

English 375-01: U.S. Literature After 1945
Spring 2019: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30-1:45
Hibbs Hall 428
Professor Bryant Mangum
Office: 307 Anderson House, 913 W. Franklin St.

I. Texts: The books listed below will be available through Virginia Book Company, 900 W. Franklin.

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| Carver, Raymond | <i>What We Talk About When We Talk About Love</i> (1981) |
| Gaines, Ernest | <i>A Gathering of Old Men</i> (1983) |
| Lahiri, Jhumpa | <i>Interpreter of Maladies</i> (1999) |
| Powers, Kevin | <i>The Yellow Birds</i> (2012) |
| Reynolds, Sheri | <i>The Rapture of Canaan</i> (1995) |
| Salinger, J.D. | <i>Nine Stories</i> (1953) |
| Vonnegut, Kurt | <i>Cat's Cradle</i> (1963) |

Short Selections: uploaded under Course Documents on Blackboard
Pirsig, Robert from *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1974)
Packer, ZZ "Drinking Coffee Elsewhere" (2003)

II. Written Assignments: There will be (a) three hour tests (two of which will have close reading and essay sections), the last one of which will be taken on the day of the final examination (and which will have only close reading, short answer sections) (b) a final take-home essay examination due the day scheduled for the final exam (c) blackboard postings (d) occasional in-class reaction papers and class participation, and (e) an optional paper (3-5 pages long, typed) if you choose option 2 below. The written assignments will be weighted in this way:

Option 1:

Hour Test #1 (objective and essay): 20%
Hour Test #2 (objective and essay): 20%
Hour Test #3 (objective only; day scheduled for final exam): 20%
Blackboard postings: 10%
Reactions papers, class participation, attendance: 5%
Final Essay Examination 25%

Option 2:

Hour Test #1 (objective and essay): 15%
Hour Test #2 (objective and essay): 15%
Hour Test #3 (objective only; day scheduled for final exam): 20%
Blackboard Postings: 10%
Reaction papers, class participation, attendance: 5%
Optional Essay (due last week of class): 10%
Final Essay Examination 25%

Note: Much of our class will consist of discussion of the works we are reading. You are encouraged to contribute to class discussions and your participation will be figured into your final grade, particularly in borderline cases. Because participation is such an important component of the course, you are allowed to miss a maximum of four classes to receive credit for the course. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class, and from the beginning of week two, if you come into class late it will count as an absence. **If you miss more than four classes for any reason (other than one of dire emergency such as serious illness or death in your immediate family) you will receive a grade of F in the course.** The final day to withdraw without penalty is Friday, March 22nd. Over the course of the semester I will post approximately twenty questions on the discussion board of Blackboard. Five substantial postings (100 words or more) in response to these are considered the minimum. For a detailed explanation of the way that Blackboard postings will be computed into your class participation grade, check on Blackboard under both the Course Documents and Assignments tab.

III. Objectives:

A. Abstracting Concerns of the Works: The description of Contemporary American Literature reads this, in part: "J.D. Salinger's Seymour Glass tells a story about bananafish, which have swum into a hole and, after filling up on bananas, are unable to swim back out again. They die. What T.S. Eliot's wasteland was to post-World War I writers, Salinger's bananafish hole is to contemporary American authors. The hole comes in various disguises...."

To examine closely some of the disguises or metaphors, then, will be our first goal. But we will be particularly interested in observing the ways in which forces beneath the disguises have determined the shape of the "quest myth" and the state of the family—decade after decade, war after war—in America from the end of World War II (1945) to the present.

B. Close Reading: The foundation of the first goal is close, careful reading of the text, which will lead us to analysis of such things as character, conflict, and theme.

C. Synthesis: You will synthesize your reading, class notes, and class discussion of a work and combine the synthesis with reading, etc. of other works in order to make sound

IV. Below is the grading scale for the class:

90-100 A
80-90 B
70-80 C
60-70 D
0-59 F

(Numerical grades will be assigned only on the short answer tests. The other assignments will be assigned letter grades that will be averaged in numerically in this way: A=95; A-=92; B+=88; B=85; B-=82; C+=78; C=75; C-=72; D+=68; D=65; D-=62; F+=58; F=57 and below.)

VI. VCU Honor System: "Virginia Commonwealth University recognizes that honesty, truth, and integrity are values central to its mission as in institution of higher education." This class will be conducted in strict adherence to VCU's Honor system policies, which can be found in the *VCU Resource Guide*.

VII. Students with Disabilities: "Virginia Commonwealth University is committed to providing students with disabilities equal opportunities to benefit from all programs, services and activities offered." Students with disabilities should identify to the instructor at the beginning of the course the services that they will need. For further information on this policy, refer to *VCU Resource Guide*.

VIII. Miscellaneous: My office is 307 Anderson House (913 W. Franklin). The telephone number is 828-1255. I will post office hours on my door (or you will find a link to them on my web page), but if you need to see me at times other than those posted please feel free to set up a time during which we can meet. There is a voice mail on my telephone, and if you leave word on it, I will call you back within an hour or so. My e-mail address is bmangum@vcu.edu.

IX. Daily Assignment Sheet to Follow: