

ENGL 5200: American Realism and Naturalism
Spring xxxx
L###: TH 6:00-8:40 P.M.

Office: LIB ###

Office Hours: MW 10-11; 2-3 and by appointment

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William Dean Howells on realism:

"Realism is nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material"

Stephen Crane on naturalism:

*"A man said to the universe:
"Sir, I exist!"
"However," replied the universe,
"The fact has not created in me
A sense of obligation."*

Course Description

In the years following the Civil War, the United States transformed into an imperial nation with possessions overseas. Innovations such as the telegraph, telephone, and electricity enabled much financial prosperity and industrialization. Although this brought prosperity and worldly status to the United States, the detrimental consequences of rapid population and industrial expansion afflicted those unable to oppose the greedy and powerful. The literature of this period reflects the social inequality evolving from rapid population and industrial growth. Several American writers, responding to these rapid cultural changes, employed the aesthetic of realism. American realists presented accurate representations of life using tangible details their readers would recognize. American naturalism extended realism further but focused on lower-class and marginalized individuals. Naturalists maintained the realist attention to detail, merging it with a belief in social determinism rather than free will. In this class, we will read, interpret, and discuss literature from various authors whose works reflect the literary movements of realism and naturalism. This course emphasizes the socio-historical conditions of America from 1865-1910 which fostered the advent of these literary movements. Each student will learn to identify the major characteristics of this literary period by analyzing and describing, both orally and in writing, the works of selected authors. We will study the effects of new urban environments and consumer culture on human life and explore the extent to which "reality" is socially constructed and shifts historically dependent upon the writer's class, gender, and race. We will write often and meet in small groups frequently and class discussion will center on the ideas that originate from each group and from student presentations. Therefore, attendance is essential for class success!

Objectives

In completion of this course, students will

- Understand defining characteristics of literary realism and literary naturalism.
- Identify key social, economic, and cultural influences on the development of each novel.

- Appreciate literature as a psychological and sociological force in understanding contemporary society by connecting with past perspectives.
- Gain practical knowledge regarding literary scholarship, developing the vocabulary to describe the theoretical trends in the scholarly discourse on the assigned readings.
- Develop questions/observations regarding the readings and share these in small groups and with the class.
- Develop skills in research, writing, and analysis.
- Participate in small groups, developing practical skills in achieving and learning cooperatively.
- Develop practical skills in leading class discussion.

Required Reading

Howells, William Dean. *The Rise of Silas Lapham*

Davis, Rebecca Harding. *Life in the Iron Mills*

Twain, Mark. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

James, Henry. *The Beast in the Jungle*

Chopin, Kate. *The Awakening*

Dreiser, Theodore. *Sister Carrie*

Sinclair, Upton. *The Jungle*

Course Requirements

Discussion Presentation (20%): On one occasion, you will research, develop, and present an important issue relevant to the text for a specific class. This will give you the opportunity to lead discussion for 30 minutes during the assigned class period. This presentation should contain a discussion of the texts historical reception as well as incorporate secondary sources you find interesting/informative.

*Dependent upon class size, two students may be presenting on the same day. If this occurs, the students must communicate with one another to eliminate redundancies. In this situation, I will allow the students to present as a team granted the discussion is expanded from 30 to 60 minutes.

Scholarly Article Presentation (10%): Along with the primary texts of the course, you will be asked to read relevant secondary source materials. On one occasion, you will present a thorough description of the assigned article to the class and provide a critique of the article's strengths and weaknesses. The presentation should last approximately 20 minutes.

*Dependent upon class size, two students may be presenting on the same day. If this occurs, I will suggest additionally articles relevant to the primary text from which you may choose to present.

Short Essays (10% each for a total of 20%): You will write two short essays (2-4 pages each) in which you look closely at the texts covered up to the point at which each essay is due. Because we are reading secondary sources as well as primary texts, the purpose of the short essays is to explore your own close reading of a specific text you chose.

