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American Public University System
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LITR218/221:

From Abolition to #MeToo: Literature of the American Civil Rights Movements

Course Summary

In this class, students will complete a weekly discussion board assignment. The discussion questions allow students to closely analyze specific works, themes, and authors. In addition, three journal assignments encourage closer analysis of specific works and themes and require students to engage in in-depth analysis and thought. Finally, the class ends with a two-part course project where students can further narrow their focus and analysis to one author, work or theme.

Course: LITR218/221 - From Abolition to #metoo: Literature of the American Civil Rights Movements.

Length of Course: 8 Weeks

Prerequisites: Credit Hours : 3

Course Description:

True to its revolutionary roots, America is not just the birthplace of democracy, but is also home to the major civil rights movements of the modern era including the Abolition Movement to end slavery, the Suffragettes (Women's Voting Rights, 1860-1920), the Civil Rights movement (1920-Present), the Women's Rights Movement (1920 - present), GLBT Civil Rights movement/ACT UP (1980Present) and the Native Rights Movement.

This course is a survey of American literature related to the major civil rights movements of the last 150 years from the Civil War to the present. It will take students on a journey of the social, political and cultural changes that shape modern day America and ask students to contemplate the connections between literature, politics, social change and the American identity.

Course Scope:

In this course, we will explore American literature from the Civil War to the present. The literature selected is diverse and represents the vast tracts of America's culture. Timely issues and traditions are studied in their historical, social, political, and economic context. With the passage of time, these issues and dilemmas multiplied, as did the philosophic, economic, and cultural assumptions that helped frame our country. Frank Norris, an American Naturalist author, stated, "The function of a novelist . . . is to comment upon life as he sees it."

Objectives:

CO1. Explain the contributions writers made to the major American civil rights movements from 1860-present.

CO2. Explain how the literature of these movements shaped American cultural, social and political ideals.

CO3. Describe the major themes of American Civil Rights literature

CO4 Explain how earlier civil rights movements influenced current thinking and movements.

CO5 Apply historical sources and documents to discuss the context of literature.

CO6 Describe the history of the portrayal of disability in literature.

CO7 Analyze connections between literary portrayals and real-life situations.

Outline

Week 1: Foundations of Civil Rights in America: Suffrage and Abolition

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify the major writers and political goals of the Suffragette movement and the Abolition movement.
2. Explain how the two movements were connected.
3. Identify and describe the importance of the major literary and political texts of these two movements.

Reading(s)

1. "Declaration of Sentiments" by Elizabeth Cady Stanton
<https://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/stantonsent.html>
2. "Solitude of Self" by Elizabeth Cady Stanton.
<https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/solitude-of-self.htm>
3. "Votes for All" by Carrie Chapman Catt.

<https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/2018/03/21/votes-for-all-nov-1917/> and Carrie Chapman Catt: <https://www.womenshistory.org/educationresources/biographies/carrie-chapmancatt>

4. Read any selection of 10 pages from Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman by Sarah Bradford (1869).
<https://www.accessible.com/accessible/docButton?AAWhat=builtPage&AAWhere=B00117942.SOMESCENESINTHELIFEOFHARRIETTUBMAN.xml&AABeanName=toc3&AANextPage=/printBrowseBuiltPage.jsp>
5. Solomon Northup: Chapter 1 and 2 from Twelve Years a Slave.
<https://www.accessible.com/accessible/docButton?AAWhat=builtPage&AAWhere=B00117943.CHAPTER1.xml&AABeanName=toc3&AANextPage=/printBrowseBuiltPage.jsp>

Week 1 Introduction Forum. In this discussion, please introduce yourself. Share where you work or plan to work after completing your program, your family, and any hobbies or special interests. Also, tell us why you are taking this course and what you hope to gain from obtaining your degree. In addition, please take a look at the course objectives in the syllabus and discuss the relevance to your career goals.

