English 361:  
American Realism and Naturalism

[The rules governing literary art] require that the personages of a tale shall confine themselves to possibilities and let miracles alone; or if they venture a miracle, the author must so plausibly set it forth as to make it look possible and reasonable.

---- Mark Twain

[The realist] finds nothing insignificant; all tells for destiny and character; nothing that God made is contemptible.

---- William Dean Howells

Try to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost!

---- Henry James

Simply put, American Realism and Naturalism were concomitant aesthetic movements that developed in the second half of the nineteenth century as a reaction against Romanticism brought on by post-Civil War disillusionment. As far as it goes, this definition suits; however, it is only the broadest outline of what cultural and artistic forces shaped American literature from about 1875-1910, producing the variety of literary forms and achievements that fall under the umbrella heading “realist” and/or “naturalist.” For example, technological advances such as the verisimilitude of photography made authors re-think the way they used language, as did the rise of the middle-class and the development of historiography, with its attention to telling the narrative of history in a plausible cause/effect sequence. Industrialism meant that the nation was becoming more homogenized, and an unexpected consequence was an increased interest in stories about the particularities of various regions (along with an exploding audience for periodical literature). Newly freed slaves, a burgeoning immigrant population and a large class of single white women demanding their rights changed not only the demographics and social awareness of the nation, but contributed to the development of a realist and naturalist aesthetic as well. Finally, this was the moment when the novel “came of age,” so to speak; when a generation of writers such as James, Howells and Twain began theorizing what makes the novel successful and what its merits are, in an attempt to elevate its status from simple mass entertainment to a legitimate art form. In this course, we will attempt to trace this intricate web of historical, cultural and aesthetic developments, considering how they grew out of the legacy of the Civil War but also how they propelled the nation toward modernity in the twentieth-century.
Required Reading

(Please note: I prefer that you use these editions. If you choose to use another edition, be aware that you will need to get supplemental texts (i.e. critical apparatus) from a classmate and that differences in pagination could make following class discussion difficult.)

Pizer, Donald, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism*. Cambridge UP.

Note: In addition, you will have some reserve reading as well as handouts; you are responsible for these as well.

Assignments

Essay #1 (5-7 pages)  20%
Essay #2 (5-7 pages)  20%
Final Essay (10-12 pages)  30%
Class presentation/paper on critical text  20%
Short response and in-class writings  10%

We will discuss the particulars for these assignments at a later date.

Attendance Policy

Because this is a 300-level English class, you are expected to perform like majors and be serious about your work. I will have little patience, therefore, with lax attendance or inattention during class. You are to be here on-time, well-prepared, and well-rested. If you miss more than 3 classes, your final grade will be penalized 1/3 letter grade per absence. If you miss more than 6 classes, you will fail the course. Furthermore, a failure to participate can adversely affect your attendance.
Assignment Submission Policy

Essays are due at the beginning of class unless otherwise stated in class. You will lose 1/3 letter grade per day (including weekends) whenever an assignment is late; after an essay is one week late, you will receive an “F” on the assignment. If you fail to turn in any of the major assignments, you will fail the course.

Also, please note that essays must be typed, double-spaced with an inch margin, stapled, and adhere to MLA standards in both layout and documentation. See me if you have questions about MLA or need further information.

Academic Honesty

If you plagiarize an essay or other assignment, in part or whole, you will fail the course in addition to any punishment meted out by the Honor Council.
English 361: American Realism and Naturalism
Reading Schedule

August

W, 22: Introduction

F, 24: Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism (CC): Budd, “The American Background” (21-46); Lehan, “The European Background” (47-73)

M, 27: RESERVE: Twain, “Fenimore Cooper’s Literary Offenses”; Chpt. 46 of Life on the Mississippi

W, 29: Riverside Edition of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Doyno, “The Composition of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” (9-17); Twain, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (AHF), Chpts. I-XI (68-123)

F, 31: Twain, AHF, Chpts. XII-XVIII (123-77)

September

M, 3: Labor Day Holiday

W, 5: Twain, AHF, Chpts. XIX-XXU (177-228); Fishkin, “Was Huck Black? Mark Twain and African-American Voices” (50-55)

F, 7: Twain, AHF, Chpts. XXVII-XXXIV (229-76); Morrison, “Re-Marking Twain” (374-82)

M, 10: Twain, AHF, Chpts. XXXV-end (276-320); Fischer, “Huck Finn Reviewed: The Reception of Huckleberry Finn in the United States, 1885-1897” (55-66)


Article Review Presentations

F, 14: RESERVE: Howells, Criticism and Fiction (Selections); Howells, The Rise of Silas Lapham (RSL), Chpts. I-III (3-48)

M, 17: Howells, RSL, Chpts. IV-IX (49-125)

W, 19: Howells, RSL, Chpts. X-XIV (126-208)

F, 21: Howells, RSL, Chpts. XV-XXII (209-85)

M, 24: Howells, RSL, Chpts. XXIII-end (286-365)
W, 26: **Article Review Presentations** (Note: the smart student will take advantage of this no-reading day to get started on *The Portrait of a Lady*).


**October**

M, 1: James, PofL, Vol. I, Chpts. I-XI (17-93)

W, 3: James, PofL, Vol. I, Chpts. XII-XIX (94-179)

F, 5: James, PofL, Vol. I, Chpts. XX-XXVII (179-253)

**ESSAY #1 DUE**

M, 8: James, PofL, Vol. II, Chpts. XXVIII-XXXIX (253-336)

W, 10: James, PofL, Vol. II, Chpts. XL-XLVII (336-414)

F, 12: James, PofL, Vol. II, Chpts. XLVIII-end (414-490)

M, 15: Fall Break


**Article Review Presentations**

F, 19: Wharton, *The House of Mirth* (HofM), Book I, Chpts. I-VI (5-60)


F, 26: Wharton, HofM, Book II, Chpts. III-VIII (162-212)


W, 31: CC: Hochman, “*The Awakening and The House of Mirth*: Plotting Experience and Experiencing Plotting” (211-35); Ammons, “Expanding the Canon of American Realism” (95-116)

**Article Review Presentations**

**November**
F, 2:  *American Women Regionalists* (AWR): Freeman (304-78)

M, 5:  AWR: Chopin (408-58)

**ESSAY #2 DUE**

W, 7:  AWR: Sui Sin Far (500-31); Zitkala-Sä (532-63)

F, 9:  **Article Review Presentations**

Note: The smart student will again take advantage of this no-reading day to get started on *The Marrow of Tradition*, as the reading pace for both it and *Sister Carrie* will be fairly intense.

M, 12:  Sundquist, *Introduction to The Marrow of Tradition* (vii-xliv); Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition* (MoT), Chpts. I-VII (1-78)

W, 14:  Chesnutt, MoT, Chpts. VIII-XVI (79-165)

F, 16:  Chesnutt, MoT, Chpts. XVII-XXVI (166-247)

M, 19:  Chesnutt, MoT, Chpts. XXVII-end (247-329)

**Article Review Presentations**

W, 21:  Thanksgiving

F, 23:  Thanksgiving

M, 26:  Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*

W, 28:  Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*

F, 30:  Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*

**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES DUE**

**December**

M, 3:  Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*


**Article Review Presentations**