

ACS 6750/ENG 6750 American Literary Realisms
Fall 2013
Jolie Sheffer

Office Hours:

414 East Hall
Tuesdays and Thursdays 1-3 pm
and by appointment on Fridays

jsheffe@bgsu.edu
(419) 217-7959

This course will introduce students to an array of narrative forms related to literary realism at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Ordinarily associated with literary works that sought to capture the complexities of ordinary life, particularly among middle-class Americans, this course will address a range of narratives and genres that depicted and constructed “reality.”

Among the questions we will be exploring will be: What is realism? What reading practices does the term presume? Against what is “realism” implicitly opposed—romanticism, fantasy, invention? While the term typically implies mimesis, verisimilitude, and objectivity, we should instead understand it as a way of perceiving reality that reflects certain social values. Our goal in this course is to investigate the various methodologies for conveying “realism” that came to prominence in the US around the turn of the twentieth century, and to understand their ideological meaning(s).

The course will be divided into four units: The Marriage Market will address gender and class as it was illustrated by major novelists of the period, such as Henry James, Edith Wharton, and William Dean Howells, in conversation with the narrative strategies of Freudian psychoanalysis. Southern Gothics will focus on the all-too-real horrors of slavery and lynching, as explored through fiction, journalism, and photography; we’ll read selections by authors such as Alice Dunbar Nelson, Ida B. Wells, Charles Chesnutt, and Pauline Hopkins. Urbanization, Immigration, and Sociology will address debates around the dangers of city life, and the rise of the discipline of sociology, through selections by writers such as Jacob Riis, Jane Addams, and Abraham Cahan. Our final unit, Empire and Anthropology will address the challenges to national identity and narrative form posed by the U.S.’s expansionist policies and by the discipline of anthropology; we’ll read works by authors such as Mourning Dove, Ella Deloria, Franz Boas, and study two World’s Fairs.

In addition, the course will require students to curate digital “exhibits” using primary archival documents from Jerome Library. This will be a pilot project for Digital Humanities coursework, which is especially useful for students of English, History, American Culture Studies, and Popular Culture Studies.

Objectives:

- To gain a broad sense of the historical period.
- To explore (and expand) the notion of "realism" in order to think about modern epistemologies and disciplines.
- To investigate how even seemingly non-realist genres can be understood as psychologically or socially accurate representations or responses.
- To use new digital technology tools to curate historical material for audiences within BGSU and with the outside community.
- To hone critical reading, interpretation, and writing skills.
- To demonstrate excellence in oral, written, and visual communication.

Required Texts:

Henry James, *Portrait of a Lady* (1881 version; Penguin Classics edition)

Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*

Charles Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition* (Bedford edition)

Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (Bedford edition)

Abraham Cahan, *Yekl and the Imported Bridegroom and Other Stories of Yiddish New York*

Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (Bedford edition)

Mourning Dove, *Cogewea*

Jolie Sheffer, *The Romance of Race: Incest, Miscegenation, and Multiculturalism in the United States, 1880-1930*

Recommended (not required):

Dora Apel and Shawn Michelle Smith, *Lynching Photographs*

ASSIGNMENTS:

1) Teaching Presentation

Each student will **co-lead discussion** with another student once during the semester. These are teaching presentations, which means that you and your partner will be responsible for making a lesson plan and leading discussion. Be prepared to bring in outside material (research and visuals in a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation, etc.), to prepare discussion questions, to clarify difficult points, etc. When you are discussion leader, you will *not* post a reading response to Canvas; instead, you will submit a copy of your lesson plan to me by Wednesday at NOON prior to our class meeting.

Unit 1: Psychological Realism, Domesticity, and the Marriage Market:

Presentation topics: Psychoanalysis, Marriage and Divorce, Property Laws

Unit 2: Photography, Southern Gothic Horrors, and Race Realities

Presentation topics: Photography, Film, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, Lynching

Unit 3: Sociological Methods, Urbanization, and Immigration:

Presentation topics: Sociology, Progressive Era, Settlement House movement, Immigration, Juvenile Delinquency, Department Stores, Census data

Unit 4: Anthropology, Empire, and Settler Colonialism:

Presentation topics: Anthropology, World's Fairs, Imperialism, Settler Colonialism

2) Reading and Film Responses

Six times throughout the semester you will submit a thoughtful, critical response (approximately 500 words) to the week's readings on Canvas; you should *not* submit during a week you are giving a teaching presentation. Responses must be submitted by NOON on Wednesday in advance of our Thursday class meeting. In addition, you are expected to read your classmates' responses in advance of our meetings. These responses should exhibit strong close reading skills and should offer thoughtful, in-depth analysis of a key idea in that week's reading(s). This is an opportunity to make observations about, ask questions about, and begin to craft your own interpretations of the work(s). You may certainly post extra responses to improve your score, or to help you to articulate your observations about the week's readings.

