

**English 743:  
Studies in Later American Literature  
“American Literary Realism”**

**Course Description:** 1885 has been considered the *annus mirabilis* of American literary realism: in that year, the *Century Magazine* published excerpts of Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* while serializing both William Dean Howells’s *Rise of Silas Lapham* and Henry James’s *Bostonians*. This seminar will focus on the era surrounding this literary landmark in order to investigate how realism, once emerging onto the scene, so quickly became a standard mode of American prose fiction. What characteristics distinguished a realist work from a non-realist one? How do local-color fiction and literary naturalism fit into the equation? We will attempt to address these questions by reading classic texts from the last three decades of the nineteenth century.

**Course Objectives:** The main objectives of this class are 1) to investigate the characteristics, historical and ongoing, of American literary realism; 2) to track chains of intellectual and artistic influence in order to get a “feel” for America’s literary history in the period between 1865 and 1900; 3) to consider which texts from this period are most relevant to our contemporary social, intellectual, and historical moment; and 4) to develop a mature literary research methodology.

**Required Texts:**

Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, introd. John Seelye (Penguin, 2002)  
William Dean Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, introd. Kermit Vanderbilt (Penguin, 1983)  
Henry James, *The Bostonians* (Penguin, 2001)  
George Washington Cable, *The Grandissimes*, introd. Michael Kreyling (Penguin, 1988)  
Sarah Orne Jewett, *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (Penguin, 1996)  
Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*, introd. Cynthia Griffin Wolff (Penguin, 1993)  
Frank Norris, *McTeague*, introd. Kevin Starr (Penguin, 1994)  
Jack London, *The Call of the Wild*, introd. E. L. Doctorow (Library of America, 2009)  
Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (Dover Thrift Edition)  
John Updike, *Rabbit, Run* (Random House, 1996)

Various critical essays are all available under “Course Reserves” on WebCampus.

**Requirements and Grading:** Regular Participation (20%); Weekly Response Papers (20%); Annotated Bibliography (20%); Final Research Essay (40%).

**SCHEDULE:**

**Week 1**

**Required Reading:** Edward Eggleston, “The Gunpowder Plot” (1871)

**Optional Reading:** John W. De Forest, “The Great American Novel” (1868); Edward Eggleston, “Preface to the Library Edition of *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*” (1892)

**Week 2**

**Required Reading:** Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885)

### Week 3

**Required Reading:** William Dean Howells, “Mark Twain” (1882); Lionel Trilling, “Introduction to *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*” (1948); T. S. Eliot, “Introduction to *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*” (1950)

**Optional Reading:** Jonathan Arac, “Nationalism, Hypercanonization, and *Huckleberry Finn*” (1994)

### Week 4

**Required Reading:** William Dean Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885)

### Week 5

**Required Reading:** William Dean Howells, Selections from *Criticism and Fiction* (1891) and “Novel-Writing and Novel-Reading (1899); Mark Twain, “William Dean Howells” (1906)

**Optional Reading:** Sinclair Lewis, “Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech” (1930); John Updike, “Howells as Anti-Novelist” (1987); Stacey Margolis, “Trollope for Americanists” (2013)

### Week 6

**Required Reading:** Henry James, *The Bostonians* (1885)

### Week 7

**Required Reading:** Henry James, “Anthony Trollope” (1883) and “The Art of Fiction” (1884); William Dean Howells, “Henry James, Jr.” (1882)

**Optional Reading:** F. R. Leavis, “Henry James: To *The Portrait of a Lady*” (1950)

### Week 8

**Required Reading:** George Washington Cable, *The Grandissimes* (1880)

**Optional Reading:** Richard Chase, “Cable’s *Grandissimes*” (1957); Gavin Jones, “George Washington Cable and the Creole Language of Louisiana” (1999); Brian Hochman, “Hearing Lost, Hearing Found: George Washington Cable and the Phono-Ethnographic Ear” (2010)

### Week 9

**Required Reading:** Sarah Orne Jewett, *The Country of the Pointed Firs* (1896)

**Optional Reading:** Heather Love, “Gyn/Apology: Sarah Orne Jewett’s Spinster Aesthetics” (2009)

### Week 10

**Required Reading:** Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth* (1905)

**Optional Reading:** Jonathan Franzen, “A Rooting Interest: Edith Wharton and the Problem of Sympathy” (2012);  
<http://www.amazon.com/gp/feature.html?ie=UTF8&docId=1000074801>

### Week 11

**Required Reading:** Frank Norris, *McTeague* (1899) and “A Plea for Romantic Fiction” (1901)

**Optional Reading:** Walter Benn Michaels, “The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism” (1985); Jennifer Fleissner, “Saving Herself: Gender, Preservation, and Futurity in *McTeague*” (2004)

**Annotated Bibliography Due**

### Week 12

**Required Reading:** Jack London, *The Call of the Wild* (1903) and “The Terrible and Tragic in Fiction” (1903)

**Optional Reading:** Fred Lewis Pattee, “The Prophet of the Last Frontier” (1922); Donald Pizer, “Jack London: The Problem of Form,” *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 16 (1983): 107-115

### Week 13

**Required Reading:** Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie* (1900)

**Paper Draft Due**

### Week 14

**Required Reading:** Theodore Dreiser, “True Art Speaks Plainly” (1903); Lionel Trilling, “Dreiser and the Liberal Mind” (1946)

**Optional Reading:** Alan Trachtenberg, “Who Narrates? Dreiser’s Presence in *Sister Carrie*” (1991); Donald Pizer, “‘True Art Speaks Plainly’: Theodore Dreiser and the Late Nineteenth-Century Debate over Realism and Naturalism” (1996)

### Week 15

**Required Reading:** John Updike, *Rabbit, Run* (1960)

**Academic Misconduct** – Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV’s function as an educational institution.

An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <http://studentconduct.unlv.edu/misconduct/policy.html>.

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If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

**Religious Holidays Policy** – Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor no later than the end of the first instructor within the first 14 calendar days of the course for fall and spring courses (excepting modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for summer and modular courses, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531>.

**Incomplete Grades** - The grade of I – Incomplete – can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student's control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. The incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester for undergraduate courses. Graduate students receiving "I" grades in 500-, 600-, or 700-level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

**Tutoring and Coaching** –The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring, academic success coaching and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, visit <http://www.unlv.edu/asc> or call 702-895- 3177. The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of the SSC (ASC Coaching Spot). Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library and College of Engineering TEB second floor.

**UNLV Writing Center** – One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702-895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>

**Rebelmail** – By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always [@unlv.nevada.edu](mailto:@unlv.nevada.edu). **Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.**

**Final Examinations** – The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur at the time and on the day specified in the final exam schedule. See the schedule at: <http://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars>.