**Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Razi University**

**An Introductory Course in American Literature; Beginnings to the 21st Century**

**Fall Semester, September 2018- January 2019.**

**Class Time: Saturdays, 8:00-9:30 & 10:00-11:30.**

**Instructor:** Ghaderi, A.

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**Course Description**: This course is an introductory survey in American literature from the colonial beginnings through the contemporary era. The syllabus is therefore designed to introduce you to a variety of different prominent writers—such as Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Robert Frost, F. Scott Fitzgerald and so forth—and help you develop a sense of how literature and culture changed from the colonial period to the early national period and then through the antebellum, Civil War, pre-Frist World War, between the Wars, post-War and all the way up to the present time. Due to our limited time we have to be selective in our reading of primary texts.

**Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of the course, it is hoped to achieve the following:

1. Providing a fundamental set of concepts, terms, histories and definition of American literature.
2. Demonstrating the intellectual trends and critical approaches in literary works in their respective historical contexts
3. Describing how various American writers’ use of language is related to contemporary ways of thinking, cultural heritage, and cultural values (through close reading of selected primary texts)
4. Addressing, partially but effectively, the contemporary trends of American literature regarding both works and critical approaches

**Students’ Responsibilities and Required Assignments:**

* **Attendance:** Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and to have completed the assigned reading before arriving in class. Two absences will be permitted. Each additional absence will result in a reduction of the final course grade.
* **Participation:** Students are expected to take part in class discussions and raise questions, if they have any, regarding the subject matter and content of each session. Moreover, they will be asked to give their opinion on certain matters during the class time.
* **Plagiarism:** All written essays submitted in this course must be your own and written exclusively for this course. Cite every sources you use in your essay to avoid violating academic and scholarly ethics. Sources must be properly documented in MLA citation style. The rules for MLA citation will be easily found on the internet. Plus you can use the following websites:

<http://www.citationmachine.net>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/24/>

Please do not refrain from asking me questions if you have any regarding use of sources and citations.

* **Policies**

Attendance and participation are mandatory. Students must have the texts under discussion on them during the sessions (electronic editions and hardcopies are both acceptable). For the use of electronic editions look at classroom rules section.

The class is open to any reasonable criticism or suggestion. Moreover, any objections that the assignments are too much or the sources are too lengthy or difficult for the class’s level are also welcome on the instructor’s part, but they are also to be met with meticulous scrutiny before being accepted into the lesson plan. Therefore, if you have any objections regarding this particular issue, please do think it thoroughly.

First and foremost, this course and our energy and time are to be employed to make sure that learning will occur, and you will finish this course with relative satisfaction having achieved a minimum though sufficient amount of literary and critical understating in accordance to your needs and interests. Hence, please share your concerns with the class or the instructor anytime the necessity arises.

**Classroom Rules**

* All electronic gadgets must be off or set to silent mode. If you use them for reading PDFs and other class related files, make sure they will not distract you or others so as to prevent the class from digressions.
* Punctuality is a non-negotiable must.
* 3 sessions of absence mean reducing your chance of passing the course greatly not to mention increasing the possibility of being dropped out of the course. Don’t try it, ever!
* Class activities are expected of the students.
* Last but not least, respect the class. Do not leave the class in groups during the breaks. You absolutely must not extend breaks’ duration on your own authority. For each session, a 10 minute break is already scheduled.
* Should the students have any questions, concerns, or requests for meeting and materials, they will contact me **only and solely** via my email address. Other forms of communications are absolutely not recommended.

You all have my thanks and appreciation since you have always observed these rules and regulations. Bringing them here again is only a matter of formality and academic regulations.

**Schedule:**

**Session 1: Pre-discovery:**

The discovery of the ‘Brave New World’, Examples of Natives’ oral literary tradition, the arrival of settlers, the Literature of exploration

**Text:** An Excerpt from *A Description of New England*, John Smith, published in 1616.

**Session 2: Colonial America and Democratic Origins:**

Colonial Period, Puritan codex and the early capitalism, religious writings. Early female authors,

towards the Revolution, Alternative voices of Revolution, Writing Revolution: Poetry.

