

## ENGLISH 168—THE AMERICAN NOVEL

Paul Douglass Spring 2015  
San Jose State University  
MW 9:00-10:15 (BBC 128)

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Office: FO 108  
Hours: MW 8:00 - 9:00  
and by appointment

**Course Code:** 27220

**Course website:** <https://sites.google.com/a/sjsu.edu/english-168/>

**Format:** Lecture, discussion, presentations, book clubs.

### Course Description:

This course follows the development of the American Novel from romance through realism and naturalism to modernism and post-modernism, helping you develop your understanding of what the genre is, or might be—and to whom.

### Required Texts:

Cather, Willa. *My Ántonia*. (1918) ISBN-13: 978-0395083567  
Diaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. (2007) ISBN-13: 978-1594483295  
Hammett, Dashiell. *The Thin Man* Vintage. ISBN 0679722637  
Hemingway, Ernest. *The Snows of Kilimanjaro and Other Stories*. (1927-1936; 1961) ISBN-13: 978-0684801469  
Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. (1861) ISBN-13: 978-0486419312  
James, Henry. *Daisy Miller*. (1878) ISBN-13: 978-0141441344  
Malone, Michael. *Handling Sin*. (1983) ISBN-13: 978-1402239335  
Nabokov, Vladimir. *Pale Fire*. (1962) ISBN-13: 978-0679723424  
Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." (1841) [UVA e-text](#)  
Steinbeck, *The Moon Is Down*. (1942) ISBN-13: 978-0140187465  
Vonnegut, Kurt. *Cat's Cradle*. (1963) ISBN-13: 978-0385333481  
Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. (1982) ISBN-13: 978-0156028356  
Wharton, Edith. *Ethan Frome*. (1911) ISBN-13: 978-1840224085

### Grading and Written Work:

1. Oral Presentation and Handout	10%
2. Graphic Novel Club & Paper	10%
3. Reading Responses & Quizzes	20%
4. Participation	15%
5. Midterm Examination	20%
6. <u>Research Paper Proposal and Final Draft</u>	<u>25%</u>
	<b>100%</b>

n.b.: When you have a schedule problem, talk with me to avoid lowered grades.

**Assignments:**

- 1. Oral Presentation and Handout:** An oral presentation of ten minutes **or less**, accompanied by a one-page handout synthesizing **an article or chapter by a scholar** about the work being discussed on that day. Sign up for your date to present.
- 2. Graphic Novel Club & Short Paper:** Select a novel from the list attached to this syllabus and read it). You will meet in- and out-side class to discuss it with other class members, and in the process write a three-page paper, focusing on the interaction of visual and textual elements in a short passage from the work you choose.
- 3. Reading Responses & Quizzes:** Short in- and out-side class quizzes and small-group activities, as well as informal, thoughtful written responses to the reading, including any questions or confusions with which you are struggling. These responses should be about 200 words (approximately one typewritten standard page in 12-point font with regular margins). Submit only legibly handwritten or printed hardcopy in class, because it will be used in small-group discussion. Reading responses due on dates indicated on the calendar.
- 4. Participation:** Lectures provide background, but this course will rely on small- and large-group discussions. Come to class having read the day's assignment, and find time to look up helpful information about the book and its author. Find opportunities to contribute to class discussion and demonstrate your engagement with the text.
- 5. Midterm Examination:** Essay and short answer format. Date indicated on the calendar.
- 6. Research Paper:** 6-8 page paper on a topic of your choosing, approved by the instructor. You must submit a **proposal** with a brief description (a paragraph or so) and short bibliography of secondary sources (five or more citations), annotated if possible. See calendar for due dates.

**Department Student Learning Goals (linked to assignments):**

Students will demonstrate the ability to

- read closely in a variety of forms, styles, structures, and modes, and articulate the value of close reading in the study of literature, creative writing, or rhetoric. (Assignments 2, 3, 6)
- show familiarity with major literary works, genres, periods, and critical approaches to British, American, and World Literature. (Assignments 1, 5, 6)
- write clearly, effectively, and creatively, and adjust writing style appropriately to the content, the context, and nature of the subject. (Assignments 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)
- develop and carry out research projects, and locate, evaluate, organize, and incorporate information effectively. (Assignment 6)
- articulate the relations among culture, history, and texts. (Assignments 3, 4, 6)

**Graphic Novel Club Choices:**

Bechdel, *Are You My Mother?: A Comic Drama*.  
 Bendis and Deming, *Who Killed Retro Girl?*  
 Carey, *Unwritten Vol. 1: Tommy Taylor and the Bogus Identity*.  
 Doxiadis, et al., *Logicomix: An Epic Search for Truth*.  
 Jason, *Why Are You Doing This?* and three other works.  
 Kindt, *Red Handed: The Fine Art of Strange Crimes*  
 Tan, *The Arrival*.

**English Department Grading Policies**

In English Department courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs.

**English Department Grading Policies, cont.**

Grades issued will represent a full range of student performance and will adhere to the following SJSU academic standards of assessment:

The "**A**" essay will be well organized and well developed, demonstrating a clear understanding and fulfillment of the assignment. It will show the student's ability to use language effectively and construct sentences distinguished by syntactic complexity and variety. Such essays will be essentially free of grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors.

