This semester, ENG 250 invites you to join the scholarly conversation by reading, discussing, and writing about literary works grounded in American social criticism. The voices we will read and write about critique the culture in which they were written; expose and protest injustices in our social structures; ask us to examine our humanity; and, in each case, eloquently call for reform and justice for the earth, its creatures, and all of humankind through fiction, non-fiction, poetry, art, and music. They often show us the consequences of our actions if we choose to remain on paths of destruction, violence, oppression, selfishness, ignorance, and hate.

No matter when they were written, works of social criticism resonate in modern times. Jack London’s 1908 novel, *The Iron Heel*, is a dystopian story about U.S. workers oppressed by the rich, but as *The Guardian* recently pointed out, it “often feels like a contemporary documentary” (“Jack London’s vision”). British author George Orwell’s *1984*, published in 1949, might be about totalitarianism and 24/7 surveillance, but, as the BBC writes, the novel is “more relevant than ever before” because “today it is social media that collects every gesture, purchase, comment we make online” no matter where we live in the world (“Why Orwell’s 1984 could be about now”). We also might easily draw a line between Upton Sinclair’s 1904 novel, *The Jungle*, and the plight of immigrants in the U. S. today.

From these early to mid twentieth-century novels to the poetry of Ntozake Shange to Tatyana Fazlalizadeh’s “Stop Telling Women to Smile” NYC art series to Tupac Shakur’s brilliant, socially-charged rap lyrics, voices of dissent call for justice and equality, consideration and truth. The literary texts on our schedule this semester span decades of American history, but they, too, feel as timely today as when they were written. If we listen carefully to the voices of the past, as well as the present, we begin to understand the power of the word and find the inspiration to speak our own truth with wisdom and grace.

The focal point of the course, however, is you and your developing abilities and skills. You will have daily opportunities to discuss course material and several opportunities to put your thoughts into writing.

**Outcomes:**

**Students in this course will demonstrate**

1. the ability to discuss literature, including engaging in an exchange of ideas and offering and supporting insights
2. the capacity to sustain controlled, critical arguments that analyze and synthesize texts
3. an understanding of the craft of writing, including concision, diction, grammar, and syntax
4. the ability to produce creative writing that shows an awareness of language, freedom from cliché, and an understanding of genre, style, and topic
5. the ability to identify and use a range of sources suitable to the scholarly conversation on a particular topic, to evaluate and integrate source material, and to document accurately
6. an understanding of the literary tradition, the historical and cultural contexts of literature, and critical methods of reading
7. the ability to give well-planned, engaging presentations

Course Texts:
The texts that you buy for English 250 will become part of your library as an English major (hence the initial expense). They will be used in other courses and useful for life-long learning.

You should own the following texts for this course:


Suzanne Collins’ The Hunger Games. Any copy is fine.

The MLA and Purdue OWL (both online and free) provide the most current rules of grammar, writing, and documentation.

Chapters 14 and 15 in your Barnet and Cain text offer excellent guidelines for style, manuscript form, using primary and secondary source material, and documentation.

General Policies:
• Class attendance and participation are necessary in order for you to pass the course. You will lose one letter grade for each absence after your third one.
• I often hold one-on-one conferences. Failure to attend a scheduled conference may result in a lower grade.
• As a rule, I do not accept a paper after that set of papers has been graded and returned. Under extenuating circumstances, I may accept a late paper, but I will deduct one letter grade for each day it is late.

A plagiarized paper (in whole or in part) will receive an automatic F and may result in failure of the course. Policy dictates that I report all instances of plagiarism to the Dean of Academic Affairs. Students will conduct themselves in a manner befitting the College policy on Academic Integrity. Consult this section in your Undergraduate Catalogue for official definitions of cheating, misconduct, plagiarism, and providing false information (and their consequences).

• Turn off all cell phones and put them away before you come into class. If you are texting, tweeting, etc., I count you absent—because you’re not really in the class. You are somewhere else. Laptops are also unnecessary, unless I specifically ask that you bring them to class.
If you fall asleep in class, I count you absent because, alas, you’re not really present. You are in dreamland.

