

American and Canadian Literature - WWII to Present

Instructor: Pavla Veselá, PhD.

pavla.vesela@ff.cuni.cz

OBJECTIVES (from the old DALC website)

LECTURES: The explosive social and political changes that the US witnessed in this period had a profound effect on the nation's culture, especially in the key decade of the 1960s. The onset of the Cold War in the 1950s set the scene for much of the conservatism and revolt that followed, which is especially apparent in the Beat Generation. The emergence of African-American literature ignited other hyphenated literatures that can be grouped around Multiculturalism. Southern Literature and American-Jewish Literature are also central phenomena of the period. Post-modernity is a further important concept that illuminates the work of several important novelists of the period, and this will also be dealt with in detail.

SEMINAR: This course deals with the main movements and figures of American and Canadian literature from the end of World War II to the present. Through the consideration of canonical texts, the seminar will also engage general historical and cultural transformations of the period. In this respect, the core of the course will be the decade of the 1960s, and its consequences in the years that followed. Emphasis will vary in individual seminars according to the specialization of the tutor; however, the following texts will be covered in all seminars: the stories of Flannery O'Connor; Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*; Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*; Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*; selected poems of Elizabeth Bishop and John Ashbery (viz., *Norton Anthology of American Literature*).

REQUIREMENTS (from the old DALC website)

SEMINAR: To receive their credit students are required to attend at least 70% of classes and single subject students must also present an essay of 2,000 words. The subject of the essay must be approved in advance by the instructor, and to this end students must draft a 100-word proposal. Essays should be submitted via Moodle by February 16, 2025. Each student must also deliver a substantial oral presentation (10-15 minutes).

AMERICAN AND CANADIAN LITERATURE CUMULATIVE EXAM: To conclude their study of American and Canadian literature, students have to pass an oral examination (*souborná zkouška*); see detailed instructions here: <https://ualk.ff.cuni.cz/wp-content/uploads/sites/159/2020/11/BA-reading-Am-new.pdf>

SCHEDULE

October 1: Introduction

October 8: Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*

October 15: Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

October 22: no class

October 29: Flannery O'Connor, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," "Good Country People," "The Life You Save May Be Your Own" and "Everything that Rises Must Converge"

November 5: Allen Ginsberg, "Howl"

November 12: Robert Lowell, *Norton* selection; Sylvia Plath, *Norton* selection

November 19: no class

November 26: John Ashbery, *Norton* selection

December 3: Elizabeth Bishop, *Norton* selection; Adrienne Rich, *Norton* selection

December 10: Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*

December 17: Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*

January 7: Toni Morrison, *Beloved*