

SOUTHERN LITERATURE

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303 New Africa House
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Tu-Th 9:30-10:45

Texts Available at Food For Thought:

Poetry, Tales, and Selected Essays, Edgar Allan Poe, Patrick F. Quinn, G. R.
Thompson Paperback | Library of America 9781883011383

William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* Vintage 978-0-679-73225-9 (0-679-73225-X)

William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* 978-0-679-73224-2 (0-679-73224-1)

Toni Morrison, *Beloved* 978-1-4000-3341-6 (1-4000-3341-1)

Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark* 978-0-679-74542-6 (0-679-74542-4)

Syllabus

September 8: Introductions; Video: *An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe*

10 Southern Literature; Gothicism; **POE:** "The Fall of the House of Usher" (plus Rathbone, Parsons [Orson Welles] recordings)

15 "The Fall of the House of Usher" (plus Koshkin [John Williams] recording; Video: *The Fall of the House of Usher*)

17 "Ligeia" (plus Price recording)

22 "William Wilson"

24 "The Masque of the Red Death" (plus Rathbone recording)

29 "Tell-Tale Heart" (plus Rathbone, Parsons [Arthur Brown] recordings)

October 1 "Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" (plus Rathbone recording)

6 "Sonnet--To Science," "Alone," "To Helen" (plus Rathbone recording), "Romance"

8 "The Raven," (plus Rathbone recording), "The Philosophy of Composition," "Annabel Lee"

13 Monday Class schedule

15 *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*

20 *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* ***Group Presentation

22 *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*

27 **Faulkner:** *As I Lay Dying* (plus Faulkner readings)

29 *As I Lay Dying* (plus Faulkner readings) ****Group Presentation**

Nov. 3 *As I Lay Dying* (plus Faulkner readings)

5 *The Sound and the Fury*

10 *The Sound and the Fury* ****Group Presentation**

12 *The Sound and the Fury*

17 **** Project Presentations**

19 *Beloved* (movie excerpt; Morrison video)

24 **Morrison:** *Beloved* (Morrison reading) ****Group Presentation**

Dec. 1 *Beloved* (Morrison reading) ****Paper Due**

3 *Beloved* (Morrison reading)

8 *Playing in the Dark*

10 *Playing in the Dark*

Requirements:

Project Due November 17th—1/4

Paper Due December 1st—1/4

Group Presentations--1/4

Daily Class Participation—1/4

SOUTHERN LITERATURE

Study / Discussion Questions for Poe

Stories: As we discuss Poe's works, we will be attempting to discern a literary aesthetic as it emerges from his practice. We will attempt to link his stories together in terms of subject matter, tone, and technique. Think about the possibilities of meanings that Poe suggests, and how he suggests them. Attend to the richness of Poe's language, his use of sound effects such as euphony, cacophony, onomatopoeia, and alliteration, his levels of language, and his sometimes deadpan, almost clinical humor. Finally, consider his use of elements of the gothic and romance traditions and how he infuses them with American concerns--and southern concerns--that point the way for future writers in those genres.

"The Fall of the House of Usher":

- 1) What is the pun in the title?
- 2) How does the first sentence set up the tone and ending of the story?
- 3) What are the connections among the three principal characters? How do they enter / appear in the story in relation to each other?
- 4) What characteristics does the house have that reflect something about the inhabitants?
- 5) What might the tarn symbolize?
- 6) How does the story of Ethelred relate to this story?
- 7) Why does the story end as it does?

"Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar":

- 1) Why do the title and paragraph 2 emphasize "facts"?
- 2) What does the name Valdemar mean?
- 3) Why does the narrator dwell on the appearance of Valdemar in paragraph 4?
- 4) In the third to last paragraph, the narrator talks about an effort to "recompose the patient." Discuss the use of "recompose" here.
- 5) With what body part does Valdemar make sound in the final paragraph, what are the characteristics of Valdemar's distinctive demise, and why?