Purge the word “like” from your vocabulary, unless, of course, you are using it correctly. Saying “like” every other word makes you sound illiterate—not something you want to strive for in college.

Maintain a respectful attitude toward the course, your fellow students, and me. I will do the same for you. Know that disrespectful behavior—online or in class—will affect your grade.

Participation means talking about the material and listening to what others say (and talking some more). Prepare for each class period by reading and thinking about the assigned material before you come to class.

Work Requirements:

As indicated in the guidelines above, your participation is essential to the success of the course. It means reading all material for the course, actively participating in class discussions, and contributing in meaningful ways on plenary sessions in which you, in teams, take the lead in analyzing texts and leading discussions.

Context is always important in any study of literature, so you will be required to give group presentations on the following time periods in American literature: 1820 – 1865, 1865 – 1914, 1914 – 1945, and 1945 to the Present.

You will receive explicit prompts for each paper during the course of the semester. In general, the papers will move from close reading/explication and analysis using your primary texts to critical analysis using primary and secondary sources.

Your final will lean toward the creative. After spending the entire semester reading and responding to voices of social criticism, you will write and deliver your own manifesto during the final period. Think of it as a Manifestival.

Grading:

10% Class participation/exercises
10% Group Context Presentations
15% Paper #1
15% Paper #2
20% Paper #3
20% Paper #4
10% Final Presentation

Course Schedule: Disclaimer—This schedule may change depending on the length of time it takes to complete discussion and in-class activities.

Always read Norton’s short biography of each author we are discussing.

Jan 14/16/18 Introduction to the Course
Cultural Criticism
Jack London
Assignment: Read “The Scarlet Plague” (June 1912, short story posted on D2L) for Wednesday

Discussion Assignment: Read Chapter 1—What is Literature, and Why Write about It? for Friday
Assignment: Read Chapter 2—The Writer as Reader: Reading and Responding for Wednesday, Jan 23
Assignment: Read Chapter 10—Writing about Fiction: The World of the Story for Friday, Jan 25

Jan 21

Martin Luther King Day—No Classes

Jan 23/25

Chapters 1, 2 and 10 in Barnet and Cain
Assignment: Read Introduction: American Literature 1820 – 1865 (Norton, 489-510) for Monday, Jan 28
Assignment: Read Nathaniel Hawthorne’s bio (Norton, 651-55) and Hawthorne’s short story “The Minister’s Black Veil” (1836, Norton 685-94) for Monday, Jan 28
Assignment: Read Chapter 6—Literature, Form, and Meaning and Chapter 7—What is Interpretation? for Wednesday, Jan 30
Assignment: Read Chapter 8—What is Evaluation for Friday, Feb 1

Jan 28/30

Context: American Literature 1820-1865
Feb 1

Hawthorne bio
“The Minister’s Black Veil”
Chapters 6, 7, and 8 in Barnet and Cain
Assignment: Read Edgar Allan Poe bio (Norton, 731-35) and Poe’s short story “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839, Norton, 749-62) for Monday, Feb 4
Assignment: Read Ray Bradbury’s “Usher II” from The Martian Chronicles (1950, short story posted on D2L) for Wednesday, Feb 6
Assignment: Read Chapter 3—The Reader as Writer for Friday, Feb 8

Paper #1 Due Monday, Feb 4

Feb 4/6/8

Poe bio
“The Fall of the House of Usher”
Bradbury’s “Usher II”
Chapter 3 in Barnet and Cain
Assignment: Read Frederick Douglass’s bio (Norton, 996-1000) and Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself (1845, Norton, 1008-66) for next week
Assignment: Reach Chapter 4—Two Forms of Criticism for Monday, Feb 11

Feb 11/13/15

Chapter 4 in Barnet and Cain
Frederick Douglass bio
*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*
Abraham Lincoln’s “A House Divided Speech” (June 16, 1858) posted on D2L

