise denotation, connotation, and tone.
- Correctness in grammar, mechanics, and usage.

### *Characteristics of a B Paper*

- Subject & interpretive framework clear. Superior approach to topic.
- Clear understanding of needs and expectations of a particular audience.
- Clear organization with rare lapses in unity and/or coherence.
- Clear focus on framework, subject, and details for each paragraph—fresh, appropriate examples and supporting evidence.
- Variety: sentence type/length to meet rhetorical demands (topic & audience).
- Language use imaginative and appropriate.
- Correctness in grammar, mechanics, and usage.

### *Characteristics of a C Paper*

- Examination or argument presented clearly with no deviation from stated or implied focus/intention.

- Though subject & framework evident, paper may not seem consistent and/or forceful in presentation or interpretation.
- Organization acceptable, though less clear or forceful than in A or B paper.
- Quality of support details uneven; examples and supporting evidence adequate.
- Few errors in sentence structure, but sentences ineffective, unvaried.
- Word choice generally correct; diction rarely imprecise or monotonous.
- No major sentence level errors; few mistakes in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and mechanics.

**Deficient papers fail to meet college-level writing standards as follows:**

*Characteristics of a D Paper*

- Adequate or only marginally acceptable examination of topic or idea.
- Rational paragraphing, but body paragraphs underdeveloped or disorganized—marked problems with unity, order, coherence, and completeness.
- Use of generalization without detail or detail with no controlling idea.
- Sentence level errors frequent enough to distract the reader.
- Inattention to audience needs.
- Marginal grasp of rhetorical and grammatical principles.

*Characteristics of an F Paper*

- Failure to address assigned topic or change topic in a manner satisfying to both writer and audience.
- Superficial attention to topic or attention to a trite or obvious topic.
- Gross assertions taking the place of carefully developed evidence/examples.
- Simplistic sentence structure; frequent errors in grammar, mechanics, usage.
- Inappropriate use of sources, including failure to provide documentation.

**Course Calendar**

The course calendar is fairly set; if changes do need to be made, I will notify you of them in advance. Each major reading may be accompanied by some supplemental readings; these readings will be distributed to you the week before they are due. You are responsible for preparing for class each week by completing the readings and assignments in the “Class Meeting” column. Failure to do so will result in an “F” for the particular assignment and a reduction in your class participation points.

Date	Class Meeting
1.19	Syllabus and course introduction  Discuss American Literature: The Big Picture  Introduction to American literary modernism

1.26	Read Hemingway's <i>The Sun Also Rises</i> (pp. 1-130)  <b>Response paper due</b>
2.2	Read Hemingway's <i>The Sun Also Rises</i> (pp. 131-251)
2.9	Read McLain's <i>The Paris Wife</i>  <b>Response paper due</b>
2.16	<b>Field Trip--Paula McLain's WWW reading</b>
2.23	Read Fitzgerald's <i>The Great Gatsby</i> (pp. 1-102)  <b>Response paper due</b>
3.1	Read Fitzgerald's <i>The Great Gatsby</i> (pp. 103-189)  Exam review
3.8	<b>No class--Spring Break</b>  <b>Complete take-home midterm examination (due 3/12 by 12 pm)</b>
3.15	Read Larsen's <i>Passing</i>
3.22	Read Faulkner's <i>The Sound and the Fury</i> (pp. 1-179)  <b>Response paper due</b>
3.29	Read Faulkner's <i>The Sound and the Fury</i> (pp. 180-321)  <b>Topic proposal due</b>
4.5	Read Chandler's <i>The Big Sleep</i>  <b>Response paper due</b>
4.12	Read Hurston's <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> (pp. 1-99)  <b>Draft of researched essay due</b>

4.19	Read Hurston's <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> (pp. 100-193)  <b>Response paper due</b>
4.26	Read Steinbeck's <i>Cannery Row</i>  <b>Researched essay due; exam review</b>
5.3	<b>Final Examination</b>