# COURSE OUTLINE

**ENG/HIS 238**  
American History and Literature

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**Class or Lecture**  
**Laboratory Work Hours**  
**Clinical or Studio Hours**  
**Practicum, Co-op, Internship**  
**Course Length**

- 3
- 15 weeks
- Not Applicable
- None

- 15 week, 10 week, etc.

**Required Materials:**

**Historical Texts:**

- Diane Ravitch, *The American Reader*.

**Literature Texts:**


Any number or combination of the novels, including but not limited to:

- Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*
- Stephen Crane, *Maggie, A Girl of the Streets*
- Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt*
- Abraham, *The Rise and Fall of David Levinsky*
- Theodore Driese, *Sister Carrie*
- Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
- Thomas Berger, *Little Big Man*
- Jack London, *The Call of the Wild*
- Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*
- Pietro DiDonato, *Christ in Concrete*
- Michael, Gold, *Jews without Money*
- Robert Penn Warren, *All The King’s Men*
- Larry McMurtry, *Horseman, Pass By*
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*
- John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*
- Bernard Malamud, *The Fixer*
- Arthur Miller, *The Crucible*
- Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*
- John Howard Griffin, *Black Like Me*
• James Baldwin, *Blues for Mister Charlie*
• Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*
• Tim O’Brien *The Things They Carried*
• Randy Shilts, *And the Band Played On*

**Catalog Description:**
An interdisciplinary examination of American literature and society with special emphasis on contemporary perspectives and the historical context in which texts were written. This course focuses on the relationship between American history and literature since 1865, covering such topics as gender and sexuality, race, ethnicity and immigration, social class, the West, war, and popular culture.

**Prerequisites:** ENG 101 and 102; **Corequisites:** None
**HIS 106 is recommended**

**Latest Review:** Fall 2014

**Course Coordinator:** Craig R. Coenen, coenenc@mccc.edu, ext. 3533, and Laura Knight, knightl@mccc.edu, ext. 3309

**Available Resources:**


- Databases: American Humanities Index (Ebsco Host), AP Photo Archive, Biographies Plus Illustrated—Wilson (Vale), EBooks (Net Library), Facts on File Online, Literature Resource Center (Gale), New York Time Historical (Proquest), Newspapers Index (Ebsco)

**Learning Center Resources:** None.

**Course Objectives.**

*The student will be able to:*
- to read secondary historical sources critically, with an understanding of their validity, perspective bias, audience, and context.
- to use information technologies in acquiring new knowledge and perspective.
- to construct an historical essay that presents a clear thesis, a persuasive argument, and well-researched supporting data.
- to describe major movements, trends, and developments of American history and literature.
- to discuss with authority, either in writing or verbally, the historical forces (e.g., religion, economics, politics, social stratification, gender, individual actors, technology, intellectual and aesthetic thought, etc.) behind the major movements, trends, and developments of American history.
- to engage in informed and perceptive reading of individual texts;
• to compare texts of different kinds;
• to understand the development of literature within certain specific historical periods.
• to understand the historical development of literature within national cultural contexts (specifically, American literatures).
• to grasp the development of theoretical approaches to literature and criticism.
• to understand the ways in which literature can be explored through associated disciplines (specifically American history).

General Education Objectives. If the course is submitted for Gen Ed approval, the Gen Ed objectives must be listed separately from the course objectives. (Consult the Gen Ed Policy for Gen Ed objectives – e.g., Communication skills, Problem-solving and Critical Thinking, Information Literacy skills, etc.)

**Gen Ed Mission:**

- Students will be competent in critical thinking;
- Students will be immersed in the critical study of what it means to be human;
- Students read, evaluate, appreciate and write about a wide range of texts and experiences;
- Students will learn how to integrate their learning into a lifelong process of understanding themselves, others, and the world

**Communication:** Students will communicate effectively in both speech and writing.

1.1. Students will comprehend and evaluate what they read, hear and see.
1.2. Students will state and evaluate the views and findings of others.
1.3. Students will write and speak clearly and effectively in standard American English.
1.4. Students will logically and persuasively state and support orally or in writing their points of view or findings.

**Critical thinking and Information Literacy:** Students will use critical thinking and problem solving skills in analyzing information gathered through different media [or presented to them by the instructor] and from a variety of sources.

3.2. Students will use appropriate library tools to access information in reference publications, periodicals, bibliographies and databases.
3.5. Students will recognize weaknesses [and bias] in arguments such as the use of false or disputable premises, suppression or contrary evidence, faulty reasoning, and emotional loading.

3.3. Students will distinguish between facts, opinions, and generalizations.
3.4. Students will access and evaluate primary and secondary sources to understand multiple causation.

**Historical perspective:** Students will analyze historical events and movements in western societies and assess their subsequent significance

9.1. Students will state the causes of a major historical event and analyze the impact of that event on a nation or civilization.
9.2. Students will show how writers’ interpretations of historical events are influenced by their time, culture, and perspective.
9.3. Students will discuss a major idea, movement, invention or discovery, and how it affected the world or American society.
• **Diversity and global perspective:** Students will analyze the implications of commonalities and differences among culturally diverse peoples.
  10.1. Students will link cultural practices and perspectives with the geographical and/or historical conditions from which they arose.
  10.4. Students will recognize the needs and concerns common to culturally diverse peoples.
  10.5. Students will recognize contributions made by people from various cultures.

