

Georgia State University
English 4300: Senior Seminar
American Regional Literature
Spring 2007

Dr. Audrey Goodman
Class M 4:30-7
General Classroom Building 719

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Course Description

The Senior Seminar in literature aims to introduce students to professional literary scholarship and contemporary scholarly debates; to teach students how to refine and apply research skills; and to provide practice in the art of writing and speaking about literature. This course will explore selected histories, practices, and theories of regionalism in the United States. Our aim is to challenge familiar categories of literary analysis and test diverse approaches to cultural study. Students will read a few key texts from several critical perspectives, choose their own literary region or text, and conduct a detailed research project that engages with one or more practices of critical regionalism. Our class will combine lecture, discussion, and collaborative research, culminating in student presentations of their final projects.

Required Texts (Available at GSU Bookstore)

Mary Wilkins Freeman, *A New England Nun*
Willa Cather, *My Ántonia*
Ellen Meloy, *The Anthropology of Turquoise*
Marilynne Robinson, *Housekeeping*

Texts on e-reserve at Pullen Library (Password GE4300PGD)

Lewis Mumford, "Regions – To Live In," from *The Lewis Mumford Reader*
Michael Kowalewski, "Contemporary Regionalism," from *A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America*
Arjun Appadurai, from *Modernity at Large*
Eric Sundquist, "Realism and Regionalism," from *The Columbia Literary History of the United States*
Stephanie Foote, "The Cultural Work of American Regionalism," from *A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America*
Robert Thacker, "Willa Cather's Glittering Regions," from *A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America*
Krista Comer, "Taking Feminism and Regionalism Toward the Third Wave," from *A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America*
William W. Bevis, "Region, Power, Place," from *Reading the West*

Course Requirements

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General Expectations

1. Active attendance. You are expected to come to every class on time, prepared to listen, take notes, and participate in our discussion of the week's reading. If you arrive late or unprepared, you miss learning the week's lessons and distract other students; I may lower the final grades of students who are chronically late, leave early, or otherwise disrupt class. If you must be absent, please notify me by email in advance. Three absences will lower your final course grade by one letter; more than four absences will result in a failure for the course.
2. Academic honesty. Any work you submit should be your own; aim for essays as articulate and polished as possible. Plagiarism is grounds for failure of this course and expulsion from the university. For Georgia State's Policy on Academic Honesty, consult the university's web site.

Assignments and Grading

1. Research Proposal, 3-5 pages (20%). Pick one recent essay on regionalism as your starting point. Summarize it and explain the issues that remain unresolved that you would like to pursue. Propose one or two literary texts that you will use to explore these ideas.
2. Presentation of work in progress, 20-30 minutes (30%). Once you have read your key texts and more critical history, prepare to present these materials to the class. Work to frame your questions and select key scenes or passages to test these questions. This presentation should include a discussion with the class to help clarify your ideas.
3. Final Research Paper, 12-15 pages (40%). This paper should present an original thesis about regionalism in American literature and explain it through close analysis of several literary texts, critical essays, and/or historical studies. At some point your paper should return to the essay that started your research and evaluate it.
4. Class participation (10%).

Portfolio Requirement for English Majors

Please be advised that as part of your graduation requirement you will be asked to turn in a portfolio of your work as an English major at Georgia State University. You should collect several assignments each term to prepare your portfolio. To learn about the specific requirements for your concentration, contact the English Department office. In this course we will spend time in class reviewing the portfolio requirement and other requirements you may be facing to prepare for graduate school or a job search. Please also feel free to ask your advisor or one of your instructors if you have any questions.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Jan 8 *Introduction to Course*

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Robert Frost, "The Mending Wall"
Donald Hall, "The Long River"; "Mount Kearsarge"
Luci Tapahonso, "Song for the Direction of North"
Gloria Anzaldúa, "To live in the Borderlands Means You"

Jan 15 No class – MLK Holiday

Jan 22 ***Introduction to Regional Studies***

Reading: Lewis Mumford, "Regions – To Live In"
Michael Kowalewski, "Contemporary Regionalism"
Arjun Appadurai, "Modernity at Large"
Class workshop: Defining literary regions in the U.S.

Jan 29 ***Realism and Regionalism***

Reading: Eric Sundquist, "Realism and Regionalism"
Stephanie Foote, "The Cultural Work of American Regionalism"
Mary Wilkins Freeman, from *A New England Nun*: "A Mistaken Charity," "A New England Nun," "The Jamesons"
Discussion: Regionalism as a historical framework
Class workshop: Analysis of *A New England Nun*

Feb 5 ***Migration and Regional Formations***

Reading: Cather, *My Antonia*
Robert Thacker, "Willa Cather's Glittering Regions"
Discussion: *My Antonia* as canonical regionalist text; Cather's reading communities

Feb 12 ***The Art of Research***

Assignment: Research Proposal draft
Meet in Pullen Library

Feb 19 ***Evaluating Scholarship***

Assignment: Bring copies of one critical essay (or most relevant part of critical book) to share with the class. Be prepared to introduce the essay.
Class work: Discussion of Senior Portfolio requirements; evaluating literary criticism

Feb 26 ***Project Proposals***

Assignment: Research Project Proposal, with bibliography
Class work: Proposal Peer Review

SPRING BREAK – No Class Mar 5

Mar 12 ***Feminism and Regionalism***

Reading: Marilynne Robinson, *Housekeeping*, Chapter 1

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Krista Comer, "Taking Feminism and Regionalism Toward the Third Wave"
Discussion: Strategies for "close reading;" Feminist criticism

Mar 19 ***Feminism and Regionalism, con't***

Reading: Marilynne Robinson, *Housekeeping*

Discussion: *Housekeeping*; writing and other literary professions; Anzaldua

Mar 26 ***Presentations of Work in Progress***

Discussion: Citing sources

Apr 2 ***Globalism and Regionalism***

Reading: Ellen Meloy, *The Anthropology of Turquoise*

William W. Bevis, "Region, Power, Place"

Discussion: Crafting nonfiction

Apr 9 ***Presentations of Work in Progress***

Apr 16 ***Rethinking Regional Stories***

Film viewing: Ang Lee, "Brokeback Mountain"

Discussion: Narrating trauma

Apr 23 ***Presentations of Work in Progress***

Apr 30 ***Final Presentations***

Last day of class

May 7 **Research Papers due in my mailbox by 5 pm**