

# ENGLISH 323

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## Introduction To This Course

English 323 consists of significant pieces of American literature written since 1918. Because of the great range and depth of the literature produced in America since the end of World War I, the course contents are necessarily highly selective. The overall purpose of the course is to introduce you to some of the best authors of the period, through representative works. In addition, the course will allow you to sample a few of the most important forms American literature has taken: novel, short story, play, poem. The readings, the questions contained in each lesson, and the midcourse and final tests are designed for any undergraduate interested in reading and responding to an integral part of his or her own heritage as an American. One need have no prior or special historical orientation or have done much work (if any) in other English courses. The essential prerequisites are an open and lively mind and heart, and a willingness to expend some effort, with the expectation of a good return through learning and enjoyment.

To enhance your appreciation of the universal relevance of literature, consider each work read in this course, regardless of the specific time or part of the country in which it was written, as having been conceived by a human being passionately and intelligently occupied by the same fundamental issues every human being has had at one time or another to confront; and as being read by fellow human beings who share, consciously or not, the same pressing concerns.

Keep faith with the author by allowing him to set his own terms for his writing and by paying close attention to what he has written. As you read, give yourself to the author.

Use the literary text itself—all that was written by the creative author, starting with the title of the work and concluding with the closing words of the final page—as the basis for all interpretations. Use no study guides or other material (biographical, historical, or what-have-you) extraneous to your own direct coming to terms with what is in front of you.

Before attempting to answer the questions in any lesson, read the appropriate work carefully, and read the discussion contained in that lesson. Return to the work itself as often as is necessary to clarify what may have been puzzling the first time through, or to check on any specific issues. Your answers to the questions should be your own conclusions, based on a close reading of the literary "evidence." Remember that individual opinion is important, and that you will be judged on how well you make a case for what you believe. Be as concise as possible, and cover all points that are raised.

## TEXTBOOKS

Textbooks are listed in order of presentation for study.

West, Nathanael, *Miss Lonelyhearts and The Day of the Locust*. New York: New Directions Publishing Corp.

Faulkner, William, *The Hamlet*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1956.

Sanders, Gerald, John Nelson and M. L. Rosenthal, eds., *Chief Modern Poets of Britain and America*. 5th edition, Vol. II, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1970.

Barth, John, *The Floating Opera*, and *The End of the Road*. New York: Doubleday (Anchor Press), 1988.

Bellow, Saul, *Henderson the Rain King*, New York: Viking Press, 1965.

Albee, Edward, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*. New York: Signet, NAL, 1983.

O'Connor, Flannery, *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976.

## GRADING POLICY

The course grade will be based both on the grades for the individual lessons and on the test results. The marks on the tests will count somewhat more heavily than those on the lessons. In answers to all questions, whether on the exams or the regular lessons, be responsive to what is asked; aim for coherence and clearly, fully developed answers; cite textual specifics as needed to support your ideas; and use good spelling and grammar, in order to communicate as clearly as possible. If you can, type your answers for all the regular lessons, and write neatly and legibly for the exams.

## EXAMINATIONS

There are two examinations—Lesson 4 (the Midcourse Exam) and Lesson 9 (the Final). The Midcourse Examination will cover the first half of the course's contents, and the Final will cover only the work done after the Midcourse Exam. The questions contained in the regular lessons should adequately prepare you for the kind of questions to be asked on the examinations.

Note on submitting lessons: **Do not submit multiple lessons;** instead, wait for a lesson's return before answering the questions on the next one, so that you can benefit from my comments on your work.