

English 336 – Postmodern American Literature (1945 +)  
Hendrix College, Spring 2017

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*no calls after 8:00pm*

“modernist, postmodernist—who cares?”

—novelist James Salter in a personal letter, 31 March 2002



*Jackson Pollock à la Vogue Netherlands à la Andy Warhol*

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1	Thu, 19 Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">“Introduction,” <i>Postmodern American Fiction: A North Anthology</i></a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Ihab Hassan, “Toward a Concept of Postmodernism”</a></li> </ul>
2	Tue, 24 Jan	Ernest Hemingway, <i>The Garden of Eden</i> chapters 1-14 (through p.127)
3	Thu, 26 Jan	Hemingway, <i>The Garden of Eden</i> chapters 15-30 (to end)
4	Tue, 31 Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Michel Foucault, <a href="#">“What is an Author?”</a></li> <li>▪ Jean Baudrillard, <a href="#">“Simulacra and Simulation”</a></li> </ul>
5	Thu, 2 Feb	Flannery O’Connor, <i>Wise Blood</i> chapters 1-4
6	Tue, 7 Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ O’Connor, <i>Wise Blood</i> (finish)</li> </ul>
7	Thu, 9 Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reflection essay: <i>Wise Blood</i> &amp; John Berger</li> </ul>
8	Tue, 14 Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ O’Connor, <i>Wise Blood</i></li> <li>▪ Reflection essay due</li> </ul>
9	Thu, 16 Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ John Barth: <a href="#">“The Literature of Exhaustion”</a> &amp; <a href="#">“... Replenishment”</a></li> <li>▪ Barth, <i>Lost in the Funhouse</i> “Night-Sea Journey”</li> </ul>
10	Tue, 21 Feb	Barth, <i>Lost in the Funhouse</i> through “Water-Message”
11	Thu, 23 Feb	Barth, <i>Lost in the Funhouse</i> through “Glossolalia”
12	Tue, 28 Feb	Barth, <i>Lost in the Funhouse</i> through “Anonymiad”
13	Thu, 2 Mar	writing day
14	Tue, 7 Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Serious Play” article review due</li> <li>▪ Don DeLillo, <i>White Noise</i> Part I</li> </ul>
15	Thu, 9 Mar	DeLillo, <i>White Noise</i> Part II and chapters 22-27 of Part III
16	Tue, 14 Mar	DeLillo, <i>White Noise</i> rest of Part III
17	Thu, 16 Mar	John Edgar Wideman, <i>Philadelphia Fire</i> Part I
	20-25 Mar	Spring Break
18	Tue, 28 Mar	Wideman, <i>Philadelphia Fire</i> Part II
19	Thu, 30 Mar	Wideman, <i>Philadelphia Fire</i> Part III
20	Tue, 4 Apr	writing day
21	Thu, 6 Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Postmodern America” article review due</li> <li>▪ bell hooks, <a href="#">“Postmodern Blackness”</a></li> <li>▪ L. Hutcheon, <a href="#">“Historiographic Metafiction: Parody and the Intertextuality of History”</a></li> </ul>
22	Tue, 11 Apr	Toni Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> Part I
23	Thu, 13 Apr	Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> Part II
24	Tue, 18 Apr	Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> Part III
25	Thu, 20 Apr	essay proposal due; workshop
26	Tue, 25 Apr	writing day/optional conferences
27	Thu, 27 Apr	Essay draft workshop
	Thurs, 4 May	Critical Essays due 10:00; course evaluations

## Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the history and variety of American literature from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Given the extent and richness of the subject, the course will be suggestive rather than inclusive or even representative. The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been dubbed the postmodern period in literary and cultural studies, and one aspect of this course will be an exploration of what exactly the terms *postmodernism* and *postmodernity* might signify.

It aims to: (1) increase your understanding of this period of literary history; (2) foster your interpretation of literary texts, especially from the modernist era; (3) improve your ability to work with literary scholarship; and (4) develop your mastery of writing about literature.

In order to gain as much from this course as possible, we will actively engage the course content. So while short lectures by the professor will certainly occur, student interaction—with the stories, with classmates, with the instructor, with your own imaginations and critical eye—will constitute the primary course activity. For class, you may be asked to work with a small group to interpret a work; you may be asked to do some in-class writing; etc. **Every day of class discussion, be prepared with a provocative question, an original insight, and a passage worthy of close scrutiny, so that your imaginations and critical insights can be the basis of our discussions.**

Outside of class, you will write three short essays and one long essay. My role is to foster your talents and to help you succeed. We will have several workshops over the semester focused on your writing. The goals here are to create another way to learn from one another and to provide additional feedback and coaching on your written work.

