

## American Portraits

008:135:002 – Topics in American Literature  
2:30 - 3:45 TTh 209 EPB

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### **Required Texts**

\* Edgar Allan Poe, “The Oval Portrait”  
\* Nathaniel Hawthorne, short stories  
Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*  
Gertrude Stein, *Three Lives*  
Nella Larsen, *Quicksand*  
Jessie Redmon Fauset, *Plum Bun*  
\* Tennessee Williams, “Portrait of a Girl in Glass”  
Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*  
Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

(\* Indicates texts handed out in class or listed on ICON (<http://icon.uiowa.edu/>). All other texts are available at Prairie Lights Bookstore)

### **Course Overview**

Our course is framed by one overarching question: Why do American authors so often exploit the art of portraiture in the construction of their texts? We begin by exploring stories from the mid-nineteenth century and end by analyzing fiction composed roughly one hundred years later. Each author engages the art of portraiture from a different angle and often for singular purposes, so while our tropological frame holds our readings together, it ultimately (and provocatively!) provides a tool for pondering the individual concerns of American authors devoted to the creation and development of an American literary tradition.

### **Course Requirements**

#### ***Class Participation***

This course asks that you engage critically and actively with demanding readings. I will expect you to come prepared for our work together, to meet deadlines, and to respond thoughtfully to class discussion. *Please be aware that merely attending class does not constitute effective participation.*

#### ***Written Work***

You will be graded on 3 types of written assignments:

1. Reading Quizzes: I will administer regular reading quizzes throughout the semester. Some are scheduled on the syllabus, but others will be unannounced. These short quizzes are designed to assess whether you are keeping up with the reading.
2. Two Essays: You will write one short essay (4-5 pgs) and one longer essay (6-8 pgs). Students will turn in an outline for each essay that includes your main claim. The outline will count for 5 points of your essay grade.
3. Final Exam: The final will test your familiarity with our texts and require you to contemplate them within the analytical framework our class creates.

## **Practical Matters**

### ***Grading***

This course will employ a +/- scale. Your final grade will be determined by the following breakdown:

Class Participation: 10%

Reading Quizzes: 20%

Essay #1: 20%

Essay #2: 25%

Final: 25%

### ***Attendance and Punctuality***

Students are expected to attend all class meetings. *There will be no make-ups for reading quizzes, and essays will not be accepted late.* Please contact me ahead of time if you need an extension or need to complete an assignment before its scheduled date. If you are absent more than three times—regardless of the reasons—your final course grade may be lowered one whole letter grade (e.g. from B+ to C+). After the fourth absence, each subsequent missed class will result in a +/- reduction (e.g. from C to C-). Chronic tardiness will negatively impact your class participation grade.

### ***Format for Written Work***

Please format your text in a common, readable 12pt font (like this one) with 1-inch margins and headings. Double-space text for essays and be sure to include your name and page numbers on your essays. This is not a course in the mechanics of writing, but I am happy to help you with any questions or concerns you may have about points of style, usage, or grammar. I also encourage you to take advantage of the services offered by the Writing Center. For main location, satellite centers, and hours, visit their website at [www.uiowa.edu/~writingc/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~writingc/).

### ***Student Rights and Other Responsibilities***

This course is given by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and its home department is English. Students wishing to add or drop this course after the official deadline must receive approval of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Details of the University policy of cross enrollments may be found at [http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/policy\\_undergrads\\_outside.shtml](http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/policy_undergrads_outside.shtml).

### **Departmental/Collegiate Complaint Procedures**

All students in the College have the right to adjudication of any complaints you have about classroom activities or instructor actions. Information is available at [www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic\\_handbook/ix.shtml/](http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml/). You should first attempt to resolve the issue with the faculty member involved. Lacking a satisfactory outcome, you can turn to the Associate Chair of Undergraduate Programs, Douglas Trevor ([douglas-trevor@uiowa.edu](mailto:douglas-trevor@uiowa.edu), 335-0472). If a satisfactory resolution remains unmet, you may contact the English Department Chair, Jonathan Wilcox ([jonathan-wilcox@uiowa.edu](mailto:jonathan-wilcox@uiowa.edu), 335-0454). After these options have been exhausted, you may turn to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and submit a written complaint to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs, 120 Schaeffer Hall (335-2633). Please note: in complaints involving the assignment of grades, it is college policy that grades cannot be changed without the permission of the department concerned.

