LIT 34

20th-Century American Literature: An Intellectual Bus Tour

Professor Michael Krasny


OVERVIEW:

The course is an intellectual bus tour of American literature through the 20th century, a survey of major figures. It will serve as a guided introduction to the pantheon of selected great writers of the genres of fiction, poetry and drama and to the central motifs and innovations of the period. By the end of the course you should have a broad view of the central voices, styles, and forms of the period as we make our way through the rich terrain of the regional, cultural and ethnic terrains. Classes will be run by lecture and discussion and those taking the course for credit or a grade will be required to write a critical essay of six to eight pages.

We will generally follow the course syllabus readings. Be sure you read all of the Introductions preceding each of the selections and selected writers:

4/4 Required Reading: Poems by Edward Arlington Robinson (688); Willa Cather’s “Neighbor Rosicky.” (694); Fiction by Sherwood Anderson (761-772); Susan Glaspell’s “Trifles” (750) and Sandburg’s “Chicago” (773).

Recommended reading: Jack London and Charlotte Perkins Gilman essays (590 & 593); Introduction to American Literature (667-686).

4/11 Required Reading: Selected poetry by William Carlos Williams – “The Red Wheelbarrow” & “This is Just to Say” (793); Ezra Pound’s “A Pact” & “In A Station of the Metro” (799) & “From A Retrospect”; Hilda Doolittle’s “Oread”(820); Marianne Moore’s “Poetry” (824); Robert Frost’s “Stopping by Woods” (747) and “Design” (748); Wallace Stevens’ “Sunday Morning” (779) and T.S. Eliot’s “The Wasteland” (834).

Recommended Reading: Mina Loy’s “Feminist Manifesto” (806); Claude McKay’s “If We Must Die” (937); e.e. cummings “in Just-“ (962) and “Buffalo Bill’s” (964).
4/18 Required Reading: Eugene O’Neill’s “Long Day’s Journey into Night” (854-934 Include illustrations with or separately); F. Scott Fitzgerald’s “Winter Dreams” (975); Ernest Hemingway’s “Hills like White Elephants” (1030).

Recommended Reading: F. Scott Fitzgerald’s “Babylon Revisited” (901); John Steinbeck’s “The Chrysanthemums” (1045); Poems by Hart Crane (1028 and 1029).

4/25 Required Reading: Essays by Langston Hughes (816) and Zora Neale Hurston (958) and Hughes’ poems “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” (1037) & “I, Too” (1038); Jean Toomer (967-973); Richard Wright’s “The Man Who Was Almost a Man” (1059); Ralph Ellison’s “Invisible Man” (Battle Royal 1210).

Recommended Reading: Poetry of Countee Cullen (1053); Zora Neale Hurston’s “Sweat” (950); Langston Hughes’ “The Weary Blues” (1039) and “Democracy” (1041).

5/2 Required Reading: William Faulkner’s “A Rose for Emily” (1005); Flannery O’Connor’s “A Good Man is Hard to Find” (1381). Tennessee Williams’ “A Streetcar Named Desire” (1116).

Recommended Reading: William Faulkner’s “Barn Burning” (1015); Flannery O’Connor’s “Good Country People” (1367); Eudora Welty’s “Petrified Man” (1097).

5/9 Required Reading: Sylvia Plath’s “Daddy” (1447); Anne Sexton’s “Sylvia’s Death” (1410); Adrienne Rich’s “Diving into the Wreck” (1421); Robert Lowell’s “Skunk Hour” (1296); Elizabeth Bishop’s “The Fish” (1108); Allen Ginsberg’s “Howl” (1394).

Recommended Reading: “American Literature since 1945” (1069-1091); Theodore Roethke’s “My Papa’s Waltz” (1093) and “I Knew a Woman” (1095).]

5/16 Required Reading: John Updike’s “Separating” (1452); James Baldwin’s “Sonny’s Blues” (1343); Raymond Carver’s “Cathedral” (1532) and John Cheever’s “The Swimmer” (1183).

Recommended Reading: Don DeLillo’s “White Noise” (1501); Thomas Pynchon’s “Entropy” (1520).

5/23 Required Reading: Philip Roth’s “Defender of the Faith” (1462); Arthur Miller’s “Death of a Salesman” (1221); Art Spiegelman “Mouse Trap” (1587).

Recommended Reading: Sandra Cisneros’ “Woman Hollering Creek” (1614). Alice Walker’s “Everyday Use” (1658); Leslie Marmon Silko “Lullaby” (1580).

5/30 Required Reading: Gwendolyn Brooks’ We Real Cool” (1303); Audre Lord “Coal” (1491); Lucille Clifton “homage to my hips” (1496); Toni Morrison’s “Recitatif” (1429).
Recommended Reading: Amiri Baraka’s “A Poem for Willie Best” (1485); Audre Lord “A Black Mother Woman” (1492); James Baldwin’s “Going to Meet the Man” (1331).

6/6 Required Reading: Louise Erdrich’s “Fleur.” (1626); Maxine Hong Kingston’s “No Name Woman” (1544); Jhumpa Lahiri’s “Sexy” (1692); Junot Diaz’s “Drown” (1709);

Recommended Reading: Li-Young Lee’s “Persimmons” (1636); Gloria Anzaldua’s “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” (1558); Sherman Alexie’s “Pawn Shop” (1679).

Michael Krasny, Ph.D., has been Professor of English and American Literature at San Francisco State and has taught at Stanford in Continuing Ed and in the Fulbright Institutes. He is a widely published literary critic and scholar. Since 1993 he has been the host of the award winning radio program Forum, heard on KQED Radio in San Francisco He is the author of a number of books, including Off Mike, Spiritual Envy, Let There Be Laughter and co-author of Sound Ideas as well as the two volume collection (also in CD and DVD) of Masterpieces of Short Fiction.