Specific Instructions: Your initial post should be *at least* 250 words. Please respond to at least 2 other students. Responses should be a *minimum* of 100 words. This discussion submission serves as your official entry into the course and this is why we have drawn special attention to this assignment. You will be reminded of this Discussion in the Week 1 Lesson, but please keep in mind that this Introduction Discussion **must** be submitted by **11:59 p.m., ET, on Sunday of Week 1** to maintain your registration in the course.

Week 1 Discussion Forum: Narrative, Politics and Activism in America

1. Select one of the readings assigned in Week 1 and write a short analysis and summary of what you read.
2. Identify two major claims made by the author regarding rights, oppression, or freedom.
3. Compare and contrast two of the readings. In what way are they similar and different.

Discussion Requirements:

- Three posts minimum.
- The initial forum response is due by Thursday at 11:55 p.m. EST and must be 250+ words in length.
- For peer replies, respond to at least two of your classmates by Sunday at 11:55 p.m. EST and they must be 100+ words in length.

Week 2: Muckraking and Worker's Rights: The Origins of Investigative Journalism

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify the major themes of African American poets.
2. Explain the importance of the Harlem Renaissance
3. Explain how the works of Garvey and du Bois created the foundation of the modern American Civil Rights movement.

Reading(s)

1. Ida Tarbell: [The History of the Standard Oil Company](http://www.pagetutor.com/standard/toc.html).
<http://www.pagetutor.com/standard/toc.html> Explore Tarbell's ground-breaking book on Standard Oil and Worker's Rights. Read a selection of at least 10 pages from any chapter.
2. Upton Sinclair – Excerpts from [The Jungle](#). Read 1-2 chapters.

Assignment(s)

Week 2 Discussion Board: The main themes of civil rights literature this week focused on worker's rights, labor laws, and child labor laws.

Focusing on just one of the writers featured in this week's readings, discuss one major theme or idea that stood out to you in this week's reading selection. What did you notice about the style of writing?

Discussion Requirements: •

Three posts minimum.

- The initial forum response is due by Thursday at 11:55 p.m. EST and must be 250+ words in length.
- For peer replies, respond to at least two of your classmates by Sunday at 11:55 p.m. EST and they must be 100+ words in length.

Writing Journal 1: Expanding on your week 2 discussion board response, answer the following two questions

1. Write an analysis of one of the writer's and his or her ideas and themes in this week's readings. As part of your analysis discuss what social changes the writer wanted and how did he or she use writing to bring about those changes? 2. Compare and contrast this writer with one other writer from last week's reading list. You can compare and contrast their themes, ideas, writing style, influences, their politics etc. **The Journal must be a minimum of two (2) double-spaced pages.**

Submit as an MS Word file document.

Attention to spelling, formatting, and organization are part of your grade.

Week 3: Anti-Lynching: Early Civil Rights Literature in America 1900-1935

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify the major themes of African American poets.
2. Explain the importance of the Harlem Renaissance to American Literature

3. Explain how the works of Garvey and du Bois created the foundation of the modern American Civil Rights movement

Reading(s)

1. Week 3 Reading and Resources W.E.B du Bois. The Souls of Black Folk. Chapters 1 and 2.
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/408/408-h/408-h.htm>
2. History of the NAACP. <https://www.naacp.org/nations-premiercivilrightsorganization/>
3. Excerpt from “Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World” by Marcus Garvey (August 1920)
https://www.amistadresource.org/documents/document_07_04_040_mgarvey.pdf
4. Ida B. Wells. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/barnettidawells1862-1931/>
5. Selection of poems and essays:

James Weldon Johnson, “To America.” <https://poets.org/poem/america-5>
Langston Hughes, “I, Too.” <https://poets.org/poem/i-too> Countee Cullen
“Saturday’s Child” “Incident” <https://www.crmvet.org/poetry/fcullen.htm> Claude McKay
“America” and “White Houses.”
<https://www.crmvet.org/poetry/fmckay.htm>

Ida B. Wells. “Lynching Our National Crime – June 1 1909” Speech.
<https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/2017/03/09/mob-murder-in-a-christian-nationjune-1-1909/>

Ida B. Wells “The Red Record.”
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/14977/14977h/14977-h.htm>

*Read one chapter of your choice from “The Red Record.”