Research Paper (25 %): You will develop and support your own thesis in this analytical or argumentative paper (8-10 pages) but it must be in dialogue with the arguments advanced in scholarly articles not already included among the readings of the course. This assignment requires you to develop a substantial insight or propose a claim with which others might take issue.

Reading Journal (10%): You will be required to keep a journal in which you write down reactions to each weeks reading. The primary purpose of these journals is to encourage deep interaction with the texts. Not solely will the journals record your reflections upon the texts but will generate ideas that you may bring to class, instigating class discussions. Often we will gather in small groups to discuss the readings and your journals will be a good place to start. The length of each entry is up to you but should demonstrate a substantial reflection.

Peer Review (5%): After completion of a rough draft of your research paper, the class will gather into small groups in order to do a peer review that will assist in your rewrite and final draft. You will be graded on your participation. Your classmates are there to help and exposure to external perspectives is very beneficial to the writing process. Furthermore, by helping others, you will develop the ability to edit, diagnose, and solve writing problems. As you develop this ability on other papers you will begin to develop it on your own.

Class Participation/Attendance (10%): Active participation will aid in your success. Much of the learning will occur in class-discussion and small group work. The learning activities of this class focus on the student and require the student's presence. I will take attendance every class meeting. Each student is allowed one absence without penalty. If you miss more than one I'll take sanctions, which may include a reduction of your final grade in the class. I value your presence so please come and learn!

Formal Written Work

From CSUS English Dept.

"Papers should be typed double-spaced, on one side of a sheet, with margins of 1" on top and bottom and 1" on right and left. Indent beginning of a paragraph a half-inch from the left margin. Page numbers should appear centered or to the right in the top margin; the first page is either not numbered or, if numbered, the number should appear centered in the bottom margin. Paginate the Endnotes (if any) and Works Cited sections as a continuation of your text. Make a title or cover sheet (this is my preference) with the following information (centered and with a minimum of double-spacing): title of your paper, your name, course number and title, semester and year, and the name of the course instructor. Use italics or underline titles of books, magazines, newspapers, and shorter works published independently. Use quotation marks (" ") for titles of short stories, poems, magazine and newspaper articles.

Works Cited and Selected Bibliography (if required): Double-space between successive lines of an entry and between entries; begin the first line of an entry flush left, and indent successive lines half an inch. List entries in alphabetical order according to the last name of the author. If an author's name is unavailable, begin the entry alphabetically, with the title of the work."

Communication Outside of Class

I can be reached via email at jdoe@csustan.edu. I will respond as soon as possible. I also encourage you to visit me during the posted office hours. On the occasion that we are unable to meet during these times, I am happy to schedule a time upon which we both agree.

Accommodation of Disabilities

From CSUS Disability Resource Services

“Academic accommodations are available for those students with disabilities who are registered with the Office of Disability Resource Services. It is your responsibility to initiate any request for accommodation. Their offices are located in MSR210. For additional information, visit their website: <http://web.csustan.edu:80/drs/>. Please schedule an appointment with me early in the semester to discuss any accommodations for this course that have been approved by the Director of Disability Resource Services.”

Plagiarism

From CSUS English Dept.

“Students, in submitting work, certify that the work is their own original work except that all information garnered from others whether quoted, summarized, or paraphrased has been appropriately cited. Dishonesty by failing to acknowledge the work of others constitutes plagiarism and is a serious offense. Normally, the penalty for plagiarism is failure in the course. More serious penalties may also be invoked.

In cases of plagiarism instructors should also submit the *Student Discipline: Academic Dishonesty Incident Report Form* to the Coordinator of Student Discipline for tracking or for disciplinary investigation.

<http://web.csustan.edu/english!dept/AcademicDishonestyIncident.pdf>

*Title 5, California Code of Regulations, Section 41301 notes that students may be “expelled, suspended, placed on probation, or given a lesser sanction for one or more of the following causes which must be campus related: 1. Cheating or plagiarism in connection with an academic program at a campus”(see Appendix F of the current CSU, Stanislaus catalog)."