

## **LITR 301 American Writers**

Spring 2012 Professor Funston

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Office hours: MWF 2:30-3:30 and by appointment

### **Description:**

During the years 1870 to 1920, over 25% of the rural population moved to urban areas. This population shift, along with the rapid changes in everyday life because of technology and industrialization, forced Americans to rethink the American identity. In addition, the Great War of 1914-1918, transformed the United States into a global power. By examining the fiction of Howells, Wharton, Cather, and Lewis, we can trace some of the central issues confronting the nation during the early twentieth century.

### **Objectives:**

1. To survey selected works of Howells, Wharton, Cather, and Lewis.
2. To examine how these writers responded to the social, historical, philosophical, political, and economic forces of the period
3. To refine skills in critical textual analysis through class discussion and writing
4. To locate, understand, and evaluate relevant scholarship

### **Texts:**

Howells, The Rise of Silas Lapham (1885)

Wharton, The Custom of the Country (1913)

Cather, The Song of the Lark (1915)

Wharton, The Age of Innocence (1920)

Lewis, Main Street (1920)

Cather, One of Ours (1922)

Lewis, Babbitt (1922)

Wharton, Twilight Sleep (1927)

Cather, Death Comes for the Archbishop (1927)

Lewis, Elmer Gantry (1927)

**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. Preparation 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 response
3. Attendance: I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences; an absence is an absence. You are allowed three absences penalty-free. **50 points** will be deducted from your final point total for each additional absence; 6 or more absences, regardless of the reasons, will result in automatic failure in LITR 301 (0.0).

Tardiness will also lower your point total: **25 points** will be deducted each time you come to class late (after 10:00).

**Class Etiquette:**

Courtesy and integrity should govern our behavior at all times. In addition, please do not wear your hat in class; nor should you eat, drink, or groom yourself in class. All electronic equipment, with the exception of your laptop, should be turned off and stowed out of sight.

I do not tolerate inappropriate or disruptive behavior. I will warn you the first time; the second time I will ask you to leave the classroom; the third time I will cancel your enrollment in the course.

**Formats:**

1. Scholarship analysis: You will use the MLA on-line database to locate and obtain three substantial (minimum 10 page) articles published in reputable professional journals. 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 notes, an essay, or a combination of the two.

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. Consult "Scholarship Analysis Guidelines" for more details.

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 Friday May 4 and will be returned during the scheduled final exam period.

3. Summation response: Select an essay or short story written by Howells, Cather, Wharton, or Lewis to be included in this course in the future. After you give a brief (1-2 paragraph) synopsis, you will analyze the essay or story in detail, explaining in what ways this text supports and illuminates the themes and ideas explored in LITR 301.

This response should be 800 words in length, typed, double-spaced, and proofed. Use MLA format. You will be sharing your response with the class.

### **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 301 will be calculated on 1000 points, distributed as follows:

Summation	200
Scholarship papers	300
Homework responses	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: Syllabus, Silas 1-7, Silas 8-14
- II: Silas 15-22, Silas 22-27, Custom 1-11
- III: Custom 12-25, Custom 26-38, Custom 39-46
- IV: Song 1, Song 2-3
- V: Song 4, Song 5-6 and epilogue, Age 1-8
- VI: Age 9-17, Age 18-25, Age 26-34
- VII: Main 1-10, Main 11-20
- VIII: Hot Saturday, Main 21-30

IX: Main 21-30, Main 31-39, One 1-2  
X: One 3, One 4-5, Babbitt 1-11  
XI: Babbitt 12-23, Babbitt 24-34  
XII: Death 1-3, Death 4-6  
XIII: Death 7-9, Twilight 1-11, Twilight 12-23  
XIV: Twilight 24-32, Elmer 1-11, Elmer 12-22  
XV: Elmer 23-33, Evaluation

**Due Dates:**

2-17 Scholarship 1  
3-19 Scholarship 2  
4-16 Scholarship 3  
5-4 Homework responses  
5-9 Summation response