The "**B**" essay will demonstrate competence in the same categories as the "A" essay. The chief difference is that the "B" essay will show some descriptably slight weaknesses in one of those categories. It may slight one of the assigned tasks, show less facility of expression, or contain some minor grammatical, mechanical, or usage flaws.

The "**C**" essay will complete all tasks set by the assignment, but show weakness in fundamentals (usually development), with barely enough specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. The sentence construction may be less mature, and the use of language less effective and correct than the "B" essay.

The "**D**" essay will neglect one of the assigned tasks and be noticeably superficial in its treatment of the assignment--that is, too simplistic or short. The essay may reveal some problems in development, with insufficient specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. It will contain grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

The "**F**" essay will demonstrate a striking underdevelopment of ideas and insufficient or unfocused organization. It will contain serious grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System"). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: A= excellent; B= above average; C= average; D= below average; F= failure. Courses graded according to the A, B, C, No Credit system shall follow the same pattern, except that NC shall replace D or F. In such cases, NC shall also substitute for W (or Withdrawal) because neither grade (NC or W) affects students' GPA.

**Academic Integrity**

The Academic Integrity Policy is outlined at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/integrity.html>, which also covers Student Conduct and Ethical Development. Your commitment to learning requires you be honest in your academic course work. Faculty members must report all infractions to the Office of Judicial Affairs. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by you alone, unless otherwise specified. If you wish to incorporate any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, [SJSU's Academic Policy S07-2](#) requires approval of all instructors involved.

**Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please discuss this with your instructor as soon as possible. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the DRC (Disability Resource Center) to establish a record of their disability. The DRC's web site is [www.drc.sjsu.edu](http://www.drc.sjsu.edu).

**Adding and Dropping Classes**

Check the SJSU Calendar for the last day to drop a class without a W grade and the last day for adding classes without a late fee, for registering late, or for requesting grade options. Information regarding the university policy on late drops can be found on the Academic Advising website at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/>.

**Estimation of Per-Unit Student Workload**

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of forty-five hours over the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities including but not limited to internships, labs, clinical practica, writing, and reading.

**SJSU Writing Center**

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Room 126 in Clark Hall. It is staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists from each of the seven SJSU colleges. Our writing specialists have met a rigorous GPA requirement, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. The Writing Center website is located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/>.

**Learning Assistance Resource Center (LARC) and Peer Mentoring**

[The Learning Assistance Resource Center](#) (LARC) is located in Room 600 in the Student Services Center. It is designed to assist students in the development of their full academic potential and to motivate them to become self-directed learners. The center provides skills assessment, individual or group tutorials, subject advising, learning assistance, summer academic preparation and basic skills development. [The Peer Mentor Center](#) is located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall in the Academic Success Center. Mentors excel in helping students manage university life, from academic challenges to interpersonal struggles. Mentor services are free, no reservation required.

**Student Technology Resources**

Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library. A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include digital and VHS camcorders, VHS and Beta video players, 16 mm, slide, overhead, DVD, CD, and audiotape players, sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

**CALENDAR OF READINGS AND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS: ENGLISH 168, SPRING 2015**

- Jan. 26: Introduction to the course.
- Jan. 28: Poe, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.” (1841) ✕ [UVA e-text](#)
- Feb. 2: Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. (1861)
- Feb. 4: Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. ✕
- Feb. 9: James, *Daisy Miller*. (1878)
- Feb. 11: Wharton, *Ethan Frome*. ✕
- Feb. 16: Cather, *My Ántonia*. (1918)
- Feb. 18: Cather, *My Ántonia*. **Research Paper Proposal Due.**
- Feb. 23: Hemingway, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro and Other Stories*. (1927-1936). **Graphic Novel Clubs Meet.**
- Feb. 25: Hemingway, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro and Other Stories*. ✕
- Mar. 2: Hammett, *The Thin Man*. (1933)
- Mar. 4: Hammett, *The Thin Man*.
- Mar. 9: Steinbeck, *The Moon Is Down*. (1942) ✕
- Mar. 11: **Graphic Novel Clubs Meet.**
- Mar. 16: **Midterm—study session.**
- Mar. 18: **Midterm Examination.**
- Mar. 23: Spring Break.
- Mar. 25: Spring Break
- Mar. 30: Nabokov, *Pale Fire*. (1962)
- Apr. 1: Nabokov, *Pale Fire*.
- Apr. 6: Vonnegut, *Cat’s Cradle*. (1963)
- Apr. 8: Vonnegut, *Cat’s Cradle*. ✕
- Apr. 13: **Graphic Novel Clubs Meet.**
- Apr. 15: Walker, *The Color Purple*. (1982). **Graphic Novel Paper Due.**
- Apr. 20: Walker, *The Color Purple*.
- Apr. 22: Malone, *Handling Sin*. (1983) ✕
- Apr. 27: Malone, *Handling Sin*.
- Apr. 29: Malone, *Handling Sin*.
- May 4: Malone, *Handling Sin*.
- May 6: Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. (2007)
- May 11: Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. ✕
- May 13: Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. Last Class.
- May 18: **Research Paper Due.**

✕ = Reading Response Due, approx. 200 words, in class.