English 208: Introduction to American Literature: The 20th Century
Professor Michaela Bronstein
Spring 2012
Tuesday/Thursday 1.15-2.30, Fanning Hall 310
Office Hours: 2.45 - 5 PM Thursdays, Blaustein 320
(Please e-mail to schedule meetings at any other time.)
michaela.bronstein@conncoll.edu

“Make it new.” Ezra Pound

Twentieth century American literature begins with a bang: the twinned literal detonations of World War I and the figurative detonation of the Modernist movement in art, which upended many of the conventions of poetry and storytelling. These two events were both primarily European in origin, but they cast a wide net of influence, and for several decades American literature negotiated a new identity as simultaneously national and international work, participating in world cultural and artistic dialogues while still concerned to remain authentically national.

As the century continued, cultural cross-pollination grew even more complex: new works emerged from recent immigrants, or from cultures within America who had long been marginalized: African-Americans, Native Americans. These authors often negotiate complex relationships with a literary heritage that has marginalized and excluded them.

Over the course of the semester, we will examine the new American literatures that have emerged in reaction against the old, as well as the forms of continuity that persist between them. We will see literature as double-voiced, speaking both to a particular historical moment and to the future, both to an American audience and to readers throughout the world.

Texts:
James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time
William Faulkner, Light in August
Toni Morrison, Jazz
J. D. Salinger, Franny and Zooey
Norton Anthology of American Literature, Volumes C, D, and E

Texts marked with a * are not from the anthology, and will either be in a course packet or made available on Moodle.

Other than the anthology and Light in August (for which you must buy the same edition available in the college bookstore), you are welcome to use alternate editions for the required texts. You must, however, bring in a physical edition to class for all texts under discussion.

Weeks 1-2: Introduction

January 24
Introductory, from handout.
January 26
Henry James, *The Beast in the Jungle* (477-506)

January 31
NO CLASS TODAY

February 2
Henry James, “The Real Thing”
Edith Wharton, “The Other Two,” “Roman Fever”

Week 3: The European American Poets

February 7
Ezra Pound, “To Whistler, American” “Portrait d’une Femme,” “In the Station of the Metro,” from “A Retrospect”

February 9
H. D., “Mid-day,” “Leda,” “Helen”
*See also:* W. B. Yeats, “Leda and the Swan,”* Brancusi (C3)

Week 4: Lost Generation Stories

February 14
World War I: Hemingway (218-219); E. E. Cummings (220-222); map (223); Gertrude Stein (227-229)
Hemingway, “The Snows of Kilimanjaro”

February 16
Susan Glaspell, “Trifles”

Week 5: The Poets Who Stayed Home

February 21

February 23
Weeks 6-7: Race and Modernism

February 28
Zora Neale Hurston, “The Eatonville Anthology”
William Faulkner, *Light in August*, 1-145

March 1
*Light in August*, through 255

March 2: Essay 1 Due

March 6
*Light in August*, through 414

March 8
*Light in August*, complete

[Spring Break]

Week 8: Modernist Epic Onstage

March 27

March 29
*Long Day’s Journey Into Night*, Act 4

Week 9: Late Modernist Poetry and Prose

April 3
Marianne Moore, “Poetry,” “To a Snail,” “The Paper Nautilus,” “The Mind is an Enchanting Thing,” “In Distrust of Merits”
T. S. Eliot, “Burnt Norton”

April 5
Flannery O’Connor, “The Life You Save May Be Your Own” and “Good Country People”

Weeks 10-12: The 1950s and 1960s:

April 10
Robert Lowell, “Colloquy in Black Rock,” “The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket,” “Skunk Hour,” “Night Sweat”
Allen Ginsberg, *Howl*, “Footnote to Howl,” “A Supermarket in California”

April 12
Vladimir Nabokov, “The Vane Sisters,”* “Signs and Symbols”*  

April 17  
J.D. Salinger, “Franny”  

April 19  
J.D. Salinger, “Zooey”  

April 20: Essay 2 Due  

April 24  
James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*  

April 26  
John Updike, “Separating”  
Thomas Pynchon, “Entropy”  
Philip Roth, “Defender of the Faith”  

The 1970s to the Present  

May 1  
David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*  

May 3  
Raymond Carver, “Cathedral”  
Leslie Marmon Silko, “Lullaby”  
Art Spiegelman, from *Maus*  
Junot Diaz, “Drown”  

May 8  
Toni Morrison, *Jazz*  

May 10  
*Jazz*, complete.  

Final exam: details TBA.  

POLICIES.  
All essays are due by e-mail to me at 5 PM on the listed due dates; they should be 5-6 pages in length, and cover different genres (poetry, fiction, drama, nonfiction prose). I will accept the following formats: .pages, .doc, .docx, and .pdf. Late papers will drop a third of a letter grade (e.g., from A to A-) for each day late.  
Feel free to drop by my office hours without an appointment; if you can’t make them, let me know and I’ll be glad to work out another time.
Prompt, prepared, and participatory attendance is required. It is your responsibility to read the listed works *before* the day they appear on the syllabus. Absences or regular silence in class will affect your participation grade. Up to one absence in the semester, with advance notice, can be made up through writing a short response to the readings. Otherwise, absences will be taken out of your participation grade; cases of repeated absence (3 or more in the semester) will result in a lowering of the grade for the whole course.

GRADING.
- Each essay: 25% of your grade
- Final exam: 30%
- Participation: 20%