• **Ethical dimension**
  4.2. Students will analyze and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different perspectives on an ethical issue or a situation.

• **Society and human behavior:** Students will use social science theories and concepts to analyze human behavior and social and political institutions.
  7.1. Students will analyze and discuss behavioral or societal issues using theories and concepts from a social science.
  7.2. Students will explain how social institutions and organizations influence individual behavior.

• **Aesthetic perspective:** Students will analyze works of the literary, visual or performing arts.
  8.1. Students will describe commonly used approaches and criteria for analyzing a work of literature.
  8.2. Students will recognize, analyze and assess works of literature with commonly used approaches and criteria.

**Examinations and Required Work.**

Instructors have some discretion in determining the format and content of required work. However, written and verbal assignments in any history course should be designed to help students develop the General Education skills (historical perspective, critical thinking, information literacy, writing, and public speaking) listed above. Instructors should emphasize these goals in their assignments and should state them in their written and verbal instructions to the students.

Below are the parameters within which instructors may operate:

**Reading Assignments**
  History textbook as well as works of classic American literature should be clearly assigned to the students

**Exams & Quizzes**
  At least two (2), one-hour exams
  A Final Exam
  Exams should include at least one essay component
Writing Assignments Students are expected to develop the ability to construct narratives—written or verbal or both—that clearly present their own thesis based on solid evidence that has been thoroughly and critically evaluated. Students are directed in developing competencies in accumulating evidence from a variety of sources, assessing the validity of the evidence, and extracting substantive generalizations from what they have discovered (Information Literacy).

- At least two (2), but preferably three (3), writing assignments
- At least one (1) essay should concentrate on the primary documents
- Length of the essays may be determined by the instructor; short (e.g., two-page) essays are acceptable
- At least one (1) one assignment should incorporate library database research; this assignment may be a term paper or group presentation or some other type of project

Units of Study in Detail

Introduction to the course and Historical Perspectives on American Literature II

Learning Objectives: The student will be able to
- Demonstrate an understanding of the period and chronology of the course.
- Identify primary vs. secondary sources and discuss the uses and limitations of each.

Unit I: 1865-1910

1. Race

Learning Objectives: The student will be able to
- Explain Reconstruction and its positive and negative implications to African Americans.
- Compare and contrast African American life in the North and South.
- Define and assess sharecropping as the social, political, and economic system.
- Analyze the writings of African-American leaders, in particular Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois
- Assess the impact of Jim Crow Laws on African Americans and the South
- Demonstrate an understanding of the depth and scope of racism in the Gilded Age and early Progressive Era.

2. Gender

Learning Objectives: The student will be able to
- Compare and contrast the social, economic, and political roles of women and men in the Gilded Age and early Progressive Era.
- Describe and evaluate the differences among women that divided their move to achieve a more equal status to men.
- Assess the impact of women’s reform movements on women and American society at large.
- Describe the daily life of women of varying social classes throughout the nation.
- Identify major contributors to the early women’s movement and be able to analyze their contributions.

3. Ethnicity and Immigration
Learning Objectives: The student will be able to
Explain why so many immigrants came to the United States in the Gilded Age and early Progressive Era.
Describe and analyze immigrants’ expectations when coming to the United States
Examine immigrants’ living conditions and occupational opportunities
Assess whether or not and, if so, how immigrants were able to achieve the American Dream.
Address the problem of ethnicity in making immigrants Americans and forging class-wide unity.
Analyze the role of labor unions and government (political machine) in immigrant life.

4. The Middle and Upper Classes

Learning Objectives: The student will be able to
Describe and analyze the paranoia of the middle classes that led to consumerism, urban flight, and various reform movements.
Assess the impact of middle-class reforms on the United States.
Compare and contrast the values and outlook of the middle and upper classes.
Explain the meaning and function of the term Social Darwinism in reference to social class and the nation as a whole.
Discuss and understand America’s fascination with lifestyles of the rich and famous.

5. The West

Learning Objectives: The student will be able to
Describe and analyze the relationship between Native Americans, western settlers, and the United States government.
Evaluate the meaning of the “Wild West” as both myth and reality.
Analyze why settlers exploited the land in the West and why a conservation movement arose by the early 1900s.
Address the American notion of rugged individualism and masculinity and how the West fed into those notions in literature and popular culture.
Assess social class, gender, and race in the old West and compare and contrast that with the East and South at the same time.

Unit II: 1910-1945

6. Race

Learning Objectives: The student will be able to
Describe and assess the impact of the Great Migrations of World War I and World War II.
Assess the growth of African-American institutions and businesses.
Explain the Harlem Renaissance and analyze its impact on African Americans and the nation at large.
Analyze the ideas and impact of African-American leaders such as Marcus Garvey and A. Philip Randolph.
Examine the lingering problems of race, in particular the upsurge in the KKK and the Scottsboro Case and assess areas where strides were taken to achieve some equality.

