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ENGL 265-01, Modern American Novella, Spring 2009

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English 265-01: Modern American Novella

CRN 29243

Professor J. Brady
Palmer 306 (office)

Spring, 2009
MWF 11:00-11:50 in
Palmer 208

843-3906 (office phone)

Reading List:

Horace McCoy, *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* (*Midnight Classics*)
Nathanael West, *Miss Lonelyhearts and the Day of the Locust* (*New Directions*)
James M. Cain, *The Postman Always Rings Twice, Double Indemnity, Mildred Pierce and Selected Stories* (Everyman's Library Classics)
Katharine Anne Porter, *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (*HBJ Modern Classic*)
Truman Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's: A Short Novel and Three Stories* (Modern Library)
Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (Bedford)
Henry James, *The Aspern Papers and Other Stories* (Oxford U P)
William Gass, *In the Heart of the Heart of the Country* (Godine)

Office Hours:

Monday, Wednesday: 1:00-2:00
Tuesday, Thursday: 11:00-12:00

Course Description:

In this course, we will be reading an eclectic group of texts, some organized by period and subject matter, others by craft and aesthetic. We will not be studying these texts in chronological order, as one might expect, but in ascending order of interpretive difficulty. We thus begin with brilliant but comparatively accessible *noir* fiction by Horace McCoy and James M. Cain and conclude with the most opaque text, *The Pedersen Kid*, written by William Gass in professed emulation of the undisputed master of the American novella, Henry James, whose ghost tale, *The Turn of the Screw* Gass rewrites into another harrowing ghost story. We will also read some of the most celebrated practitioners of the genre in the period spanning the 1930s to the 1950s: Katharine Anne Porter, Truman Capote, and Nathanael West. All of these novellas are *tour de force* performances by writers

exploring the liminal terrain between the short story and the novel; these novellas are great and memorable reads.

This course carries both F2 (Writing Intensive) and F4 (Literary Texts) credit.

Attendance Policy:

Late arrivals to class will be counted as an absence and any student who misses or comes late to class more than **four** times in the semester will receive a zero in the 10% of the grade reflecting class participation and attendance and may be asked to withdraw from the course.

Schedule:

	American Noir of the 1930s
Jan. 14	Introductory remarks
Jan. 16, 21	<i>They Shoot Horses, Don't They?</i> (1935)
Jan. 23, 26, 28	<i>Double Indemnity</i> (1936)
Jan. 30, Feb. 2, 4	<i>The Postman Always Rings Twice</i> (1934)
Friday, February 6	First essay due, 4-5 pages
	Classic Novellas, 1930s to 1950s
Feb. 9, 11, 13	<i>The Day of the Locust</i> (1939)
Feb. 16, 18	Workshops of first essay
February 20, 23	<i>Old Mortality</i> (1939)
February 25, 27	<i>Pale Horse, Pale Rider</i> (1939)
March 2, 4, 6	<i>Breakfast at Tiffany's</i> (1958)
Monday, March 9	Second essay due, 5 pages
	The Master and A Disciple
March 9, 11, 13	<i>The Aspern Papers</i> (1888; 1905-07)

Spring Break

March 23, 25	Workshops of second essays
March 27, 30, April 1, 3, 6	<i>The Turn of the Screw</i> (1899)
April 8	James's preface to the New York edition of <i>The Aspern Papers</i> and <i>The Turn of the Screw</i> (1907-09)

Easter Break

April 13, 15, 17, 20, 22	<i>The Pedersen Kid</i> (1961)
April 24	Gass's preface to <i>In the Heart of the Heart of the Country</i> (1968)
April 27, 28, 29	Office interviews re final essay
Thursday, April 30	Third essay due, 6 pages

Method of Evaluation:

American <i>Noir</i> of the 1930s (4-5 pages)	20%
West/Porter/Capote essay (5 pages)	20%
James/Gass essay (6 pages)	30%
In-class question*	10%
In-class grade	20%

* Each student will pose one formal question to the class during the semester, speaking from notes only. Your question should be focused, given a context, and its potential significance made clear to your classmates. The question should explore a fresh aspect of the text that you think important to our understanding of the work. Having posed your question, you will then guide class discussion.

** All late essays will be penalized by at least a letter grade, and may not be rewritten.