6. James Weldon Johnson.
<https://www.blackpast.org/africanamericanhistory/johnson-james-weldon-18711938/>
7. African-American History Timeline 1930-1939:
<https://www.thoughtco.com/africanamerican-history-timeline-1930193945427>

Assignment(s)

Week 3 Discussion Forum:

Explain how the works of Garvey and du Bois created the foundation of the modern American Civil Rights movement. Why might writers such as Langston Hughes and Ida B. Wells disagree with Garvey's ideas?

Discussion Requirements:

- Three posts minimum.
- The initial forum response is due by Thursday at 11:55 p.m. EST and must be 250+ words in length.
- For peer replies, respond to at least two of your classmates by Sunday at 11:55 p.m. EST and they must be 100+ words in length.

Week 4: Race, Identity, and Literature: The Civil Rights Movement. 1935-1965.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify the major themes of African American poets.
2. Explain the importance of the Harlem Renaissance to American Literature
3. Explain how the works of Garvey and du Bois created the foundation of the modern American Civil Rights movement

Reading(s)

1. "The Last Quatrain of the Ballad of Emmett Till" by Gwendolyn Brooks.
<https://allpoetry.com/The-Last-Quatrain-Of-The-Ballad-Of-Emmett-Till>
2. Listen to Brooks reading her poem here.
https://www.brandeis.edu/repository/projects/westmedford/blogstatic/9_14_200511_20PM.mp3
3. Ballad of Birmingham Jail by Dudley Randall.
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46562/ballad-of-birmingham>
4. Richard Wright: Excerpts from Native Son. Read any 20-30 page excerpt from the novel. <https://www.yonkerspublicschools.org/cms/lib/NY01814060/Centricity/Domain/1130/Native%20Son%20Novel.pdf>
5. Teaching James Baldwin and Richard Wright in the Ferguson Era.
<https://newrepublic.com/article/121844/teaching-james-baldwin-and-richardwright-ferguson-era>

6. [James Baldwin. "Everybody's Protest Novel."](http://faculty.gordonstate.edu/lsanders-senu/Everybody%27s%20Protest%20Novel%20by%20James%20Baldwin.pdf)
<http://faculty.gordonstate.edu/lsanders-senu/Everybody%27s%20Protest%20Novel%20by%20James%20Baldwin.pdf>

Assignment(s)

Week 4 Discussion Forum:

In his essay, "Everybody's Protest Novel," James Baldwin criticizes Richard Wright's depiction of Bigger Thomas in *Native Son*. Are his criticisms valid? Why or why not? What points does Baldwin make about the role of art and social change? Finally, what is your opinion? Should art try to change society? Why or why not?

Discussion Requirements:

- Three posts minimum.
- The initial forum response is due by Thursday at 11:55 p.m. EST and must be 250+ words in length.
- For peer replies, respond to at least two of your classmates by Sunday at 11:55 p.m. EST and they must be 100+ words in length.

Initial Post Due: Wednesday, by 11:55 p.m., ET **Responses**

Due: Sunday, by 11:55 p.m., ET

Journal 2: Referring to at least three of the works we have read in class so far (Weeks 1-4) discuss the role of art as it relates to social change in America. This is a broad question and students have the freedom to take it where they want. However, references to literary works and social change must be specific and supported.

Minimum of 450 words. Submit the journal on an MS Word file attachment. T

The journal is graded on accuracy, presentation, analysis, and detail. The journal should reflect your knowledge of the writers and their themes along with a detailed analysis. Do not summarize the content of what you read. Instead, analyze and discuss.