"The Masque of the Red Death":

- 1) Discuss the title homophone, and look up the history of the Black Death.
- 2) Discuss the colors of the rooms, and any sense of symbolism or order you might have.
- 3) What might the "gigantic clock of ebony" symbolize?
- 4) How does the phrase "out-Heroded Herod" resonate in the text?
- 5) Discuss the use of the name Prince Prospero--an allusion?
- 6) What associations are suggested by the notion that the Red Death had come "like a thief in the night"?

"The Tell-Tale Heart":

- 1) How do the opening words of the narrator set the tone of the story?
- 2) Why is the old man's "Evil Eye" so important, so vexing?
- 3) What do the words "My manner had convinced them" have to do with Poe's artistic aesthetic?
- 4) Why does the narrator call the police villains?
- 5) Agree or disagree: "Madmen know nothing."

SOUTHERN LITERATURE
Study / Discussion Questions for Poe

"Ligeia":

- 1) "Ligeia" is an evocative name. What does it suggest?
- 2) What effect does the notion that the narrator does not know the paternal name of his wife have on us?
- 3) Ligeia's eyes are so prominent, so compelling. Why?
- 4) What does the poem about the conqueror worm have to do with her character / the story?
- 5) What does the Lady Rowena have in common with Ligeia? How?

"William Wilson":

- 1) Discuss the distinct phrasing of the opening sentence, and how it sets up the story.
- 2) Who is Elah-Gabalus?
- 3) Discuss what the narrator calls the "gigantic paradox, too utterly monstrous for solution."
- 4) Discuss the narrator's statement "Yet in fact--in the fact of the world's view--how little there was to remember."
- 5) Discuss the language of the following sentence: "I had always felt aversion to my uncourtly patronymic, and its very common, if not plebeian praenomen." Why is this thought stated as it is?
- 6) We have seen "out-Herod Herod" before. Compare its use in this story.

Poems: For all of the poems, you should determine what the metrical patterns and rhyme schemes are, and what poetic devices are employed, and why. We will read "The Philosophy of Composition" with a skeptical eye, but will examine Poe's poetry with the stated philosophy in mind.

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You have one paper and one project to do, plus a group presentation and daily class participation. This is not many assignments to do, so I expect what you do to exhibit signs of a great deal of work and effort. Don't try to do things at the last minute—start working on your assignments now, and show me drafts of what you are doing so your final product is exemplary.

--Paper Requirements

DUE BY December 1st

Write a clear, concise, specific, mechanically and grammatically impeccable essay that adheres to the MLA Handbook style in layout, note, and Works Cited form. Your arguments, style, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and any other element of your paper affecting the effective communication of your ideas will be evaluated in order to arrive at your grade on the paper.

Length: 1200-1500 words, typed, double spaced.

Subject: Write a specific analysis, not merely a summary or paraphrase, of a work by one of the authors we read for class this semester that we did not discuss in class this semester. Make sure that you provide a specific thesis that states the theme of the work and lays out how your focus contributes to making the work mean what it means. You are welcome to show a thesis or draft(s) of your work to the professor for specific commentary, provided you allow the professor one week's time to return it. **Students caught plagiarizing will receive an F for the course.**

Your essay will be rated according to the following criteria:

1. How directly, fully, and accurately you follow the directions;
2. How effectively your writing conveys your ideas stylistically;
3. How well you proofread and eliminate errors in punctuation, spelling, grammar, fragments/comma splices/fused sentences, and any other elements that interfere with the effective communication of your ideas;
4. Typing your work, and stapling or paper-clipping your work together;
5. Turning in your paper on time and providing a word count on your last page.

Certainly you are welcome to discuss your conception and work with me as you go along. As one of two major assignments, it is important for you to do well on this.

Late penalty for all projects/papers is one letter grade per day, weekend days included.