### **Students with Disabilities**

You have the right to expect a classroom environment that enables you to learn, including modifications if you have a disability. Students with disabilities that may require some modification of seating, testing, or other class requirements should discuss them with me so that appropriate arrangements may be made. It is the student's responsibility to contact Student Disability Services, 3100 Burge Hall (335-1462), and obtain a Student Academic Accommodation Request form (SAAR).

## Plagiarism and Cheating

All of our work will be conducted according to a spirit of integrity. Plagiarism and cheating are serious forms of academic misconduct. Examples of them are given in the Student Academic Handbook: [www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic\\_handbook//ix.shtml](http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook//ix.shtml). To deliberately present the work of someone else as your own is to plagiarize. I will not accept work that I suspect may be plagiarized in whole or in part. If my concerns are not allayed after speaking with a student whose work I suspect, I will write an account of the chronology of the plagiarism or cheating incident for the departmental chair, who will send an endorsement of the written report of the case to the Associate Dean for academic programs. A copy of the report will be sent to the student, who has the right to request a hearing within the Department and/or within the College.

## Working Schedule

Wk			Seminar	Assignments
1	T	1/16	Course Introduction & Poe, "The Oval Portrait" *	
	Th	1/18	Hawthorne, short stories *	
2	T	1/23	James, <i>The Portrait of a Lady</i> (41- 121: Preface – Ch. VII)	
	Th	1/25	<i>Portrait</i> (122-180: VIII-XIII)	
3	T	1/30	<i>Portrait</i> (181-277: XIV-XXI)	Reading Quiz
	Th	2/1	<i>Portrait</i> (278-346: XXII-XXVII)	
4	T	2/6	<i>Portrait</i> (349-438: XXVIII-XXXVIII)	
	Th	2/8	<i>Portrait</i> (439-495: XXXIX-XLIII)	
5	T	2/13	<i>Portrait</i> (496-579: XLIV-L)	
	Th	2/15	<i>Portrait</i> (580-637: LI-End)	
6	T	2/20	Stein, <i>Three Lives</i> (7-15)	Essay #1 Outline
	Th	2/22	<i>Three Lives</i> (15-52)	
7	T	2/27	<i>Three Lives</i> (53-147)	Reading Quiz
	Th	3/1	<i>Three Lives</i> (149-174)	

<b>8</b>	T	3/6	Larsen, <i>Quicksand</i> (5-82: Ch. 1-14)	<b>Essay #1 Due (Mon. 3/5 by Noon)</b>  Reading Quiz
	Th	3/8	<i>Quicksand</i> (83-136: Ch. 15-end)	
<b>9</b>	T	3/13	-----Spring Break-----	
	Th	3/15		
<b>10</b>	T	3/20	Fauset, <i>Plum Bun</i> (1-83)	Reading Quiz
	Th	3/22	<i>Plum Bun</i> (87-153)	
<b>11</b>	T	3/27	<i>Plum Bun</i> (154-236)	
	Th	3/29	<i>Plum Bun</i> (239-328)	
<b>12</b>	T	4/3	<i>Plum Bun</i> (331-379)	Reading Quiz
	Th	4/5	<b>III. Fractured Images: Mid-Century Frames that Fail to Fix</b> Williams, "Portrait of a Girl in Glass" * & <i>The Glass Menagerie</i> (xvii-25)	
<b>13</b>	T	4/10	<i>Menagerie</i> (26-97)	
	Th	4/12	Ellison, <i>Invisible Man</i> (1-70)	
<b>14</b>	T	4/17	<i>Invisible Man</i> (71-195)	Reading Quiz
	Th	4/19	<i>Invisible Man</i> (196-260)	
<b>15</b>	T	4/24	<i>Invisible Man</i> (261-382)	Essay #2 Outline
	Th	4/26	<i>Invisible Man</i> (383-444)	
<b>16</b>	T	5/1	<i>Invisible Man</i> (445-534)	<b>Essay #2 (Due Mon. 5/7 by noon)</b>
	Th	5/3	<i>Invisible Man</i> (535-End)	