**The WAYLAND BAPTIST UNIVERSITY**

**Virtual Campus**

**School of Languages and Literature**

**Wayland Baptist University Mission Statement:** Wayland Baptist University exists to educate students in an academically challenging, learning-focused and distinctively Christian environment for professional success, and service to God and humankind.

**Course Name: ENGL 5313- Studies in American Literature: The American Epic and the American Dream**

**Term and Year: Summer 2017**

**Full Name of Instructor: Dr. Dorothy Maria O’Connell**

**Office Phone and Email:** [maria.o’connell@wbu.edu](mailto:maria.oconnell@wbu.edu) **806-291-1102 Cell: 806-224-8234 (You can also find me on Facebook, if you would like to message me).**

**Office Hours, Building, and Location: I will be available on Blackboard Chat or by email or phone (please make an appointment if you will be calling)**

**Class Meeting Time and Location**: On BlackBoard

**Catalog Description:** A study of a specific time, genre, or major figure in American literature. Note: May be repeated one time when topic varies.

* Required Textbook and Resources: ***Kindle or other e-book formats are acceptable, as are used or other paperback editions.***
* **Buell, Lawrence, *The Dream of the Great American Novel,* Cambridge, Harvard UP, 2016. Print. 978-0674659896**
* **Brubaker, Ed, *Captain America Vol 1.: Winter Soldier*, New York, Marvel, 2010, Print. 9780785143413**
* **Fitzgerald, F. Scott, *The Great Gatsby,* New York, Scribner, 2004 (orig. 1922). Print 978-0743273565**
* **McCarthy, Cormac, *Blood Meridian,* New York, Vintage, 1992. Print. 978-0679728757**
* **Melville, Herman. *Moby Dick, or the White Whale,* Wordsworth Editions, 1999. Print. 978-1853260087**
* **Morrison, Toni, *The Song of Solomon,* New York, Vintage, 2004. Print. 978-1400033423**

**Other readings may be included from online sources.**

**Optional Materials:** You will need good internet access and the ability to participate in discussion board threads and to turn in written work in a timely manner. You must have software that allows you to save materials as .doc or .docx formats and some form of storage. You will be responsible for making sure that you have saved all works in progress and other materials.

**Course Outcome Competencies**: Course Overview:

This course is structured to examine the development of an American literary identity and legacy. We will look at the development and structure of American Epic Novels and how they connect to ideas of the American Dream and t American history and identity. We will study a variety of novels that could fit well into the epic genre and that also follow some of the expectations for the “Great American Novel.” Students will learn to identify some of the characteristics of American epics and to relate those large stories to the American mythos, and, through Buell and others, to see how the novels interact with, support, and/or undermine cultural expectations and rhetoric of identity in the United States. Students should be able to produce coherent and thoughtful discussion responses and essays developing what they find in the readings and their responses.

**The more the student puts into the course, the higher his or her outcome competencies will be.**

**Attendance Requirements**: The course will take place entirely online. You must have a functional Blackboard account and be able to access the WBU library website, as well as articles and other material provided through proprietary databases available via the WBU library website. You also must have an active WBU email address. Your WBU email address is the usual way that I will contact you. You are strongly encouraged to visit the Blackboard login page and test your browser for Blackboard compatibility, as well as take the Blackboard Tutorial if you are not familiar with how the service works. If you have problems with Blackboard or your WBU email, please use the WBU Support Contacts available on the Blackboard login page

**Disability Statement**: “In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), it is the policy of Wayland Baptist University that no otherwise qualified person with a disability be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational program or activity in the university.  The Coordinator of Counseling Services serves as the coordinator of students with a disability and should be contacted concerning accommodation requests at (806) 291- 3765.  Documentation of a disability must accompany any request for accommodations.”

