

# Overview of Themes in American Literature

*Course Syllabus (Spring Semester 2019)*

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## **Course description and course objectives**

This course covers selected short stories and novels from American literature, focusing on several recurrent topics, such as war, family, the Frontier, technological development, racial issues, gender issues, the American dream. Various narrative techniques will be discussed and applied in the interpretation of the literary works. The objectives of the course include advancing students' knowledge and understanding of American literature, developing their skills for analyzing, assessing and presenting information, ideas and concepts about the selected themes, as well as raising their awareness about the numerous possibilities of interpretation. The course is also aimed at raising students' awareness about the importance of valuing other people's perspectives, and thus learning to treat others with respect.

## **Materials for the course:**

Kelly J. Mays, ed. *The Norton Introduction to Literature*. Shorter 12<sup>th</sup> edition. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2017.

John G. Parks, ed. *American Short Stories since 1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

## **Additional readings:**

Harper Lee. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1988.

Jack London. *Martin Eden* (in: *Novels and Social Writings*). Ed. Donal Pizer. New York: Macmillan, 1982.

George McMichael et al. *Anthology of American Literature*. 9<sup>th</sup> edition. Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2007.

Paul Lauter et al. *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.



## ❖ Grading

### **Class participation, homework and activities – 20%**

This portion of your grade will be based on your active involvement in class (attendance alone does not count towards the grade). Class participation includes coming to class prepared: having read the assigned texts, completing your homework, and discussing the issues that are envisaged in the syllabus for each class. Students are encouraged to provide thoughtful and insightful critical analysis of texts, which is only possible if you dedicate time to thinking about the texts after having read them.

### **Presentation – 10%**

As part of the course, you will be required to give a 5-minute oral presentation on a theme relevant to the materials covered in class, and in agreement with your instructor. More information will be given during the introductory class.

### **Final exam – 70%**

The final exam will cover the material that is studied during the semester.

## ❖ Class Rules

We all have responsibility to maintain safe and pleasant learning environment, which means treating each other with understanding, dignity and respect, as well as providing support and encouragement to fellow students, which leads to improvement of everyone's work. That means that all discussions should be carried out with appreciation of other people's opinions. Respect for others also includes: not making fun of them, not insulting them, no side talking. Open-mindedness is encouraged, so feel free to express any opinions you have on the topics that will be discussed, unless they are offensive. It is also important not to discriminate on the basis of nationality, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, place of living or any other basis.

Please come to class on time in order not to interrupt the class and not to distract other students in their discussions. If you come into class more than 15 minute late, it will be counted as absence. I will not stop anyone who wishes to leave earlier, but please consider the fact that it is unfair to others who stay by the end of the class, because it may create the impression that some students are privileged (allowed to leave earlier). In order to avoid that, leaving earlier will be counted as absence. If, at one or two occasions you have the need to leave earlier, please let me know before class, in which case it will not be counted as absence.

The class is also nice opportunity to take a break from cell phone use.

Plagiarism is not permitted. To plagiarize is "to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own: use (another's production) without crediting the source" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

A student is responsible for covering the material when missing a class.

**Thank you for bringing the assigned text materials to class and for respecting the Class Rules.**