

American Literature & Culture—Movements, Memory, Meaning

Last Updated: Tue, 01/06/2026

Course prefix: LMC

Course number: 3511

Section: B

CRN (you may add up to five):

33349

Instructor First Name: Randall

Instructor Last Name: Harrell

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

This course surveys major movements in American literature from early foundations to the late twentieth century, with an emphasis on how literature reflects, resists, and reimagines the cultural and political forces that shaped the United States. Through poetry, short fiction, nonfiction, and novels, we will examine how authors have engaged with foundational questions around identity, freedom, race, gender, labor, and belonging. Major literary movements covered include Romanticism and Transcendentalism, Realism and Naturalism, Modernism, the Harlem Renaissance, Postmodernism, and contemporary experimentalism. Authors ***could possibly*** include Herman Melville, Kate Chopin, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, W.E.B. Du Bois, Ernest Hemingway, Allen Ginsberg, Langston Hughes, Frank O'Hara, Hart Crane, Henry David Thoreau, Annie Dillard, William Carlos Williams, Alison Hedge Coke, Toni Morrison, and David Foster Wallace. Students will engage in literary analysis, historical contextualization, and critical writing through a combination of essays, short reflections, and/or digital creative projects.

Course learning outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. **Analyze Literature in Context:** Interpret American literary texts and understand how they reflect and shape historical, cultural, and social contexts.
2. **Explore Multiple Perspectives:** Examine literature through different lenses to consider identity, power, and culture.
3. **Trace Literary and Cultural Movements:** Identify major American literary movements and connect them to historical events and social change.

4. **Communicate Critically:** Write clear, evidence-based analyses and participate thoughtfully in discussions.
5. **Connect Past and Present:** Relate literary and cultural studies to contemporary social, ethical, and civic questions.
6. **Engage Creatively and Reflectively:** Produce original interpretations and projects that demonstrate critical thinking, curiosity, and engagement with course materials.

Required course materials:

All readings will be provided via links or files on *Canvas*. The only exception will be the novel/novella that the student chooses for their final project. You will need to purchase or acquire your chosen book. A link of those options will be disseminated at a later date.

Grading policy:

Grades in this course will be based on a combination of assessment methods, which may include short written responses, analytical essays, synthesis assignments, quizzes or exams, presentations, collaborative work, and participation. Not all components listed may be used in every section or semester. Detailed grading criteria, point values, and expectations for each assignment will be provided during the semester.

Georgia Tech Letter Grade Scale:

A: 90–100%
B: 80–89%
C: 70–79%
D: 60–69%
F: <60%

Attendance policy:

Active presence and engagement are essential. Attendance and participation together count for 20 points. More than three absences may lower your final grade. Participate actively during sessions and in small group discussions. All major assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade. Late work is generally not accepted. If you experience illness or emergency, communicate promptly to make arrangements. Although some exceptions may be made for certain situations, I reserve the right to determine what constitutes any extenuating circumstance. If you are physically present but wholly unprepared or blatantly disengage, your grade will be affected and you may be counted absent. Attendance exceptions are allowed for institute-approved absences (for example, those documented by the Registrar) and situations such as hospitalization or family emergencies (documented by the Office of the Dean of Students). Some assignments and activities cannot be made up. I reserve the right to determine what can and cannot be made up after an absence. **NOTE:** Excessive tardiness will begin to accrue absences.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

If you engage in plagiarism or any other form of academic misconduct, you will fail the assignment and possibly be referred to the Office of Student Integrity. You should be familiar with these Georgia Tech sites:

- Honor Challenge — <https://osi.gatech.edu/students/honor-code>
- Office of Student Integrity — <https://osi.gatech.edu/index.php/>

A Note Addressing Artificial Intelligence:

This course is about growing in your ability to write, communicate, and think critically. Generative AI agents should only be used as tools. Tools cannot learn or communicate for you, and they cannot meet the course requirements for you. AI cannot stand in for your voice and your ideas. Work generated with AI and submitted will be treated as if it is plagiarized work—which leads the student to fail the assignment and possibly be referred to the Office of Student Integrity.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a **Core IMPACTS** course that is part of the **Arts, Humanities & Ethics** area. Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with **essential knowledge in foundational academic areas**. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I interpret the human experience through creative, linguistic, and philosophical works?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze and interpret the meaning, cultural significance and ethical implications of literary/philosophical texts in English or other languages, or of works in the visual/performing arts.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Ethical Reasoning
- Information Literacy
- Intercultural Competence