3) Short essay

Midway through the semester, you will submit a short essay that carefully, thoughtfully, thoroughly, and originally close reads one of our primary texts to discuss its meanings and ideological significance. This essay should be approximately 1500 words and will be submitted via Canvas. This essay may be an extension and elaboration of an idea first developed in a reading response or as part of your teaching presentation. This is an opportunity to more fully develop your ideas about a given text, and to craft a concise argument about its particular form(s) of realism.

Each essay should have an introduction and conclusion, and should articulate and sustain an argument over the length of the essay. Each essay should provide analytical close readings of your primary text, craft an argument about its meaning and significance, and exhibit strong writing skills. Give careful attention to your analysis, organization, transitions between paragraphs, grammar, and citations. PLEASE FORMAT in Times New Roman, 12-point, double-spaced, with one-inch margins and MLA or Chicago-style in-text citation and works cited list.

4) Group-Curated Exhibit

Students will work together as a class to create a digital exhibition on the subject of "Constructing Race in America, 1880-1940," composed of a variety of objects (visual, textual, musical) from the BGSU Library's special collections, with explanatory text and curatorial essays. Once completed, this exhibit will be published on the library's web page, available for all to see and use. Students will decide amongst themselves who is responsible for what: project management, design/layout, drafting the introductory curatorial statement on the exhibit, providing infographics (such as timelines), crafting a comprehensive bibliography page, editing/ proofreading (and checking all links), etc.

Part of the project will also require you to work in small teams to create sub-sections of the exhibit on narrower topics. Your job will be to curate original materials from the library's archives, as well as write explanatory essays for your sub-section (using course readings and additional research). On the last day of class, you will present your sub-section of the Digital Exhibit to the class, detailing the particular contributions, archival materials, and insights into the historical era that you and your teammates provided.

This project will require individual research, analysis, and writing, as well as excellent coordination and cooperation with others in order to create a cohesive, comprehensive digital exhibition that illustrates both course content and library resources.

5) Final Essay

Every student will submit a final essay (approximately 3,500-4,000 words; 20 pages maximum) detailing your contribution to the digital exhibit. This essay should include three sections:

- **An executive summary** outlining the particular tasks and responsibilities you contributed to the Digital Exhibit, including the items you were responsible for curating (1-3 pages)
- **A personal reflection** in which you discuss how the entire project has shaped your understanding of American culture during this historical period (3-5 pages). For this portion, go "meta" by offering personal reflections on the process and insights you gained from: a) your work with **archival materials** and b) your **collaboration on the Digital Exhibit**.
- **A research essay** on your particular topic that analyzes and interprets the subject matter. You should include extended close readings of specific documents you curated, contextualized with independent research and analysis. Be sure to identify all of the archival materials you included for the site, the additional research you did, and the conclusions you drew.

Every student must meet with me before November 22nd to discuss your contributions to the Digital Exhibit.

6) Participation

This is a discussion-based class that requires your ACTIVE participation. I will primarily serve as a discussion moderator, not as lecturer. It is your responsibility to come to class with questions about the texts and history, as well as interpretations (from the tentative to the well-formulated), and to engage in active discussions. Thus, each class member is responsible for the direction of the conversation in class, for keeping it lively, and for coming to class prepared. You should expect to share ideas, engage with your classmates' ideas, and disagree productively and respectfully. Our goal is to investigate these fascinating texts from a variety of angles.

You are allowed one absence without penalty. Each additional absence will drop your final grade by 10 percentage points (from a 90 to an 80, for example). Because this is a small class, every person should speak multiple times at every class period.

CALCULATING GRADES

Teaching Presentation	15%
Reading Responses	15%
Short essay	20%
Digital Exhibit (entire and sub-section)	15%
Final Essay	20%
Participation	15%

COMPLETE SCHEDULE:

Psychological Realism, Domesticity, and the Marriage Market

- August 29 Sigmund Freud, "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria" ("Dora") and "The Unconscious"*
Henry James, "The Art of Fiction"*
Henry James, *Portrait of a Lady* (through Chapter XXVI)
- September 5 Henry James, *Portrait of a Lady* (finish novel)
Carole Shammas, "Re-assessing the Married Women's Property Acts"*
- September 12 Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*
Amy Kaplan, chapter 4 from *The Social Construction of American Realism**