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--Project Options

DUE BY November 17th

- 1) Write and perform a musical piece dealing with the focus of this course, and discuss its form and content in relation to the tradition.
- 2) Create a collage, sculpture, mobile, or other piece of visual art that depicts the energy, intellect, and spirit, of an author or work by an author discussed in this course.
- 3) Give a meaningfully-delivered memorized recitation of an approved length (c. 30 lines of poetry or prose, depending on the line length) of some work or works of a writer on whom we have focused in this course. You must provide a copy of the work recited.
- 4) Analyze an art work that deals with the work of one of the writers discussed this semester--a Dore illustration of a work by Poe, the cover art of a Faulkner novel, or a reading of a Morrison piece, for example. You must supply a copy of the art visible to or hearable by the class.
- 5) Generate your own project, making sure that you gain approval from the instructor at an early stage before you do too much work.

All performances must be submitted on properly functioning VHS or DVD video or cassette audio tape or CD. Please retain a copy of all submitted material in case another copy is required. In addition, all projects must be accompanied by a written discussion of your project of at least 300 words that lays out concretely what you have done and why you have done it the way you have. In other words, you must explain how your subject matter and style work together to create a logical, coherent, and satisfying whole.

Certainly you are welcome to discuss your conception and work with me as you go along. As one of two major assignments, it is important for you to do well on this.

I have set aside a day for you to present your project in class if you so desire.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is mandatory. If you miss more than 4 classes, you must drop the class or receive an F. A signed note from your doctor on the doctor's stationery is necessary for an excused illness. Other unavoidable absences will require signed official verification as well. These four absences are not free days. The only way you will not be penalized for exceeding the limit is if you have legitimate formal excuses for ALL absences.

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--Class participation

Participation is an important element of this course. It is your opportunity to hear and be heard with regard to the subject matter we cover this semester. It should reflect your thoughtful preparation for this class, evidencing not only that you have read the material but that you have wrestled with it, contextualized it, generated an articulate expression of it, and left your mind open for an adjustment of your ideas as you listen to what others have to say. In order to get credit for class participation, you must do one or more of the following:

- 1) Answer questions posed by the instructor
- 2) Answer questions posed by other students
- 3) Provide intelligent insights on your own concerning the material under discussion
- 4) Generate intelligent questions that reveal that you have made an attempt to figure out the answer to the question you ask--that is, the questions are framed in such a way as to indicate some thought, contexts, possible answers, paradoxes or dilemmas, etc.
- 5) Relate the classroom discussion to contemporary social or political issues. Literature should have something to do with our lives, not merely be an historical artifact. I invite you to see your world in it, and to share it.

In order to get an A in class participation, you must participate well in 50% of discussion classes

a B	40%
a C	30%
a D	20%
an F	less than 20%

Please remember that 1) you must raise your hand and be recognized to participate
2) your participation should not be disruptive
3) your participation should be respectful of others' beliefs
4) 4) you may not always be called on first even if your hand gets up first, especially if you have already participated that day. The goal is to give everyone a chance to participate. Let me know immediately if I am missing you.

You may check with me at any time to find out how well you are doing in class participation

I hope that this will be a friendly, open classroom with free discussion of many important ideas. I will do my best to see to it that it is. So should you. If you have not participated frequently in classroom discussions in the past, this is a great time to start. If you do not participate in 20% or more of our classes, you will receive an F as 1/4 of your final grade. You don't want that, and I don't want you to have it either. If you want some help in this area, just come and see me.

Group Presentations

You will be assigned to a group of 5 or 6 students near the beginning of the semester, and given a presentation day for your group. Each group will be assigned a topic, question, or critical essay to present to the class. Everyone in the group must participate verbally during the presentation period, and the entire group will receive the same grade. Work on making your presentation as insightful and informative as possible, and don't hesitate to use multidisciplinary materials in your presentation to make it as interesting and engaging as possible. You should try to involve as many people outside your group in the discussion as well.

Your presentation should last 15 -20 minutes