**Plagiarism and Conduct Statement**

**Writing is a collaborative art. Working out ideas for your paper with an instructor, writing tutor, classmate, family member, or friend is encouraged not only for this class, but also for other classes that involve writing. Discussion and collaborative brainstorming are good. However, passing off another's *writing or ideas* as your own is plagiarism. It is unethical, it constitutes Academic Dishonesty (cheating), and it is sufficient grounds both for failure of a course and suspension from the university.**

**Common examples of plagiarism or academic dishonesty include the following:**

* **Copying any amount of text directly from an internet website, book, or other document without appropriate citation and synthesis into one’s own discussion.**
* **Paraphrasing the ideas presented in any source or oral discussion without *appropriate citation*.**
* **Using the evidence and conclusions of any source as the controlling framework for one’s own paper.**
* **Recycling work from a previous or current course, whether your own work or another student’s work.**
* **Purchasing or otherwise downloading a paper from an internet website.**

**In some writing assignments, you will be expected to incorporate scholarly sources into your document. ALL OF THE FOLLOWING must be met to constitute *appropriate citation* of any source:**

* **Including MLA, Chicago, or APA parenthetical or note-style citation format as required by the instructor.**
* **Placing borrowed text directly from another source within “quotation marks.”**
* **Introducing clearly another author’s voice into the document by means of a signal phrase (an introduction of that author).**
* **Offering, in short, a clear distinction between one’s own voice or ideas and those of any outside authors brought into the discussion.**

**Wayland Baptist University observes a ZERO TOLERANCE policy regarding Academic Dishonesty.**

* **Any suspected instance of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will first be evaluated by the instructor and discussed individually with the student.**
* **If the instructor determines that a student’s actions constitute Academic Dishonesty, the case will be filed with the school dean (as determined by course prefix) and reported to**

**the university executive vice president/provost, as per university policy. ALL CASES OF**

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY WILL RE REPORTED.**

* **Per university policy as described in the Wayland Academic Catalog, second offenses**

**WILL RESULT IN SUSPENSION FROM THE UNIVERSITY.**

* **In this course, the first instance of Academic Dishonesty may also result in a zero on the assignment.**

**Grade Appeals**

**Students shall have protection through orderly procedures against prejudices or capricious academic evaluation. A student who believes that he or she has not been held to realistic academic standards, just evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course by using the student grade appeal process described in the Academic Catalog. Appeals may not be made for advanced placement examinations or course bypass examinations. Appeals are limited to the final course grade, which may be upheld, raised, or lowered at any stage of the appeal process. Any recommendation to lower a course grade must be submitted through the Executive Vice President/Provost to the Faculty Assembly Grade Appeals Committee for review and approval. The Faculty Assembly**

**Course Requirements and Grading Criteria:** Students will provide evidence of successful completion of the course outcome competencies by:

**Semiweekly Responses to Study Prompts 1: 30%**

1 Regarding “Responses to Study Prompts”: these are decidedly not “essays,” merely a page or two of organized thought per prompt. Select one of the possible prompts for each date and submit your considered response by Tuesday and Friday midnight of each course week. There is no order in which to answer the prompts and you might cite freely but meaningfully—by extending or challenging ideas—from your colleagues. Borrowings, of course, require in-text acknowledgments, whether of word or idea.

**Threaded Peer Review of Responses: 20%**

2 Respond to any of the posted responses from your colleagues—one from the Tuesday submissions or one from the Friday submissions. Each review should consist of a single, well-developed paragraph (you will touch on your peer’s argument, question, and critique). This must go beyond, “I agree” or “good job” to really engage your peers. Ask questions, bring up ideas, or explain WHY you agree/disagree. Submit your considered reviews by Saturday midnight of each course week.

**Paper proposal: 20%**

3.) Midterm detailed proposal for final paper: **5-8 pp** with a detailed plan for how you wish to approach a piece of epic American literature and how it engages American culture or myths. This proposal should include your basic sources and the methodology you will use to approach the various topics. This is a rumination; a chance to brainstorm arguments and show understanding. I will expect it to be in MLA format and fairly formal, but it can be fragmentary to some extent. I need to be able to evaluate your argument and themes and give you feedback on how to finalize your essay. You may examine any piece(s) of literature, film, or other cultural product that you think fits the epic genre.

**Final paper 30%:**

4). Final paper: **10-15 pp** should be an extended argument about epic American concepts and how they can be identified in various works of American literature. You are also welcome to make connections to current literature, film, or historical events and how they continue or trouble those literary/mythological/historical concepts.

