

Dr. Greg McNamara
Clayton State University
Department of English
Web: <http://a-s.clayton.edu/gmcnamar>
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Office: Arts and Sciences 105-J
Phone/Voice Mail: 678-466-4557
E-mail: gregorymcnamara@clayton.edu
Office Hours: TBA

ENGL 5000—Great Books
CRN 87799, Section 01—T 6:30-9:15 PM

Course Content: The title of this course is perhaps somewhat misleading, or at least it is from my perspective. What constitutes a “great book” is to a certain degree subjective, and of course this has been a matter of significant debate throughout the course of human history. I have in this particular instance chosen books which I feel are indeed masterpieces and which I think are for the most part humane and beautiful—they are all twentieth-century American literature with one exception published four years before the turn of the century, and they are mostly novels. This is certainly not because I am convinced that all great books can be located in one era, national origin, or genre. We will frequently discuss issues of greatness and bookness, aesthetics, literary history, and so forth in this course, but perhaps more importantly, we will together read several very significant works of literature for the sake of enjoyment and personal edification.

Outcomes:

- Students will survey a body of culturally and critically significant works of literature, or “great books.”
- Students will develop advanced reading skills and heightened awareness of literary history.
- Students will take significant responsibility for classroom discussion, occasionally leading the group, thus developing advanced organization and presentation skills and applying diverse pedagogical approaches.
- Students will undertake significant activities in writing about literature designed to enhance critical thinking skills and mastery of the writing process.

Required Texts*:

James Baldwin, *Going to Meet the Man*
John Barth, *The Floating Opera*
Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*
T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*
F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*
Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*
Sarah Orne Jewett, *The Country of the Pointed Firs*
Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*
Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*
Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge*

*All students are expected to have the required texts from the start of the semester and to bring the appropriate books to each class meeting.

Attendance and Requirements: I expect everyone to be present and on time for each class meeting. Absences which result in missing presentation and discussion obligations will affect marks in those areas.

Student Conduct: As a Clayton State University student and as a student in this class, it is your responsibility to read, understand, and abide by the Student Code of Conduct, outlined in the Clayton State University Catalog as “Basic Undergraduate Student Responsibilities” at <http://a-s.clayton.edu/BasicUndergraduateStudentResponsibilities.htm>.

Communication: For your convenience, I have noted my e-mail address and campus telephone number in the heading of this syllabus. If you need to e-mail me for any reason, please use your Clayton State University e-mail account and put your name in the subject line. Please know the limits of e-mail and voice mail: find me at my office hours or schedule an appointment if you need extensive help or want to have a conference; further, please do not e-mail me about grades—see me in person.

Office Hours: I offer regular office hours on campus for your convenience, and I encourage you to consult me during those hours if you are in need of assistance in the course or want to have a conference about a specific, course-related issue or discuss your grade.

Special Needs: If you have a documented disability or special needs and require any assistance, please do not hesitate to speak with me as soon as possible. All information will be kept confidential. Students who suspect they have a disability that has not been documented or sufficiently accommodated for should contact the Disability Services Coordinator, Student Center 214, 678-466-5445, disabilityservices@clayton.edu.

Personal Problems: Please remember that your professors are primarily responsible for helping you master specific subject matter within certain legal, professional, and ethical guidelines. If you are experiencing personal problems—including intellectual or social frustrations and/or attitude problems—and need help, there is a counseling service available on campus in addition to various offices addressing health and public safety. These services are for your benefit and are freely available to you and confidential. Counseling Services is located in 245 Student Center and can be reached by phone at 678-466-5406.

Academic Dishonesty: In accordance with University policy, academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. All students are expected to understand and avoid plagiarism. Briefly stated, plagiarism involves copying another person's words or ideas without citing the source through appropriate documentation. Cheating includes such practices as having your eyes on someone else's exam paper, intentionally deceptive behavior related to quizzes or any other assignment, or other forms of socially and ethically incorrect and/or parasitic academic performance. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will fail the course and risk further disciplinary consequences at the University level. Please see the Student Code of Conduct for further information: <http://adminsivices.clayton.edu/judicial/>. If you do not understand an assignment or feel incapable of adequate performance on an assignment or examination, seek legitimate academic support through me or through the Center for Academic Success.

Graded Work:

Take-Home Examinations (2)	80%
Discussion Leadership	10%
General Participation	10%

Examinations: Your grade will be largely determined by your performance on two take-home examinations which will be distributed approximately one week in advance of their due dates. The examinations will encourage you to consider issues and themes addressed in the reading and also to consider the matter of what constitutes greatness in the books we are reading. Examinations are to be typed, double spaced, presented in accordance with MLA style, well-written, and original.

Discussion Leadership: On two occasions during the course of the semester I will expect individual class members to begin the evening's discussion and maintain the flow of the meeting for approximately forty-five minutes. How you structure this time is up to you, but I expect attention to content, organization, and style: there should be some substance, method, and preparation apparent in your presentation and leadership. We'll decide on the order of leadership responsibilities at our first meeting, but I think alphabetical order is as good a method as any. On some evenings we may have two presenters.

Participation and Preparation: In a graduate-level course, I expect students to exhibit pronounced intellectual curiosity, autonomy, and responsibility. Naturally, I expect that everyone will be thoroughly prepared for each session and demonstrate that preparedness regularly and with relaxed professionalism.

Late Work: Generally speaking, I do not accept late work. If your situation is exceptional, persuade me in advance, not on the day the work is due. In the rare cases that I do accept late work, I reserve the right to drop a letter grade for each day the work is late.

Midterm Grades: Midterm grades will be posted for all students before the midterm date noted on the University Calendar.

Disclaimer: There may be minor revisions to this syllabus over the course of the semester. Any changes will be announced in class and given with reasonable notice.

Schedule of Assignments

- August 18 Introduction to the Course. General Discussion.
- 25 Read Jewett, *The Country of the Pointed Firs* and “A White Heron.”
- September 1 Read Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*.
- 8 Faculty furloughed—class will not meet. Read Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*, Chapters 1-10.
- 15 Finish reading *The Sun Also Rises*.
- 22 Read Eliot, *Four Quartets*.
- 29 Read Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. **First Examination Distributed.**
- October 6 Read Barth, *The Floating Opera*, Chapters 1-11. **First Examination Due.**
- 13 Finish reading *The Floating Opera*.
- 20 Read Plath, *The Bell Jar*.
- 27 Read Baldwin, *Going to Meet the Man*, first four stories.
- November 3 Finish reading *Going to Meet the Man*.
- 10 Read Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Chapters 1-8.
- 17 Finish reading *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*.
- 24 Read Williams, *Refuge*, through “Long-Billed Curlews.”
- December 1 Finish reading *Refuge*. **Second Examination Distributed.**
- December 7-12—Finals Week. **Second Examination Due** (we’ll decide on a date).