Week 5: GLBTQ Literature: Gay Liberation 1950-1980

Learning Objectives:

1. Analyze the role of Ginsberg 's Howl in the American gay rights movement and first amendment protections.

2. Explain the role of coming out and visibility in terms of GLBT rights

Reading(s)

1. The Price of Salt (1952) by Patricia Highsmith.
<https://www.abebooks.com/booksearch/title/the-price-of-salt/author/highsmith/>
2. The importance of the ending of The Price of Salt.
<https://newrepublic.com/article/124220/patricia-highsmith-offered-gayreadershopeful-ending>
3. Allen Ginsberg: "Howl" -- the poem was subject to an obscenity trial in part because of its explicit gay themes. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49303/howl>
4. [Listen to Ginsberg Read "Howl."](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-P2fILsLH8) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-P2fILsLH8>
5. [Screaming Queens : The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria \(film\)](#)

Assignment(s)

The lecture and readings this week take us from early gay rights organizations that stressed assimilation and cooperation to, in just 15 years, outright rebellion and protest. The curve in terms of response to repression was very short and the two responses were opposite.

1. How does "Howl" represent the changing response to repression from the 1950s to the present? What connections can you make between the ideas and themes in "Howl" and today's protests?
2. Why was the novel, **The Price of Salt** so important both today and in the past? How has representation of GLBT changed in the last 50 years in literature, media and film?

Discussion Requirements:

- Three posts minimum.
- The initial forum response is due by Thursday at 11:55 p.m. EST and must be 250+ words in length.
- For peer replies, respond to at least two of your classmates by Sunday at 11:55 p.m. EST and they must be 100+ words in length.

Week 6: Literature of Loss: AIDS and ACT UP (1980-Present).

Learning Objectives:

1. Analyze how AIDS changed activism.
2. Describe literature in the era of AIDS
3. Analyze the modern day mainstreaming of queer lives, Pride Capitalism, and Straightwashing.

Reading(s)

1. ACT UP Oral History Project. <http://www.actuporalhistory.org/interviews/index.html>
2. Act Up Today: <https://actupny.com/>
3. Larry Kramer: 1,112 and Counting
http://bilerico.lgbtqnation.com/2011/06/larry_kramers_historic_essay_aids_at_30.php
4. Interview with Larry Kramer.
<https://www.interviewmagazine.com/culture/larrykramer-ellen-barkinamericanpeople-volume-two>
5. Sarah Schulman Explains How *Rent* Straightwashed Queer Lives and AIDS Activism <https://www.them.us/story/sarah-schulman-rent>
6. RENT. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhG3JTchKDA>
7. Randy Shilts And the Band Played On. (1987). <https://openlibrary.org/> Sign up (free) and search Randy Shilts. Click on "Borrow for 1 hour." NOTE: This reading is only available through openlibrary.org. Students can access it (borrow) for one hour.

Assignment(s)

Discussion: AIDs and AIDs activism led to the creation of novels, plays, and autobiographies. Select one or more of this week's readings (or one other reading of your choice) and discuss the political and social legacy of AIDs literature.

1. How did it impact our reaction to AIDS, AIDS patients, and the gay community, for example? This is an open-ended question and students have the freedom to explore the literature and this question from multiple angles.
2. Do you agree with Shilts' thesis that the US government only made the AIDs epidemic worse?

Discussion Requirements:

- Three posts minimum.
- The initial forum response is due by Thursday at 11:55 p.m. EST and must be 250+ words in length.
- For peer replies, respond to at least two of your classmates by Sunday at 11:55 p.m. EST and they must be 100+ words in length.

Journal 3: Compare and Contrast Rent and The Band Played On. 2-3 page response. This is a very broad question. You can take any angle you want on this question. The main goal is to analyze/examine the two works in relation to each other in some way. For example, the response could compare and contrast themes, characters, main ideas, etc. In addition, consider Sarah Schulman's criticism of Rent and AIDS activism as you compare and contrast the two texts.

