

English 4630G: Seminar in American Literature
 “Reading the City: Representations of New York City in American Literature”
 January 2015 Course Outline

Instructor: Dr. Miranda Green-Bartee
 Office: Lawson Hall 3245
 Office Hours: M 10-11:15; W 12-2
 By Appointment

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*Email is the best way to contact me. Please allow at least 48 hours for me to respond to you. Be sure to put our course number into the subject line and to use your UWO email to contact me.

Course Description and Objectives:

From its beginnings as a Dutch Colony in the 16th century, a British port in the 17th and 18th centuries, a colonial capital in the Revolutionary War, a center of industry and trade from the 19th century to the modern day, and to its current position as a center of world finance, information, and fashion, New York City has long occupied the imagination of individuals around the world. It has also figured prominently in American Literature. Whether it is merely the setting, the place characters aspire to live, or a character itself, New York has intrigued and fascinated American writers for centuries. In this course, we will attempt to “read” the city by considering how New York has been represented in American literature from the late-18th century through the early 21st century. Further, we will explore the developing field of City Studies, a branch of American studies that considers ideas about cities from the social sciences and applies those ideas to other disciplines.

In addition to reading primary works from a variety of genres, we will also consider theoretical works about how cities develop and how people interact with the urban spaces of cities. While some of the theory will address New York specifically, much of it will focus on cities generally; in these instances, we will work to apply these theories to both the primary texts we’re studying and our knowledge of New York. We will also consider several historical accounts of the city to better understand how New York developed from a small colonial port to a booming metropolis in little more than 100 years. Finally (although not exclusively), we will consider the ways theory, history, architectural design, urban planning, and literature interact to capture a complete image of New York’s on-going impact on American Literature and culture. Throughout the course, we will consider the following questions:

- Why does New York figure so prominently in American literature?
- How do representations of New York vary in the approximately 250 years we will be considering?
- How do representations of New York vary based on an author’s race, class, or gender?
- How do urban design and architectural theory influence literary representations of the city?
- How is the city’s history charted (and, perhaps, challenged) through literature?

In addition to reading and writing about New York, the course includes an optional travel component. Interested students will travel with the course instructor to New York during Reading Week; while there, we will experience many of the locations discussed in the works we are reading. From the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, the American Museum of Natural History, the Empire State Building, and the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, we will see as much of New York as possible. We will also tour the archival collections at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture to further our understanding of how important New York has been to American writers. Our firsthand experience of the city will enhance our understanding of

the literature we're studying as well as help us see the practical application of many of the theories we will consider in the classroom. With this course, reading and experiencing will go hand-in-hand as we will apply our experiences in New York to classroom discussions of why the city continues to capture the imagination of so many American writers.

Throughout the semester, in addition to gaining and sharing knowledge through the assigned readings, you will

- strengthen your critical reading skills;
- gain an understanding of literary genres and periods;
- have a sense of the way literature influences and is influenced by historical events;
- have a sense of how architectural theory and urban design influence writers;
- experience international travel and apply those experiences to the texts being studied in the classroom;
- gain insight into how the urban imagination inflect differences in national identity;
- and gain an understanding of how a single city can be affected by and can affect literary works.

Texts:

Stephen Crane, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893)

Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (1921)

Ann Petry, *The Street* (1946)

E.L. Konisburg, *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (1967)

Virginia Hamilton, *The Planet of Junior Brown* (1971)

Spike Lee, *Do The Right Thing* (1989)

Sex and the City, various episodes (1998-2004)

Custom Course Pack

Term Work:

Daily Reading Post, participation	10%
Group Presentation	10%
Travel Journal	10%
3 Reading Response Papers (@ 10% each)	30%
OR	
4 Reading Response Papers (@ 10% each)	40%
Paper Proposal	5%
Research Paper	35%

Forum Posts: In my opinion, the most successful college classrooms have students and instructors equally engaged in a discussion about the readings. Prior to each class (except on days written assignments are due or exam days), you will post a question, comment, or observation on the day's reading to the Class Forum, which is available through OWL. The entire class will be able to see the posts, and you will be able to respond to each other. I will read at least one post at the start of each class discussion as a way to stimulate discussion. You will be expected to post even if you miss class.