**Text:** ‘The Legend of Sleepy Hollow’, Washington Irving, published in 1820.

**Session 3: Democratic Origins and Revolutionary Writers, 1776-1820:**

Drama, fiction, American Enlightenment, secular state of a divine nation, early signs of Realism and Naturalism

**Text:** continuing discussing Irving’s ‘The Legend of Sleepy Hollow’

**Session 4: The Romantic Period, 1820-1860: Poetry and Fiction (I):**

The making of American myths, making of American selves, making of American fiction and poetry

**Text:** ‘Ode to Beauty’, by Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Session 5: The Romantic Period, 1820-1860: Poetry and Fiction (II):**

Trends in politics and culture, Transcendentalism, Voices of African Americans and thier identity

**Text:** Young Goodman Brown’, by Nathaniel Hawthorne, published in 1835 (anonymously) in The New-England Magazine; 1846 (under his own name) in Mosses from an Old Manse

**Session 6: The Rise of Realism, 1860-1914**

Regionalism in literature, development and perfection of Naturalism and Realism, the transition between Transcendentalism and Realism,

**Text:** ‘O Captain! My Captain!’, Walt Whitman, 1865

**Session 7: Realism; Reconstructing the Past, Reimagining the Future:**

Women’s writings, voices of resistance and reform, the immigrant encounter

**Text:** ‘The Upturned Face’ Stephen Crane.

**Session 8: Modernism and Experimentation, 1914-1945**

Changing national identities, between Victorianism and Modernism, poetry and the search for form

**Text:** Prose of Faulkner, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway to be introduced by lecturer. Poetry of Frost, Pound, and Eliot. ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’, commonly known as ‘Prufrock’, T. S. Eliot, published in 1915.

**Session 9: Making it New: The Development of Modern American Literature**

Innovations of Modernism, Harlem renaissance, challenges for women writers, traditionalism, politics, (mass) culture and art

**Text:** ‘A Rose for Emily’ William Faulkner, 1930

**Session 10: Post-war Literature 1945-1980; Birth of a New World Power**

A Nation of Transition, feminists, formalism and neocriticism, the art and politics

**Text:** *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, a play by Tennessee Williams (students will watch the 1985 adaptation).

**Session 11: American Literature since 1980; Age of Technology and Simulation**

Art and race, reality challenged, post-structuralism and genres, digital world and cinema

**Text:** *Fences*, a play by August Wilson (students will watch the 2016 adaptation)

**Session 12: Summing-up Session**

We will discuss interesting trends in American culture such as popular culture phenomena, cinema, growth and success of television series, etc.

**Sessions 13 and 14: Review**

**Resources**Spanckeren, Kathryn Van. *Outline of American Literature*. S.l.: Estate of Langston Hughes, 1994. Print.\*

\* All short stories and poems that are mentioned in the syllabus are considered to be of primary importance as well. For the two sessions that plays are introduced as the session reading material, student are free to either watch the adaptations or read the plays’ texts.

**Grading and Evaluation**Participation and analysis of the works on class’s agenda are expected of the students.

**Your final grade will be decided based on:**

Class participation + attendance→ 20 + 10 per cent

Critical Response Papers→ 20\*

Final exam\*\* → 50 per cent

\*On sessions 7th and 13th, two questions are raised by the instructor. Each student must respond to the questions in form of short essays. I will not dictate the length of your writings. You are free to compose at any length that will deliver your response **clearly** and **logically**. Demonstrating **critical insight** and **precision** in the argument are expected of you.

\***\***the final exam will be an essay exam. On your exam, you will answer essay questions that are structured around the issues discussed in the class. You must respond to them properly and to the point in a reasonable length with maximum awareness of the texts themselves and critical subject matters that have been presented in the class. It goes needless to say that those who show genuine analytical insights in their answers will receive extra points. And there will be at least one bonus question on your exam which is much more difficult than the regular questions and needs a great deal of critical insight and mastery over the sources. Don’t forget: **everything I say will be on the exam!**