Feb 18/20/22

Film: *Lincoln* (2012)
Assignment: Read Introduction: American Literature 1865 – 1914 (Norton, 1-20) for Monday, Feb 25
Assignment: Read Walt Whitman’s bio (Norton, 21-24) and Whitman’s “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” (1865, Norton, 76) for Monday, Feb 25

Feb 25/27

Whitman bio
“When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d”
Assignment: Read Whitman’s “Song of Myself,” sections 1-33 (1855, Norton, 25-53) and sections 48-52 (66-9) for Wednesday
Assignment: Read Chapter 12—Writing about Poetry for Monday, Mar 4

Paper #2 Due Monday, Mar 4

Mar 1

Chapter 12 in Barnet and Cain
Assignment: Read Emily Dickinson’s bio (Norton, 82-6) and the following Dickinson poems for Wednesday:
“I’m wife” (handout)
“Wild Nights – Wild Nights!” (88)
“There’s a certain Slant of light” (90)
“Mine – by the Right of the White Election!” (93)
“I died for Beauty – but was scarce” (1261)
“Because I could not stop for Death” (94)
“I heard a Fly buzz – when I died” (96)
“My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun” (1267)
“Tell all the Truth but tell it slant” (100)

Mar 4/6/8

Spring Break
Assignment: Read Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s bio (Norton, 509-11), Gilman’s “The Yellow Wall-paper” (1892, Norton, 511-23) and “Why I Wrote “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1913, Norton, 523-24) for Monday, Mar 18
Assignment: Read Introduction: American Literature 1914 – 1945 (Norton, 667-85) for Wednesday, Mar 20
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Assignment: Read Edith Wharton’s bio (Norton, 524-26) and Wharton’s “Roman Fever” (1934, Norton, 540-49) for Wednesday, Mar 20

Mar 18/20/22
Gilman bio
“The Yellow Wall-paper”
“Why I Wrote “The Yellow Wallpaper”
American Literature 1914 – 1945
Wharton bio
“Roman Fever”
Assignment: Read Langston Hughes’ bio (Norton, 1036-37), Hughes’ “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” (1926, Norton, 816-18), and Hughes’ following poems for Monday, Mar 25:
“Mother to Son” (1037-8)
“I, Too” (1038)
“Visitors to the Black Belt” (1041)
“Democracy” (1042-43)
“Theme for English B” (1043-44)

Mar 25/27/29
Hughes’ bio
“The Negro Artist”
Hughes’ poetry
Assignment: Read Introduction: American Literature since 1945 (Norton, 1069-90), Allen Ginsberg’s bio (Norton, 1392-94), Ginsberg’s “Howl” (1956, section I, 1394-99), and “A Supermarket in California” (1956, Norton, 1402-03) for Monday, Apr 1
Assignment: Read Sylvia Plath’s bio (Norton, 1442-43) and Plath’s “Daddy” (1966, Norton, 1447-49) for Wednesday, Apr 3

Paper #3 Due Friday, Mar 29

Apr 1/3/5
American Literature since 1945
Ginsberg bio
Section I of “Howl”
“A Supermarket in California”
Plath bio
“Daddy”

Apr 8/10/12
The 1960s
Music/Poetry/Art

Apr 15/17
The 1960s
Music/Poetry/Art
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 18-22</td>
<td>Easter Holiday Break</td>
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<td>Assignment: Read <em>The Hunger Games</em></td>
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<td>Apr 23 (Tues)</td>
<td>Monday Classes Meet</td>
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<td>Apr 24 (Wed)</td>
<td>Undergraduate Research &amp; Arts Celebration—No Classes</td>
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<td>Apr 23/26</td>
<td><em>The Hunger Games</em></td>
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<td>Discussion</td>
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<td>Paper #4 Due Monday, Apr 29</td>
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<td>Apr 29/May 1/3</td>
<td><em>The Hunger Games</em></td>
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<td>Discussion</td>
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<td>May 3</td>
<td>Last Day of Classes</td>
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<td>May 6, 7, 8, 9</td>
<td>Final Period – Manifestival</td>
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