

English 0626-1500-01  
Fall 2019  
Office Hours: Th 11-1  
Email: spencer@tauex.tau.ac.il

Spencer Morrison  
Su and Wed 12-2  
Office: Webb 504

## **Introduction to American Culture**

This course will introduce American culture through a variety of written and visual texts spanning the colonial era to the present. The course will emphasize how America is not just a juridical but an imaginative and narrative construct, asking how this construct arose from and transformed the pre-national and pre-colonial landscape. Among the broad issues we'll explore are the relationship of the individual to the community; the imaginative function of the frontier in structuring American identity; the persistence of racial division across U.S. history; America's fraught relationship to imperialism as both a post-colony and an imperial power; and the global dimensions of American culture. We will also consider the term "America" as a signifier for both the U.S. nation-state and the entire hemisphere ("the Americas"), emphasizing the hemispheric relationships that helped determine national development. We will interpret U.S. novels, poems, speeches, autobiographies, essays, and films in acquainting ourselves with the country's rich culture and history.

### **Required Text** (available to purchase online)

Flannery O'Connor, *Wise Blood*

### **Additional Recommended Texts**

M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*

Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*

Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual*

A good desktop dictionary (e.g. Oxford)

### **Evaluation**

10% Participation (will only be used to raise grade)

20% Short Close-Reading Essay (2-3 pages)

40% Term Paper (5 pages)

30% Final Exam (2 hours)

### **Notes on Short Essay and Term Paper**

Topics will be provided in advance for each assignment. Please type and double-space your paper according to standard formatting (i.e. Times New Roman font, standard margins). Late papers will be marked down by 2% per weekday. Extensions will be granted under exceptional circumstances, but they must be negotiated with me in writing and before the deadline. Finally, a note on plagiarism: I take this academic offence very seriously; please do not discredit yourself and endanger your academic reputation by attempting it. Plagiarism involves claiming someone else's ideas or material as your own; be sure to cite every last source.

### **Reading Schedule**

*October*

Week One 27 Su: Introduction

30 We: Christopher Columbus, "Letter on His First Voyage" and excerpt from "Letter on His Third Voyage;" John Smith, excerpt from *The General History of Virginia*

### November

Week Two 3 Su: John Winthrop, excerpts from *A Model of Christian Charity*

6 We: Mary Rowlandson, excerpts from *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*

Week Three 10 Su: Benjamin Franklin, excerpts from *The Autobiography*

13 We: Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux"

Week Four 17 Su: Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance"

20 We: Frederick Douglass, excerpts from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

Week Five 24 Su: Walt Whitman, excerpts from "Song of Myself;" "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"

27 We: Emily Dickinson, selected poems

### December

Week Six 1 Su: Henry David Thoreau, "Economy" and "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," from *Walden*

4 We: Herman Melville, "Bartleby, the Scrivener"

Week Seven 8 Su: Mark Twain, "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County;" and Stephen Crane, "The Open Boat"

11 We: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wall-Paper" \***Short Close-Reading Essay Due\***

Week Eight 15 Su: Booker T. Washington, "The Atlanta Exposition Address;" and W.E.B. Du Bois, excerpts from *The Souls of Black Folk*

18 We: T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

Week Nine 22 Su: T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

25 We: William Carlos Williams, "Spring and All" and "The Red Wheelbarrow;" Robert Frost, "Mending Wall" and "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening"

Week Ten 29 Su: No Class

### January

1 We: Langston Hughes, "The Weary Blues" and "The Negro Speaks of Rivers;" Countee Cullen, "Heritage;" Jean Toomer, excerpts from *Cane*

Week Eleven 5 Su: William Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily" and "Barn Burning"

8 We: Flannery O'Connor, *Wise Blood*

Week Twelve 12 Su: Flannery O'Connor, *Wise Blood*  
15 We: Alfred Hitchcock, dir., *Vertigo*

Week Thirteen 19 Su: James Baldwin, "Going to Meet the Man;" Maxine Hong Kingston, "No  
Name Woman"  
22 We: John Ford, dir., *The Searchers*; Gloria Anzaldua, excerpts from  
*Borderlands/La Frontera*

Week Fourteen 26 Su: James Marsh, dir., *Man on Wire*; Colum McCann, "Phreak"  
**\*Term Paper Due\***