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ENGL 361-01, American Realism and Naturalism, Fall 2015

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Authors	Petty, Leslie
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Professor Leslie Petty
Office Hours: M 3-4 pm; W 9-10 am, TTh 3:15-4 pm, and by appt.
Palmer 313
x3981
pettyl@rhodes.edu

English 361: American Realism and Naturalism Fall 2015

[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*

American Realism and Naturalism developed in part as a reaction against Romanticism brought on by post-Civil War disillusionment. However, there were other forces at work as well. Technological and scientific advancements, industrialism and urbanization, and a rapidly changing population of new immigrants, freed slaves and “new women” all led to an intellectual and aesthetic revolution that “came of age” in the writings of authors like Henry James, Kate Chopin and Charles Chesnutt. 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. Prerequisites: Any 200-level literature course or permission from instructor.

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.)

Chesnutt, Charles. *The Marrow of Tradition*. (Penguin)
Chopin, Kate. *The Awakening*. (Norton)
Howells, William Dean. *The Rise of Silas Lapham*. (Penguin)
James, Henry. *The Portrait of a Lady*. (Norton)
Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. (Norton)
Wharton, Edith. *The House of Mirth*. (Norton)

Note: In addition, you will have some readings posted in the course folder 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%
Short response papers	20%
Participation (including class prep)	10%

We will discuss the particulars for these assignments in class.

Attendance and Participation

This is a class designed for English majors, so you bear a much greater responsibility for its success than you would if it were introductory. We will function as a seminar, which means the course will be driven by discussion, advanced study and original research. Given our relatively small class size this semester, there is no space for dead weight. I expect that each of you will come prepared and ready to engage. To underscore this expectation, we have a formal attendance policy. If you miss more than 3 classes, your final grade will be penalized 1/3 letter grade per each additional absence. If you miss more than 6 classes, you will fail the course. Furthermore, your participation counts 10% of your grade.

Assignment Submission Policy

Essays are due at the time stated on the syllabus. 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.

Cell Phones and Laptops

I should never see or hear your cell phone, nor should I be aware of it vibrating. Please turn your phones off before you enter the room. Be warned that I reserve the right to answer any phone that rings in my class and that if I see you texting or checking your phone, you'll be counted absent for that day. **You may not use a laptop in class without first meeting with me one-on-one to discuss it.**

Academic Honesty

Every assignment that you submit must be your original work, written specifically for this class, and it must clearly and properly cite any sources you used (or consulted) in writing it. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please do not hesitate to ask. I am bound by the honor code to turn in any work I suspect of being plagiarized to the honor council. Therefore, it is best to approach me with any concerns or questions before the assignment is submitted. 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. Please see the English Department policies attached to this syllabus for a further elaboration of the course plagiarism policy.

English 361: American Realism and Naturalism
Reading Schedule

August

Thurs. 27: Introductions

September

Tues. 1: **The Realist Aesthetic:** COURSE FOLDER: *Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism*: **Budd**, “The American Background” (21-46);
Mark Twain, “James Fenimore Cooper’s Literary Offenses”

The Dean and the Master

Thurs. 3: COURSE FOLDER: **William Dean Howells**, from *Criticism and Fiction*
William Dean Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*; Chpts. I-VII (3-92)

Tues. 8: **William Dean Howells**, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*; Chpts. VIII-XIII (93-186)
Group 1

Thurs. 10 No Class

Tues. 15: **William Dean Howells**, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*; Chpts. XIV-XX (187-270)
Group 2

Thurs. 17: **William Dean Howells**, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*; Chpts. XXI-end (270-365)
Group 3

Tues 22: COURSE FOLDER: **Henry James**, “The Art of Fiction”
Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*; Chpts. I-VI (17-60)

Thurs. 24: **Henry James**, *The Portrait of a Lady*; Chpts. VII-XIX (61-179)
Group 1

Tues 29: **Henry James**, *The Portrait of a Lady*; Chpts. XX-XXIX (179-265)
and “Preface to the New York Edition [of *Portrait of a Lady*] (1908) (3-17)
Group 2

October

- Thurs. 1: **Henry James**, *The Portrait of a Lady*; Chpts. XXX-XLIII (265-374)
- Tues. 6: **Henry James**, *The Portrait of a Lady*; Vol. II; Chpts. XLIV-end (374-490)
Group 3
- Thurs. 8: **The Naturalist Aesthetic**: COURSE FOLDER: **Stephen Crane**, “The Open Boat,”; **Malcolm Cowley**, “A Natural History of American Naturalism”; **Donald Pizer**, “The Three Phases of American Literary Naturalism”
- Mon 12: Essay 1 due by noon**
Gender and Economics
- Tues. 13: **Kate Chopin**, *The Awakening*; Chpts. I-XVI (3-47)
Thorstein Veblen, “Conspicuous Consumption and the Servant-Wife” [in *The Awakening: Norton Critical Edition*, 154-59]
- Thurs. 15: **Kate Chopin**, *The Awakening*; Chpts. XVII-end (46-109)
Group 1
- Tues. 20: Fall Break**
- Thurs. 22: **Kate Chopin**, *The Awakening* – Finish Discussion
COURSE FOLDER: **Donna Campbell**, “Women Writers and Naturalism”
Group 2
- Tues. 27: COURSE FOLDER: **Edith Wharton**, Selections from *The Writing of Fiction*
Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*; Book I; Chpts. I-VII (5-68)
- Thurs. 29 No Class**

November

- Tues. 3: **Edith Wharton**, *The House of Mirth*; Book I; Chpts. VIII-XV; Book II; Chpts. I-V (68-189);
Thorstein Veblen, “Conspicuous Leisure and Conspicuous Consumption” [in *The House of Mirth: A Norton Critical Edition*, 264-71]
Group 3
- Thurs. 5: **Edith Wharton**, *The House of Mirth*; Book II; Chpts. VI-end (189-256)

Race and Reconstruction

- Tues. 10: **Mark Twain**, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; Chpts. I-XIII (13-85)
COURSE FOLDER: **Twain**, Chpt. 46 of *Life on the Mississippi*
- Thurs. 12: **Mark Twain**, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; Chpts. XIV-XX (86-150)
- Mon. 16: Essay 2 Due**
- Tues. 17: **Mark Twain**, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; Chpts. XXI-XXXII (151-233)
- Thurs 19: **Mark Twain**, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; Chpts. XXXIII-end (234-96)
Group 1
- Tues. 24: **Charles Chesnutt**, *The Marrow of Tradition*; Chpts. I-V (1-62)
COURSE FOLDER: Selections from **Ida B. Wells**, "Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All its Phases"
- Thurs. 26: Thanksgiving Break**
- December**
- Tues. 1: **Charles Chesnutt**, *The Marrow of Tradition*; Chpts. VI-XXIV (63-209)
Group 2
- Thurs. 3 **Charles Chesnutt**, *The Marrow of Tradition*; Chpts. XXV-XXXI (210-73)
Group 3
- Tues. 8: **Charles Chesnutt**, *The Marrow of Tradition*; Chpts. XXXII-end (274-329)
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES DUE

Final Essay Due by 9:00 am on Monday, December 14