## Texts

☞ select theoretical and critical essays (see syllabus)

### “Serious Play”

- ☞ Ernest Hemingway, *The Garden of Eden* (1986)
- ☞ Flannery O’Connor, *Wise Blood* (1952)
- ☞ John Barth, *Lost in the Funhouse* (1968)

### “Postmodern America”

- ☞ Don DeLillo, *White Noise* (1985)
- ☞ John Edgar Wideman, *Philadelphia Fire* (1990)

### “History’s Ghosts”

- ☞ Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1987)

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Requirements

- ☞ *Class Participation* (20%): Class participation includes attendance, tardiness, and **active** participation in class activities. Excessive absences will result in a failure for the course.
- ☞ *Article Reviews* (2x15%): Twice you will choose one novel from the recent novels, find a compelling critical article on that novel (preview several please), and write a 4-5 page article review. Your review needs to (a) sympathetically represent the article; (b) discuss its assumptions, implications, strategies, shortcomings; and (c) propose a new investigative approach to the novel for you to explore that expands upon or departs from the article. While the three requirements suggest an obvious organization, feel free to organize your essay in some other way. Do not think of your essay as an assignment for this class; think of it as a smart, self-contained essay for a general reader with a passing familiarity with the novel. Bring two copies to class.
- ☞ *Reflection Essay* (15%): After completing *Wise Blood*, read two essays by John Berger that do not directly concern O'Connor's novel: "[Why Look at Animals?](#)" and "[Ape Theatre.](#)" Write a 4-6 page essay that reflects on how one might approach the novel's embedded ideas through either or both of Berger's essays. Do not think of your essay as an assignment for this class; think of it as a smart, self-contained essay for a general reader with a passing familiarity with the novel. You are welcome to collaborate with classmates in work through the novel and/or the two essays, and in brainstorming for this assignment. Submit one hard copy and one e-copy.
- ☞ *Critical Essay Proposal* (5%): Bring two copies to class of a 4-5 page "essay" exploring the questions, ideas, passages/evidence you propose to write about in your critical essay. If you are working with Morrison, evidence that you have started looking at secondary sources is highly recommended. You do not need a formal introduction, etc. (but feel free to write as if you are preparing the first draft!).
- ☞ *Critical Essay* (30%): In 8-10 pages, make a significant argument about one of the studied novels. Feel free to use secondary material from outside this class, including from other academic disciplines. You are limited only by the range of your own intellectual curiosity and your ability to present your case. Consultation is recommended. Use at least two secondary sources in significant fashion. You are encouraged to take up where one of your three Article Reviews left off, and include that article as one of the two. Do not use internet sources unless they are clearly online versions of valid printed sources or are otherwise substantial and legitimate sources (you might want to check with me). You can use reviews or interviews for the Barry novel. Submit one hard copy and one e-copy.

In terms of essay grading criteria/expectations, use the following general guidelines: An **A** essay provides insights beyond class discussion; it is clearly and gracefully written and organized. A **B** essay might be well written and organized but not push the ideas much past class discussion, or it has some problems of logic/evidence in that effort; or it is successful in its ideas, but the execution—the writing—has some shortcomings. A **C** essay does not go beyond class discussion, depends on plot summary, or otherwise has logic/evidence problems preventing its argument from being particularly convincing or compelling. If most readers don't need you to explain what you are explaining, your paper is probably a "C" in content. A "C" paper might also have somewhat compelling and even convincing ideas, but exhibits serious problems in written expression. A **D** essay has serious shortcomings in both content and expression.

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**Other Policies**

- ✎ The syllabus is subject to revision as the course progresses.
- ✎ *Email*: Email will be used to contact the entire class for communicating changes to the syllabus and other matters. Check your Hendrix account daily.
- ✎ Drinks are permitted in class, but no food. No hats except for religious or medical reasons.
- ✎ *Learning Disabilities*: Any student who needs accommodation in relation to a recognized disability should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. In order to receive accommodations, students with disabilities are required to contact Julie Brown in Academic Support Services at 501-505-2954.
- ✎ The failure to complete any course requirement may result in a failure of the course.
- ✎ *Academic Dishonesty*: Intellectual dishonesty will not be tolerated. See the academic integrity statement and policy in the student handbook. Frequently, failure to document and attribute secondary sources adequately is not a deliberate attempt to pass another's ideas and words off as one's own, but rather a misunderstanding of how to give that other person sufficient credit properly. Please consult with me on any documentation question so we can avoid problems.
- ✎ *Late essays*: If you have extenuating circumstances, you must consult me at least one week prior to the due date (except in the case of actual emergencies). Otherwise, you will lose five points for every day it is late, starting from when class begins on the due date.
- ✎ *Essay Format*: All submitted essays must follow the MLA style for format, documentation, and bibliography. Specifically:
  - ✎ MLA format: 12 point font, Times New Roman or Garamond (with serifs). 1" margins all around (watch out for 1.5" left margin default). No extra space between paragraphs (watch out for default); section breaks are fine. No cover sheet. No folders. Staple pages (not my job). Last name and page numbers in the upper right corner of each page except the first. All papers must have a productive title and a "[Works Cited](#)" section. Epigraphs beneath the title are welcome. Footnotes or endnotes are permitted.
  - ✎ Exceptions to MLA format: Single-space the name/course/date/professor information on the first page. 1.5-space block/indented quotations; indent .5 on each side. If you have room, add your entire "Works Cited" section at the bottom of your last page.
  - ✎ MLA documentation: MLA calls for [parenthetical documentation](#), not footnotes or endnotes. Consult any recent English handbook, the *MLA Handbook* in the library, or the online guide linked via the English Department's website. *Rule of thumb*: Given the context of the surrounding passage and the bibliography listing, include the absolute minimum amount of information necessary within the parentheses.

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