

ENGL 2326 – LITERATURE OF THE AMERICAS

Instructor: Dr. James Finley

Contact: james.finley@tamusa.edu

Meeting: Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00 - 3:15 pm, Hall 203

Student Hours: Mondays and Wednesday, 1:00 - 2:00 pm, Hall 328, and [by appointment](#)

“Literature of the Americas” examines America as a collection of places, peoples and cultures and considers how a variety of texts from a range of genres, languages, periods, and regions, both shape and reflect what America means. We will focus predominantly on material written in or about the area that is or that would become the United States of America. Among the range of questions we will consider include: In what ways do authors write about freedom, belonging, community, and identity? How can literature both support and challenge colonialism and slavery? How can literature shape understandings of national and cultural identity? In what ways has American literature become a tradition and how has it changed over the centuries?

Course Objectives

As this course is part of the Texas Core Curriculum, it has the following objectives:

- **Critical Thinking Skills (CT)** - creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
- **Communication Skills (COM)** - effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication
- **Social Responsibility (SR)** - intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities
- **Personal Responsibility (PR)** - ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making

We will work on all of these skills through reading and responding to literary texts from a range of periods, authors, and genres. Responses will be both written and discussion-based, and will provide students with multiple, differentiated opportunities for building on and adding to existing skill sets, while also learning about how these four objectives align with and support the disciplinary norms of English studies.

Readings

The following editions are recommended. Other readings will be available as PDFs and are linked in the syllabus.

- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (Penguin, 2014), 978-0143107309
- Gloria Naylor, *Mama Day* (Vintage, 1989), 978-0679721819

Assignments

This One Thing - This assignment is designed to help you to focus your reading on something that you can bring to our discussion. By noon on the days when there is a reading assignment, please post to Blackboard a brief paragraph that states, at the start, something along the lines of *there's this one thing I noticed in the reading* and explains what you found interesting about

it. Please be sure to quote at least some of the passage that prompted your thinking and include a citation. I will read these before we meet and will use the points you raise to structure our class. 2 points - includes both a quotation and your reaction; 1 point - includes only one element or is late; 0 points - missing both parts or contains thinking that is not your own.

Reflections - Reflections will focus on the [Core Curriculum objectives](#) and will be a chance for you to use material we've been reading to develop skills and knowledge related to these objectives. Reflections are less about making an argument than it is using writing to both capture your thinking and to push it forward. Please feel free to write in the first person ("I") and to address matters on which you are not entirely sure or where your thinking is ongoing. [Detailed prompts](#) are available on Blackboard. Reflections will be graded out of 4 points

Final Project - This assignment asks you to draft and revise an analytical essay about a text of your choosing that we have read this semester. A detailed description is available on Blackboard. The final project will be graded out of 10 points.