Week 7: 21st Century: Narrative, social media and social change. Learning Objectives:

1. Analyze the role of social media in the development of both literature and civil rights in the 21st century.

Reading(s)

1. Survivor Stories. (videos). <https://metoomvmt.org/>

2. #Metoo A Timeline of Events.
<https://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/ctmetootimeline-20171208-htmlstory.html>
3. [Excerpts from the Twitter #metoo feed. You may have to set up a Twitter account to read these entries.](#)
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATYK2svJ6eM> The Economist.

Assignment(s)

Discussion Forum 7: Respond to the following question. Include examples and support for your position.

What is the impact of social media both on literature and civil rights? Consider this question in terms of the narrative. In week 1 we discussed the role of the slave narrative in relation to Abolition and Emancipation. What role does narrative play today online and in terms of activism and civil rights?

Do we need to redefine literature today? Why or why not?

Discussion Requirements: .

Three posts minimum.

- The initial forum response is due by Thursday at 11:55 p.m. EST and must be 250+ words in length.
- For peer replies, respond to at least two of your classmates by Sunday at 11:55 p.m. EST and they must be 100+ words in length.

Course Project: Part I

We have covered almost 150 years of American literature and American Civil Rights. For this project you have the freedom to explore any writer or time period/movement. I encourage you to revisit your journals for ideas. The topic must be focused with a specific thesis. No more than 20% of the essay should be quotes and paraphrasing. The focus must be on your own ideas, analysis, reactions to the writer or literature.

Include the following:

1. **Topic** (a specific statement. Eg. I plan to write an analysis of the impact of And the Band Played on and the American government's response to the AIDS crisis

or “I want to explore how Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle continues to impact worker and animal rights in America today.”

2. **Thesis:** Write a 1-2 sentence statement of the main point of idea of your project.
3. Write a short outline of the major points you will cover (how you will support your thesis).
4. Identify two scholarly sources (cite in MLA format).

Week 8: Disability Studies

Learning Objectives:

1. Explore the history of the portrayal of disability in literature.
2. Describe the connections between literary portrayals and real-life situations.
3. Analyze and describe the varied experiences of the disabled community.

Reading(s)

- [Andrea Long Chu, “My New Vagina Won’t Make me Happy.”](#)
- [Nancy Mairs, “On Being a Cripple.”](#)
- [Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle](#)
- [Ecofiction](#)
- [The White Heron by Sarah Horne Jewett](#)
- [Excerpt from Silent Spring by Rachel Carson](#)

Optional:

1. Critical Disability Studies:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/writing_in_literature/literary_theory_and_schools_of_criticism/critical_disability_studies.html
2. Jen Robinson. “Invisible Illnesses, Visible Stereotypes,” in “Sick Chicks and Twisted Sisters: Empowering Disabled Women on the Web,” Fall 2000; originally at: <http://sickchicks.homestead.com/invisibleillness.html>[5 pp]

3. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson: "The Politics of Staring."
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/2f28/d35c4b0a8aa89701311ff9b8b58139359148.pdf>

Assignment(s)

Discussion Forum 8A: Describe your course project. Include your topic and thesis for peer review and write a short overview of your plans for your project and why you picked this topic.

Discussion Forum 8B:

1. Describe some of the major themes of both disability literature and the disability rights movement.
2. Do you agree with Lennard Davis' argument that Disability Studies begins with the claim that the "problem" of disability is not persons with disabilities, but the "way that normalcy is constructed to create the 'problem' of the disabled person." Why or why not? Explain.

Discussion Requirements:

- Three posts minimum.
- The initial forum response is due by Thursday at 11:55 p.m. EST and must be 250+ words in length.
- For peer replies, respond to at least two of your classmates by Sunday at 11:55 p.m. EST and they must be 100+ words in length.

