

EN 438 Writing America(s)
Professor Rhonda Frederick

REQUIRED TEXTS

Hagedorn, Jessica	<i>Dogeaters</i>
James, Henry	<i>Daisy Miller</i>
Kincaid, Jamaica	<i>At the Bottom of the River</i>
Stein, Gertrude	<i>Three Lives</i>
Wharton, Edith	<i>Ethan Frome</i>
Wright, Richard	<i>Native Son</i>

Required Supplemental Readings

Auerbach, Erich	“Odysseus’ Scar,” <i>Mimesis</i>
Baker Jr., Houston A.	<i>Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance</i>
Barthes, Roland	“From Work to Text,” <i>The Critical Tradition</i>
Gates Jr., HL	from <i>Afro-American Literary Studies in the 1990s</i>
Hamon, Philippe	on the Major Features of Realist Discourse, <i>Realism</i>
Iser, Wolfgang	“The Reading Process,” <i>The Critical Tradition</i>
	from “The Play of the Text,” <i>Realism</i>
James, Henry	“The Art of Fiction,” <i>The Critical Tradition</i>
Ling, Jinqi	“Realist Interventions and the Return of the Repressed,” <i>Narrating Nationalisms</i>
Miller, J. Hillis	from “The Fictions of Realism,” <i>Realism</i>
Watt, Ian	from <i>The Rise of the Novel</i>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course seeks to interrogate modernist and realist concerns in American literature through a comparison of works by ethnic American writers. In the first part of the course, we will examine and re/define “realism;” we will then “test” our definitions against our readings of works of fiction. We will spend the last half of the course applying this process to “modernism” and modernist literature. The objective of this process is to complicate the very theoretical and critical concerns that we have previously examined. We will do so by identifying the ways different writers challenge modern and realist critical objectives. We will end the semester by reading of North American fiction that challenges and complicates the above mentioned critical traditions. Students will become versed in American modernist and realist thought through close readings of important fictional texts and non-fictional essays. Primary readings include – but are not limited to – works by Jessica Hagedorn, Henry James, Jamaica Kincaid, Gertrude Stein, Edith Wharton, and Richard Wright. Students must prepare two critical essays (approximately 7 pages), 5 critical response papers, and a revised final essay to complete the course successfully.