

MODERN AMERICAN LITERATURE (English 372)
MWF 2:20-3:20pm

Stephen Burt

This course aims to introduce you to some of the best, most interesting, and most important, books written by Americans in the first half of the twentieth century. Along the way, and not coincidentally, you'll encounter important literary schools and movements, major economic and political events, and writers' attempts to respond to those events. We'll be looking at texts as parts of their authors' careers, and as parts of their era, but our focus will be on the novels, stories, poems, and plays as works of art.

I expect you to show up at all our course meetings, and to participate. I do call on people who don't seem to talk. I will also want a good excuse, in advance, if you're going to miss a class; missed classes without excuses will lower your grade.

You'll write three **papers**. The first two (probably 3-5 pages) must focus on one work, or part of a work; the third (probably 6-9) might look at two or more, or look harder at one. You will also make one 5 to 10 minute class presentation based on your own research.

These papers, and your participation in class, represent most of your work for the course, and most of your grade will be based on them. I will, however, be giving a final exam, based on short passages from the books we've read. Your grade consists of your first (10%), second (15%) and third (35%) papers; your involvement in class (20%, including the presentation); and your final (20%).

Late work goes down one letter grade per day if you haven't talked to me about it beforehand. If you've got an extraordinary excuse-- or you need extra time for an extraordinary project-- we can probably work something out if you tell me about it beforehand, the sooner the better.

It should be very easy to contact me by email-- burt@macalester.edu-- and to find me in my office, Old Main 202. I will set office hours by the second week of class. You can even call me at home, 698-1238, between 10am and 11:30pm; late-night calls will anger our cats.

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Stephen Burt fall 2004

BOOKS REQUIRED

Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!*
Gertrude Stein, *Three Lives*
Robert Frost, *Complete Poems*
Ernest Hemingway, *In Our Time*
Jean Toomer, *Cane*
Raymond Chandler, *Farewell, My Lovely*
William Carlos Williams, *Imaginations*
Nella Larsen, *Quicksand and Passing*
Meridel Le Sueur, *The Girl*
Eugene O'Neill, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*
Fitzgerald, *The Diamond as Big as the Ritz*
Robert Penn Warren, *All the King's Men*
George Herriman, *Krazy & Ignatz 1925-26*
Marianne Moore, *Complete Poems*

Wed SEPT 8
Introduction

Fri SEPT 10
Cather, *O Pioneers!*: parts I-II

Mon SEPT 13
Cather, *O Pioneers!*: parts III-V

Wed SEPT 15
Cather, cont'd; Stein, *Three Lives*: "The Good Anna"

Fri SEPT 17
Stein, *Three Lives*: "Melanctha"

Mon SEPT 20
Stein, *Three Lives*: "Melanctha," cont'd.; "The Gentle Lena"

Wed SEPT 22
Frost: "The Death of the Hired Man," "Home Burial," "A
Servant to Servants," "The Code"

Fri SEPT 24
Frost: *The Hill Wife*, *Two Witches*, "After Apple-Picking,"
"The Bonfire"

Mon SEPT 27

Frost: "For Once, Then, Something," "The Need of Being
Versed in Country Things," "Neither Out Far Nor In Deep,"
"Design," "Provide, Provide," "The Most of It," "Directive"

Wed SEPT 29

Hemingway, *In Our Time*: 1-77

Fri OCT 1

Hemingway: 77-end

SIGN UP FOR PRESENTATIONS

Mon OCT 4

Toomer, *Cane*: "Karintha" to "Blood-Burning Moon"

FIRST PAPER DUE

Wed OCT 6

Toomer: "Seventh Street" to "Bona and Paul"

Fri OCT 8

Toomer: "Kabnis"; presentations

FIRST PAPER DUE

Mon OCT 11

Le Sueur, *The Girl*, 1-41

Wed OCT 13

NO CLASS—to be made up by evening class TBA

Fri OCT 15

Le Sueur, *The Girl*, 42-132; presentations

Mon OCT 18

Chandler, *Farewell, My Lovely*: 1-107

Wed OCT 20

Chandler: 108-204

Fri OCT 22

Chandler: 204-end; presentations

Mon OCT 25

Penn Warren, *All the King's Men*: chs. 1-3

Wed OCT 27

All the King's Men, chs. 4-5

MID-TERM BREAK

Mon NOV 1

Penn Warren, *All the King's Men*: chs. 6-8

Wed NOV 3

Penn Warren, *All the King's Men*: chs. 9-10

Fri NOV 5

Penn Warren, cont'd; presentations

Mon NOV 8

Fitzgerald: "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," "Bernice Bobs Her Hair," "The Ice-Palace," "May-Day"

Wed NOV 10

Fitzgerald, cont'd: Moore, "The Steeple-Jack," "No Swan So Fine," "The Fish," "Poetry," "To Military Progress," "To a Steam Roller," "An Egyptian Pulled Glass Bottle in the Shape of a Fish," "Sojourn in the Whale"

Fri NOV 12

Moore: "A Grave," "The Labors of Hercules," "New York," "Marriage," "The Student," "The Pangolin," "The Paper Nautilus," "Nevertheless"; presentations
SECOND PAPER DUE

Mon NOV 15

Moore, cont'd; Larsen, *Passing*

Wed NOV 17

Passing, cont'd.

Fri NOV 19

Passing, cont'd; presentations

Mon NOV 22

Herriman, *Krazy Kat*: introduction (pp. 6-11), then read around- pick one page or sequence you'd especially like to discuss; presentations (if necessary)

Wed NOV 24

Herriman, cont'd.

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Mon NOV 29

Williams, *Spring and All*

Wed DEC 1

Williams: *The Great American Novel; The Descent of Winter*

Fri DEC 3

Williams, cont'd; presentations

Mon DEC 6

O'Neill, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, act 1

Wed DEC 8

O'Neill, *Long Day's Journey*, act 2; presentations (if necessary)

Fri DEC 10

O'Neill, *Long Day's Journey*, acts 3 and 4; presentations
DEADLINE FOR DRAFTS OF THIRD PAPER

Mon DEC 13

NO CLASS: to be made up by evening session TBA

Wed DEC 15

Exam review; wrap-up

Fri DEC 17

THIRD PAPER DUE

FINAL EXAM: TUESDAY DEC 21 10:30am-12:30pm