

## **LITR 436 American Literary Realism and Naturalism**

Spring 2011 Professor Funston

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Office hours: MW 10:00 to 10:50 and by appointment

### **Description:**

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the United States shifted from a rural society to one that was predominantly urban. As a result, Americans had to redefine the relationship between the individual and society, thus challenging some of the fundamental beliefs about the nature of independence and self-determination. American Literary Realism and Naturalism were reactions to the radical changes wrought by urbanization, immigration, and industrialization, as well as the philosophical revolutions caused by science and technology.

### **Objectives:**

1. To survey major American Realism and Naturalist writers
2. To examine how these writers and texts were situated in a historical context
3. To analyze literary texts critically and analytically
4. To locate, understand, and evaluate relevant scholarship

### **Texts:**

Cather, Willa O Pioneers! (1913)

Dreiser, Theodore Sister Carrie (1900)

Frederic, Harold The Damnation of Theron Ware (1896)

Howells, William Dean A Hazard of New Fortunes (1890)

James, Henry Washington Square (1880)

Nagel, James and Tom Quirk, eds. The Portable Realism Reader (1997)

Wharton, Edith The House of Mirth (1905)

### **Requirements:**

1. **Engagement:** I expect that you come to class prepared to engage seriously in the work of the class, which includes reading, thinking, and writing. Engagement will be demonstrated by the following:
  - a. submitting required work on time
  - b. reading and thinking through the scheduled assignment
  - c. writing a thoughtful response to the reading as required
  - d. responding to questions for writing in class as required
  - e. participating in class discussions in a constructive manner (constructive means comments that show insight and move the class forward...not comments that are repetitive, obstructive, or tangential)
2. **Writing:**
  - a. three scholarship papers
  - b. homework responses
  - c. summation

3. Attendance: I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences; an absence is an absence. You are allowed two absences penalty-free. **50 points** will be deducted from your final point total for each additional absence; 4 or more absences, regardless of the reasons, will result in automatic failure in LITR 436 (0.0).

Tardiness will also lower your point total: **25 points** will be deducted each time you come to class late (after 2:00).

### **Formats:**

1. Scholarship analysis: You will use the MLA on-line database to locate and obtain a substantial (minimum 10 page) articles published in reputable professional journals three times this semester. The scholarly articles must be focused on an author or a text covered in this course; you will be expected to contribute your findings to the class. Your analyses should be typed and error-free; they may be in the form of detailed paragraphs or an essay.

Essentially, you will be examining and evaluating the arguments put forward in these scholarly articles. You must identify the writer's thesis as well as the structure of the writer's argument and the evidence the writer gives to support the argument. In addition, you must identify how the writer situates his or her work in relation to what others have done previously in the same area; you must also identify how the writer sees his or her findings in relation to the author's total body of work. Finally, you must discuss how this article relates to your own experience of and thinking about the text.

2. Homework "responses" (200 words minimum) will be judged on content rather than correct form; the responses must be typed. Since homework responses will form the basis for that day's class discussion, they must be completed prior to the class meeting and brought to class. The point of these homework responses is to demonstrate your insight into the reading—generally, there will be no one "right" answer.

Summaries of the reading or tangential discussions are unacceptable. Addressing the assignment minimally or superficially is just barely acceptable. College-level work reflects serious engagement with and a thorough understanding of the reading as well as evidence of real thought and the use of skills and concepts from class.

ALL homework responses will be collected on Wednesday May 4 and will be returned during the scheduled final exam period.

3. Summation: This essay is your opportunity to reflect on what you have accomplished in this course. You will be describing your sense of this period as reflected in the literary texts, as well as your evolution as an analytical reader of these texts.

### **Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another person without giving proper credit. IT IS THEFT. It includes

- word-for-word copying without quotes and documentation
- using material from the Internet without documentation

- paraphrasing without proper credit
- patching a paper together from a variety of sources
- turning in another student's work (essays, paragraphs, sentences, words, ideas) as your own
- using ideas or structures from sources without credit

The penalty for plagiarism: 0.0 for the course and referral to the College's judicial system for disciplinary action. Ignorance or "honest mistakes" are not excuses for plagiarism. You should consult the College's catalogue on academic honesty.

### **Grading**

The grade for LITR 436 will be calculated on 1000 points, distributed as follows:

Scholarship papers	300
Homework responses	200
Summation	200
Engagement	300

### **Course Grading Scale:**

4.0	900-1000
3.7	870
3.3	830
3.0	800
2.7	770
2.3	730
2.0	700
1.7	670
1.3	630
1.0	600

### **Schedule:**

- I Introduction; Jewett, "White Heron"; Howells, "Editha"
- II Washington Square 1-10; 11-20
- III Washington Square 21-35; Hazard of New Fortunes I
- IV Hazard II; Hazard III
- V Hazard IV; Hazard V
- VI **Scholarship 1 (2-28)**; Damnation of Theron Ware I
- VII Damnation II-III; Damnation IV
- VIII Freeman, "Revolt"; Gilman, "Yellow"; Austin, "Walking"; **Scholarship 2 (3-23)**
- IX House of Mirth I; House II
- X O Pioneers I-II; O Pioneers III-IV
- XI Chesnutt, "Sheriff"; Chopin, "Desiree"; Cather, "Wagner"; Frederic, "Aunt" Crane, "Blue Hotel" and "Open Boat"
- XII **Scholarship 3 (4-18)**
- XIII Dreiser, "Curious Shifts" and "Second Choice"; Sister Carrie 1-10
- XIV Carrie 11-20; Carrie 21-30; **all HR due 5-4**
- XV Carrie 31-40; Carrie 41-50 and **Summation due 5-11**