Photography, Southern Gothic Horrors, and the Realities of Race

- September 19 From Bedford edition of Chesnut, *The Marrow of Tradition*
- Introduction: Cultural and Historical Background
 - Documents under "Caste, Race, and Gender after Reconstruction"
 - Documents under "Laws and Lawlessness"
- Ida B. Wells, selections from *A Red Record: Lynchings in the United States**
Alice Dunbar Nelson, selections from "Une Femme Dit"*
Julia Lee, chapter 3 from *Interracial Encounters: Reciprocal Representations in African and Asian American Literatures, 1896-1937**
Dora Apel and Shawn Michelle Smith, *Lynching Photographs* (optional)

Special guest: Sue Carter Wood, Professor of Rhetoric and Writing, talking about Ida B. Wells

- September 26 Charles Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*
 From Bedford edition of *The Marrow of Tradition*:
 - Documents on the Wilmington Riot
 - William Dean Howells, from *A Psychological Counter-Current in Recent Fiction*
 Sandra Gunning, chapter 2 from *Race, Rape and Lynching: The Red Record of American Literature, 1890-1912**
- October 3 Pauline Hopkins, *Of One Blood*
 Jolie Sheffer, Chapter 1 of *The Romance of Race: Incest, Miscegenation, and Multiculturalism in the United States, 1880-1930*
 Dana Luciano, "Passing Shaddows: Melancholic Nationality and Black Critical Publicity in Pauline E. Hopkins's *Of One Blood*"*
- October 10 **Fall Break**
- October 17 **Library Day: Introduction to Archival Research & Digital Curation (142 Jerome Library)**
 We'll visit Special Collections and learn about the library's various holdings:
 - The Browne Popular Culture Library
 - Center for Archival Collections
 - Music Library & Sound Recordings Archive
 - Government Documents
 Then we will get a demonstration and workshop of the Omeka platform.
 Please bring a laptop if you have one; if not, you will need to check one out from the library before class.
- Homework to be completed in advance:
 Review BGSU Library Digital Galleries for design standards, display options, objects/images, etc.
 Review our course Library Guide (librarian contact information, metadata standards, and Library of Congress Key Terms).
- SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20TH: SHORT ESSAY due by MIDNIGHT via Canvas.**
- October 24 Film: *The Birth of a Nation* (Directed by D. W. Griffith)
 Amy Louise Wood, Introduction and Chapter 5 from *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940**
 Arthur Lenning, "Myth and Fact: The Reception of *The Birth of a Nation*"*
 Ellen C. Scott, "Black 'Censor,' White Liberties: Civil Rights and Illinois' 1917 Film Law"*
 Phillip Maciak, Spectacular Realism: The Ghost of Jesus Christ in D.W. Griffith's Vision of History"*

Sociological Methods, Urbanization, and Immigration

- October 31 Émile Durkheim, selections from *The Rules of Sociological Method**
Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*
Abraham Cahan, *Yekl and the Imported Bridegroom and Other Stories of Yiddish New York*
Sarah Chinn, selection from *Inventing Modern Adolescence**
- November 7 Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*
Selections from Hilda Satt Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger* (in Bedford edition)
Additional selections from Hilda Satt Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger**
Jolie Sheffer, chapter 5 from *The Romance of Race*

Anthropology, Empire, and Settler Colonialism

- November 14 The World's Columbian Exposition (1893) and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition (1904). Please review the following websites for images and materials from these events:
<http://columbus.iit.edu>
<http://www.chicagohs.org/history/expo.html>
<http://www.mohistory.org/Fair/WF/HTML/Overview/>
<http://www.archive.org/stream/cu31924015340114#page/n7/mode/2up>
<http://www.crawforddirect.com/worldfairtour.htm>
<http://www.slpl.org/slpl/interests/article240114133.asp>
Robert Rydell, chapters 2 and 6 from *All the World's a Fair**
Laura Wexler, Intro, Chapter 5, and Chapter 7 from *Tender Violence**
- November 21 Franz Boas, "Psychological Problems in Anthropology" and "Anthropology"*
Ella Deloria, selections from *Dakota Texts**
Maria Cotera, part 1 intro and Chapter 1 from *Native Speakers**
Info on Ella Deloria: <http://anthropology.usf.edu/women/deloria/deloria.htm>

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22ND: DEADLINE TO DISCUSS DIGITAL EXHIBIT AND FINAL ESSAY.

November 28 **Thanksgiving Holiday**

- December 5 Mourning Dove, *Cogewea*
Jolie Sheffer, chapter 4 from *The Romance of Race*
Beth Piatote, chapter 3 from *Domestic Subjects**

December 12 Group Presentations on Digital Exhibitions

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15TH: FINAL ESSAY DUE before MIDNIGHT via Canvas.