7. Gender
Learning Objectives: *The student will be able to*
Assess the women’s movement just before and during the decade after women received suffrage in the United States.
Evaluate the conflicts and antagonisms during the 1920s among women who became known as the “New Woman” and those who retained the restrictions of the cult of domesticity.
Describe women’s new prominent role in the depression and World Wars and its impact in popular culture and society.
Analyze the gains that women made during this period and the problems still holding them back.

8. **Progressivism**

Learning Objectives: *The student will be able to*
Describe the origins of the Progressive movement.
Identify the major decisions, actions, and legislation that define the Progressive Era.
Assess the impact of Progressive reform on the lives of poor people, the quality of life for all Americans, and the direction of American capitalism and democracy.
Compare and contrast the Progressivism of Robert LaFollette, Teddy Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson.
Explain how the Progressives were not always that progressive.
Analyze Progressive accomplishments and explain why the era ended so abruptly.

9. **World War I and the Roaring 1920s**

Learning Objectives: *The student will be able to*
Discuss American isolationism and the reasons why the nation eventually entered the Great War.
Assess the importance of American involvement in the Great War.
Identify the crises of 1919 and analyze their impact on shaping the 1920s.
Define the roaring 1920s its impact on creating a mass culture.
Evaluate and assess the significance of the traditional 1920s.
Exhibit an understanding of the “Lost Generation.”

10. **The Great Depression and the New Deal**

Learning Objectives: *The student will be able to*
Discuss why the Great Depression occurred and detail the scope of the economic devastation.
Assess Herbert Hoover’s response to the Depression.
Describe the problems related to Hoover’s response and state what was happening that seemed to be breaking down American society and institutions.
Explain the New Deal and analyze its practical impact on the lives of Americans.
State who opposed the New Deal and who supported it and why.

11. **World War II**

Learning Objectives: *The student will be able to*
Discuss the arguments for and against American involvement in World War II.
Describe and analyze the changes in the home front during the war.
Assess racial and ethnic antagonisms, especially with Japanese and Mexican Americans
during the war.
Explain the experiences of soldiers during and after the war.
Compare and contrast the aftermath of World War II with that of the first World War.

Unit III: 1945-present

12. Race

Learning Objectives: The student will be able to
- Discuss major events and moments in the Civil Rights Movement
- Describe the ways in which government and politicians both inhibited and accepted civil rights.
- Discuss and analyze the different actions taken by African Americans in the South and the rest of the nation.
- Evaluate the impact of civil rights efforts and legislation to bring about true equality.
- Compare and contrast the ideas and efforts of major civil rights advocates.
- Analyze why more radical African American groups developed into the mid-1960s and what impact they had on the civil rights fight.
- Express race as a larger issue in contemporary America.

13. Gender

Learning Objectives: The student will be able to
- Assess the impact of the Feminine Mystique on women and America.
- Explain the glass ceiling and efforts to create a more equal America.
- Evaluate the successes and failures of the women’s movement since the 1960s.
- Describe women’s place and roles in myth and reality during the 1950s.
- Analyze traditional and lingering gender stereotypes in popular culture.

14. Social Class

Learning Objectives: The student will be able to
- Explain why middle-class suburban America came to dominate representations of American culture in the media during the post-World War II era.
- Assess the notion of a classless society and the realities of a stratified American society.
- Analyze “status seekers” and their unique place as a driving force in the United States.
- Identify class-based and ethnic stereotypes and their continuing impact in American society.
- Discuss economic and technological changes of the past few decades that have transformed class structure and relationships.

15. The Cold War

Learning Objectives: The student will be able to
- Describe Cold-War paranoia and its impact on American civil liberties.
- Explain the long- and short-term causes of the Cold War.
- Assess containment its significance.
- Evaluate the world’s view of American foreign policy during the Cold War.
- Discuss why the Cold War ended and the new problems that then arose.
16. The Counterculture

Learning Objectives: The student will be able to
Explain the origins of the counterculture.
Assess the counterculture’s impact on the United States in the 1960s and since that decade.
Evaluate the demise of the counterculture and the conservative backlash.
Describe the various social, cultural, and political ideas that drove the counterculture.
Discuss the important events that symbolized the hopes and failures of the counterculture.
Analyze who accepted the counterculture and why.
Examine how the counterculture is perceived today.

Academic Integrity Statement:

Students are expected to comply with the college-wide requirements for academic integrity. Mercer County Community College is committed to Academic Integrity—the honest, fair, and continuing pursuit of knowledge, free from fraud or deception. This implies that students are expected to be responsible for their own work. Presenting another individual’s work as one’s own and receiving excessive help from another individual will qualify as a violation of Academic Integrity. The entire policy on Academic Integrity is located in the Student handbook and is found on the college website (http://www.mccc.edu/admissions_policies_integrity.shtml).