

Tel Aviv University  
The Lester & Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities  
The Department of English and American Studies  
מבוא לתרבות אמריקה - 0626150001 - Introduction to American Culture  
מסטר ב' תשע"ז 2016-17 Spring Semester

This course will provide an overview of American Culture based on written texts from the Colonial period to the contemporary scene. Material will be drawn from a variety of genres, among them poetry, slave narrative, captivity narrative, autobiography, novel, romance, essay, sermon, and short story. These texts will be placed in the context of historical developments and other cultural expressions, such as painting, film, and music.

**Reading:**

All the short works are available on the Moodle site below. Twain's Huckleberry Finn and Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby are available for purchase in the bookstore. For most classes, you are also asked to read (or view) some historical context that will frame the main text(s) for that day. It is vital for success in this course that you will complete all the readings listed for each meeting before you come to class. Students who will not come prepared to class or try to read all the material just before the exams are not likely to perform well.

**Attendance:**

While in such a large class it is difficult to police the attendance of each student, showing up for the lectures is mandatory. Students who miss lectures are not likely to succeed in this course.

**Classroom etiquette:**

Please come on time and refrain from walking in and out during class. Cell phone use during the lecture is prohibited. Laptop computers are permitted but only for activities related to the content of the class.

**Graded work:**

- Quizzes and Exams - There will be two quizzes and a final exam. The quizzes will constitute 15% of the final grade each (30% combined). The dates for these quizzes appear in the syllabus below. Each will be given only once and there will be no moed bet. The final exam will take place on July 6th at 9:00 (Moed Alef) and August 8th at 9:00 (Moed Bet). This exam will account for 50% of the final grade.
- Map of American Literature assignment – during the semester we will be building together a map of American literature. Your written contribution to this project will count as 20% of the final grade. Completing this assignment on time is a condition for passing the course.

**Teaching team:**

- Prof. Milette Shamir | Office Hours: Thurs 14:00-16:00 Webb 519 | [mshamir@post.tau.ac.il](mailto:mshamir@post.tau.ac.il)
- Ms. Nitzan Lapidot | Office Hours: by appointment | [nitzanlapidot@gmail.com](mailto:nitzanlapidot@gmail.com)

## Beginnings: Encounter, Conquest, Settlement

### **March 13<sup>th</sup> - American Stories**

- Before class, please read New York Times article "Who Are We?" by Ross Douthat.
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED Talk, "The Danger of a Single Story".

### **March 16<sup>th</sup> - Discovery**

- Context: read "The Name 'America' Appears for the First Time on a Map" OR watch "Christopher Columbus"
- Text: Christopher Columbus, "Letter on His First Voyage" and excerpt from "The Third Voyage" (1493 and 1498).

### **March 20<sup>th</sup> - Contact Zones**

- Context: read "Fear and Love in the Virginia Colony" or watch "Powhatan Tribes, Pocahontas, and John Smith."
- Text: John Smith, excerpt from *The General Historie of Virginia* (1624).
- Text: Yuchi oral narrative, "Creation of the Whites" (n.d.).

### **March 23<sup>rd</sup> - Puritans I**

- Context: read "A City upon a Hill."
- Text: John Winthrop, excerpt from "A Modell of Christian Charity" (1630).

### **March 27<sup>th</sup> - Puritans II**

- Text: Mary Rowlandson, "A Narrative of the Captivity and Restauration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson" (1682), read introductory section, removes 1-9, removes 19-end.
- Text: Louis Erdrich, "Captivity" (2003).

## Making the Nation, Making the Self

### **March 30<sup>th</sup> - Enlightenment I**

- Context: watch "American Enlightenment."
- Text: Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography*, Parts One and Two (1771-90), pp. 828-64, pp. 879-886.

### **April 3<sup>rd</sup> - Enlightenment II**

- Text: Thomas Jefferson, excerpt from *The Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson* (1821).
- Text: Walt Whitman, "The Sleepers" (1855).