Final Course Project: We have covered almost 150 years of American literature and American Civil Rights. For this project you have the freedom to explore any writer or time period/movement. I encourage you to revisit your journals for ideas.

- The topic must be focused with a specific thesis.
- No more than 20% of the essay should be quotes and paraphrasing.
- The focus must be on your own ideas, analysis, reactions to the writer or literature.
- 6-8 double spaced page

- Cite all sources in MLA Format. A works cited page and corresponding in-text citations are required.
- A minimum of **three scholarly sources** from the APUS library.
- Well written and proofread.

Please see the [Student Handbook](#) to reference the University's [grading scale](#).

Based on a point system, your final grade will be calculated as follows (% of final grade on the right):

Grade Instruments	Points	Percent of Final
Week 2 Journal 1	25	10
Week 4 Journal 2	25	10
Week 6 Journal 3	25	10
Week 7 Course Project Part 1	50	10
Week 8 Final Course Project	100	30
Welcome Discussion Forum	100	3.3
Forum Posts Week 1	100	3.3
Forum Posts Week 2	100	3.3
Forum Posts Week 3	100	3.3
Forum Posts Week 4	100	3.3
Forum Posts Week 5	100	3.3
Forum Posts Week 6	100	3.3
Forum Posts Week 7	100	3.3
Forum Posts Week 8	100	3.3
Total	1125	100%

Writing Assignments:

All writing assignments must be submitted in MS Word (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf). Use only Times New Roman 12-point font.

Citation and Reference Style

Students will follow MLA style for the assignment.

Late Assignments

Students are expected to submit classroom assignments by the posted due date and to complete the course according to the published class schedule. Should you need additional time to complete an assignment, please contact me before the due date so we can discuss the situation and determine an acceptable resolution.

Work posted or submitted after the assignment due date will be reduced by 10% of the potential total score possible for each day late up to a total of five days, including forum posts/replies, quizzes, and assignments. Beginning on the sixth day late through the end of the course, late work, including forum posts/replies, quizzes, and assignments, will be accepted with a grade reduction of 50% of the potential total score earned.

Netiquette

Online universities promote the advancement of knowledge through positive and constructive debate – both inside and outside the classroom. Forums on the Internet, however, can occasionally degenerate into needless insults and “flaming.” Such activity and the loss of good manners are not acceptable in a university setting – basic academic rules of good behavior and proper “Netiquette” must persist. Remember that you are in a place for the rewards and excitement of learning which does not include descent to personal attacks or student attempts to stifle the Forum of others.

- **Humor Note:** Despite the best of intentions, jokes and especially satire can easily get lost or taken seriously. If you feel the need for humor, you may wish to add “emoticons” to help alert your readers: ;-), :), ☺

Academic Services

The Online Library is available to enrolled students and faculty from inside the electronic campus. This is your starting point for access to online books, subscription periodicals, and Web resources that are designed to support your classes and generally not available through search engines on the open Web. In addition, the Online Library provides access to special learning resources, which the University has contracted to assist with your studies. Questions can be directed to librarian@apus.edu.

- ***Charles Town Library and Inter Library Loan:*** The University maintains a special library with a limited number of supporting volumes, collection of our professors' publication, and services to search and borrow research books and articles from other libraries.
- ***Electronic Books:*** You can use the online library to uncover and download over 50,000 titles, which have been scanned and made available in electronic format.
- ***Electronic Journals:*** The University provides access to over 12,000 journals, which are available in electronic form and only through limited subscription services.
- ***Tutor.com:*** AMU and APU Civilian & Coast Guard students are eligible for 10 free hours of tutoring provided by APUS. Tutor.com connects you with a professional tutor online 24/7 to provide help with assignments, studying, test prep, resume writing, and more. Tutor.com is tutoring the way it was meant to be. You get expert tutoring whenever you need help, and you work one-to-one with your tutor in your online classroom on your specific problem until it is done.