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**Tentative Schedule**: **Subject to (slight) revision as necessary! This is basic overview and will evolve with time and discussion.**

**Week 1 (May 30-June 3)**. **Read the introduction to *The Dream of the Great American Novel***

**Discussion prompt 1 (due Tuesday): Introduce yourself and tell us what interested you about the course?**

**Discussion prompt 2 (due Friday): Choose one of these:**

**Note: These are exploratory questions to help guide some of our discussions and writing. Answer to the best of your ability and don’t be afraid to speculate or take a stand!**

1. **What are some of the characteristics of a Great American Novel (GAN) and how might theses correspond to epic literature?**
2. **What makes a novel an epic, in your opinion? What are some novels or movie adaptations that you think qualify as epics? Why?**
3. **How do you see American epics engaging the American Dream?**

**Peer responses (due Saturday)**

**Week 2. (June 5-9) Read Chapters 1-46 (Don’t panic! A lot of chapters are only 1-3 pages).**

**Discussion Prompt 1 (Due Tuesday): Choose ONE of these:**

1. **The name “Ishmael” taken by the narrator is one of the first Biblical references in *Moby Dick* (one of many). Why Ishmael? How might that name not only relate to the culture of the American northeast, but also to sailing itself?**
2. **What do we find out about Ishmael’s current financial state and his desire to go whaling in Chapter 2? What is the significance of the picture in the Spouter Inn and how might Nathan Swain’s corkscrewed harpoon connect with it?**
3. **How might Bildad and Peleg be seen as representations of American approaches to business? How do their Quaker beliefs seem to be affirmed and/or contradicted by their practices as captains?**

**Discussion Prompt 2 (Due Friday): Choose ONE of these:**

1. **The crazy prophet Elijah has been referenced in other American works (he shows up as Eli in *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy). However, he’s also a reference to Coleridge’s “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” as is the passage about the albatross. Why do the old man and the albatross appear in this early part of the novel? What are they signaling to the reader?**
2. **How do Ahab’s appearance and his deformity matter in the voyage? How are they “demoniac” (as Ahab refers to himself)? How does his approach to the hunt “blasphemous”?**
3. **Why do you think that Melville includes the section on cetology (the study of whales)? How does that section contrast with the descriptions of Moby Dick himself?**

**Peer Response (Due Saturday):**

**Week 3. (June 11-16) Read *Moby Dick* Chapters 47-95**

**Discussion Prompt 1 (Due Tuesday): Choose ONE of these**

**Discussion Prompt 2 (Due Friday): Choose one of these to answer**

**Peer Responses (due Saturday)**

**Week 3 (June 18-23 ) Read Chapter *Moby Dick* Chapters96-135**

**Discussion Prompt 1 Choose ONE of these**

**Discussion Prompt 2**

**Peer Responses due Saturday**

**Week 4. (June 25-30) Read *Blood Meridian***

**Discussion Prompt 1 (due Tuesday) Choose one of these**

**Discussion Prompt 2 (due Friday)**

**Peer responses (due Saturday).**

**Week 5 (July3-8 ) Read *Song of Solomon* and Buell….**

**Discussion Response 1: (Due Tuesday)**

**Discussion Response 2: (Due Friday)**

**Peer Responses: (Due Saturday)**

**Week 6 (July 10-15) : Read *Song of Solomon* and Buell…**

**Discussion prompt 1: (Due Tuesday)**

**Discussion Response 2 (Friday): This is a bit of a free-for all. I would love to see your ideas for your papers and to see you discuss and help each other. I will jump in as I can. I’m very excited to see what everyone is thinking about.**

**Week 7 (July 17-22): Paper Proposal of 5-8 pages. See the requirements on the syllabus. We will not have a discussion board, but I will be available by email for feedback on your papers. The paper will be due on Saturday (July 22).**

**Week 8 (July 24-29): Read *Great Gatsby***

**Discussion prompt 1: Due Tuesday**

**Discussion Response 2: Due Friday**



**Peer Responses: due Saturday**

**Week 9 (July 31-Aug 4): Read *Captain America Vol 1: Winter Soldier* and Buell**

**Discussion Response 1: Due Tuesday Choose 1 of these**

**Discussion Response 2: Due Friday Choose one of these**

**Peer Responses: Due Saturday**

**Week 10 (Aug 6-11) : Read Buell…**

**Discussion Response 1: Due Tuesday**

**Discussion Response 2: Due Friday**

**Peer Responses: Due Saturday**

**Week 11 (February 13-17): Final wrap-up. Available by email or chat to conference about the final paper.**

**(Final due week 11 10-15 page fully developed research essay)**

**Discussion Prompt: Answer BOTH of these. This is the only prompt this week.**

1. **What concepts do you take away from this class? Be as specific and clear as possible.**
2. **How does reading the ideas of the West and of the frontier through early-American literature change or add to your understanding of American identity, especially as expressed through literature, film, and media?**