## **QUIZ #1 ON ALL MATERIAL COVERED SO FAR.**

## Romanticism and the Marketplace

### **April 20<sup>th</sup> (first class after Pessach break) - Transcendentalism I**

- Context: "Early Nineteenth Century: 1800-1865," pp. 1389-1400.

- Text: Ralph Waldo Emerson, from "Nature" (Introduction and chapter 4); from "The American Scholar" (Introduction); from "Self Reliance" (from beginning to "Virtues are in the popular estimate...)

#### **April 24<sup>th</sup> - Transcendentalism II**

- Text: Henry David Thoreau, "Economy" and "Where I lived, and What I Lived For" from *Walden* (1854).

#### **April 27<sup>th</sup> - American Romance**

- Text: Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" (1835).

#### **May 1<sup>st</sup> - No class.**

#### **May 4<sup>th</sup> - The Frontier and the City**

- Text: Edgar Allen Poe, "The Murders at the Rue Morgue" (1841).

#### **MAP OF AMERICAN LITERATURE ASSIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS**

#### **May 8<sup>th</sup> - Occupying Wall Street**

- Text: Herman Melville, "Bartleby, the Scrivener" (1853).

#### Slavery and Sentimentalism

#### **May 11<sup>th</sup> - The Cult of Domesticity**

- Context: "Early Nineteenth Century: 1800-1865," pp. 1400-1409.
- Text: Harriet Beecher Stowe, from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: chapters 1-5, 8-9, 25-6, 40 (1851). You can read the plot summary of the whole novel here.
- Text: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Declaration of Sentiments" (1848).

#### **May 15<sup>th</sup> - The Slave Narrative**

- Text: Frederick Douglass, selections from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845): Prefaces, Chapters 1-3, 6-7, 10-11.

#### **May 18<sup>th</sup> - An American Myth**

- Text: Mark Twain, selections from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). Book available for purchase in the campus bookstore.

#### New Women

#### **May 22<sup>nd</sup> - Visiting author: Jamaica Kincaid, Winner of the 2017 Dan David Prize for Literature**

- Text: Excerpts from *Annie John* (1985).

#### **May 25<sup>th</sup> - No class.**

#### **May 29<sup>th</sup> - Writing New Womanhood**

- Context: "Circumstances and Literary Achievements of Women," pp. 14-18.

- Text: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"(1892) and "Why I Wrote the Yellow Wallpaper" (1913).

## QUIZ #2 ON ALL MATERIAL COVERED FROM PESSACH TO TWAIN.

### Race, Ethnicity, and Writing

#### **June 1<sup>st</sup> - From Slavery to Race**

- Context: "Circumstances and Literary Achievements of African Americans," pp. 18-22.
- Text: Booker T. Washington, "The Atlanta Exposition Address" (1895).
- Text: W.E.B. Dubois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" (1903).

#### **June 5<sup>th</sup> - Consent and Descent**

- Text: Charles Chesnutt, "The Wife of his Youth"(1898).
- Text: Cahan, "A Providential Match" (1898).

#### **June 8<sup>th</sup> - Melting Pot, Multiculturalism, Nativis**

- Text: Mary Antin, Introduction to *The Promised Land* (1912).
- Text: Horace Kallen, from "Democracy vs. The Melting Pot" (1915).
- Text: William Faulkner, from *The Sound and the Fury* (1929).

### Modernity and Modernism

#### **June 12<sup>th</sup>**

- Context: read "Modern Period, 1910-1945" pp. 839-856 OR watch:
- Text: F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925), chapters 1-2.
- Text: T. S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men" (1925).

#### **June 15<sup>th</sup>**

- Text: *The Great Gatsby*, chapters 3-6.

#### **June 19<sup>th</sup>**

- Text: *The Great Gatsby*, chapters 7-end.

### Contemporary Challenges

#### **June 22<sup>nd</sup> - The Western v. Borderlands**

- Text: Watch "The Searchers" (1956).
- Text: Gloria E. Anzaldua, from *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987).

#### **June 29<sup>th</sup> - New Americans**

- Text: Selections from contemporary Arab-American poetry and prose.