The timeliness and quality of your discussion questions form one part of your overall participation grade for the year. Participation also includes reading each day's assignment, making insightful comments during discussion, and actively listening. I reserve the right to give reading quizzes as a part of the participation grade if it seems necessary (i.e., if class members do not keep up with the readings). No single portion (participation, reading posts, etc.) determines your participation grade.

Group Presentation: In the first few days of class, students will be put into groups of two and assigned a presentation day. On the day of their presentation, the groups will be responsible for presenting the assigned critical reading to the class. You will receive a detailed prompt about this on the second week of class

Travel Journal: Students will be asked to keep an informal travel journal during our week in New York. In your journals, you should record your reaction to the various locations we visit as well as your experiences in and impressions of the city. You will receive a detailed assignment prompt in the first week of class. *Students not traveling to New York will complete 4 Response papers in lieu of this assignment.

Response Papers: Students will be asked to write 3 short response papers. You will be asked to respond to specific theoretical and/or historical readings and to apply your understanding of the readings to a literary work we have recently discussed in class. You will receive detailed prompts several weeks before each paper is due. All papers must be double-spaced, in a standard font (10-12 point Arial, Times New Roman, or equivalent), and have standard margins. These short papers—2-3 pages—are designed to help you focus your thinking in preparation for the longer essay.

***Note:** There will not be assigned due dates for these; it will be your responsibility to turn in the correct number by the end of term. **You may not turn in more than one response paper in any given week.**

Research Paper: Students will be expected to complete a research paper of 10-12 pages using a minimum of 6 secondary sources. As part of this project, students will also be expected to secure topic approval from the course instructor as well as to complete an abstract and annotated bibliography several weeks before the research paper is due. As part of this assignment, students will be required to submit a paper proposal. A detailed assignment prompt will be distributed the first few weeks of class.

Course Policies

Academic Accommodation: Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

The full policy is available here:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive medical documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for accommodation on medical grounds, or for other reasons (e.g. to explain an absence from class which may result in a grade penalty under an 'Attendance' policy in the course). **All** medical documentation **must** be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.

Submitting Assignments: All assignments are due in-class on the date stated on the class schedule. You are expected to turn in both a hard copy of the assignment as well as to submit an electronic version to Turnitin.com (see below). Note: there are no specific due dates for Reading Response Papers. It is your responsibility to complete these papers prior to March 26, 2014. You may not turn in more than one Reading Response Paper in a given week.

Late assignments will not be accepted under any circumstances. It is your responsibility to turn assignments in on time. Should you need an extension for any reason, please contact me by email at least 48 hours prior to the day an assignment is due to discuss an extension. Extensions may be granted for the writing assignments, but not for the Forum Posts. If you have a medical or personal emergency, notify me as soon as possible to request an extension (see above). In-class assignments cannot be made up unless the absence is excused. ***Note:** this applies to the following assignments: Forum Posts, Paper Proposal, Travel Journal, and Research Paper.

Attendance Policy: The very nature of this course requires that you attend regularly to do well. You are, therefore, expected to attend all scheduled class meetings. Should you have more than two unexcused absences, you may receive up to a 5% deduction off of your final grade. See also: '**Academic Accommodation Policy**' above.

Electronic Devices: you may use a computer in class to take notes. Do not use class time for anything other than academic purposes. You may not use a cell phone or similar electronic device in class at any time. Should you, for any reason, need to receive a phone call/text during class time, I ask that you keep your phone on vibrate and step out of the classroom to take the call/respond to the text.

Owl/Sakai: The use of Owl/Sakai is necessary for successful completion of this course. This includes accessing readings as stipulated in the course outline, downloading instructions and guidelines for assignments, and submitting assignments to Turnitin.com. All course information, including assignments, will be posted on the course website.

Scholastic Offences, including Plagiarism: The University Senate requires the following statements, and Web site references, to appear on course outlines:

“Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy as above).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).”

Please consult the Department of English Studies "Information for Students" page for more information: <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/info%20for%20students.html>.

Prerequisites: The University Senate requires the following statement to appear on course outlines: "Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

Special Examinations, Incomplete Standing, and Aegrotat Standing: All requests for Special Examinations, Incomplete Standing, or Aegrotat Standing must be made by the student, with supporting documentation, to the Dean of Arts and Humanities Academic Counselling Office. The Dean's office reserves the right not to sign INC and SPC grades without the proper paperwork. Special examinations must be written at the University or an Affiliated College no later than 30 days after the end of the examination period involved.