

Syllabus: English 103.08 **Imagining America**

Fall 2005. Period B (Tues & Thurs, 9:40-11:00 a.m.), Timberlake Seminar Room

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Office Hours: Wednesday 2 to 4 & by appointment

Course Objectives

For about three-thousand years, writing has been a tool for investigation, reflection, and mastery. To write about something that you have read or observed is one of the surest ways to make it your own, to know it intimately, and to have a position in regard to it. This course is meant to help students find and practice a method for responding in writing to complex material (literary, in this case, but the method ought to have broad application). By the end of the course, students should have developed their own sense of what constitutes a “good essay,” and have practiced--perhaps even improved!--the skills needed to produce such work.

Our focus will be a series of texts that pertain to the way that America has been imagined over the centuries, and students will therefore gain some insight into themes that have recurred in American literature: the idealization of nature and the frontier, the erasure of history and optimism about the future, various models of freedom, and the tension between community and the self-reliant individual.

Texts

Reader, “Imagining America.” [Contains Native American stories, and work by John Winthrop, Benjamin Franklin, Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman.]

Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (Signet Classic).

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (Signet Classic).

Allen Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems* (City Lights).

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (on library reserve).

Requirements

Come to class on time having done the assigned reading and writing. Speak up in class.

More than three unexcused absences will affect your grade. More than five, and you may be asked to leave the class. An absence is excused only if you are on the official college excused absence list, and it is your responsibility to make certain that you are on the list (see the *Kenyon College Course of Study 2005-06*, page 22).

Written Work

Your work must be typed, double spaced, and stapled. Please put your name and date on the first page, and number the pages. Be sure to keep extra copies.

One-page responses are due in class almost every time we read something new. A ‘page’ means 250 words.

Short papers (ideally arising from these responses) are due regularly, as noted on the syllabus (a ‘short’ paper is 2 to 3 pages). When you have written several short papers, you will revise and expand one of them into a 3 to 5 page paper. There will be three such essays, and they will be graded.

At the end of the semester you will revise one of the three essays, and the grade will be changed based on the revision.

At the end of the semester you will have a chance to write less academic responses to some of the reading (and to the film we watch). We’ll discuss the form of these responses when the time comes. They will not be graded.

Grading

The graded essays will determine the bulk of your final grade. The quality of your class participation will move that grade up or down (or not at all). “Participation” means coming to class on time, doing the assigned reading and writing for each class, and contributing to the class discussion.

Late papers will be marked down 1/2 a grade as soon as they are late, and a full grade for every week thereafter. If you have an unusual circumstance and need an extension, you must seek my permission *before* the paper is due.

If I feel that students are not doing the reading, I will begin to give quizzes. If more than one quiz seems to indicate that you are not doing the reading, your final grade will be lowered 1/2 a grade.

Failure to do any of the assigned work may lower your grade catastrophically.

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Regarding e-mail: I will regularly send e-mail to the class as a whole. I will assume that you have read these e-mails; they are “official correspondence.” Feel free to e-mail me, as well: HYDE@Kenyon.edu Unless you have advance permission from me, you may **not** submit any

work by fax or e-mail or as e-mail attachments.

Academic honesty: Make certain that you are familiar with Kenyon's policies on academic honesty and the offense of plagiarism, as described in the *Kenyon College Course of Study 2005-06*, pages 26-29.

On disabilities: If you have a disability that might require some accommodation in order to participate fully in class, please feel free to discuss your concerns in private with me and also identify yourself to Erin Salva, Coordinator of Disability Services at PBX 5145 or via e-mail at salvae@kenyon.edu.

On Citations in Your Essays

You must give citations for every quotation that you use in your essays. If you are citing a text that we use in class, simply enter the page number in parentheses after the quotation:

Thoreau joins nature, nationalism, and religion, as when he declares that he "should be ashamed to think that Adam in paradise was more favorably situated...than the backwoodsman in this country" ("Walking," 93).

If you cite a text that we do not use in class, give a simple parenthetical page reference in the body of your paper, and list the work at the end:

In the introduction to his collection of Thoreau's essays, Professor Hyde argues that the 'voice' in Thoreau's essays might best be called 'prophetic,' and he goes on to explain that the 'prophetic voice' has its own special rhetoric. (*The Essays*, viii-xvi).

Works Cited

The Essays of Henry D. Thoreau. Ed., Lewis Hyde. (New York: North Point Press, 2002).

In general, please give citations sufficient that the reader can easily find your source.

As for integrating citations into your papers, as a rule of thumb, those that are four typed lines or longer should be single-spaced and indented. Shorter citations should appear without any change in spacing or indentation.

Other professors at Kenyon will want more formal citations and documentation in your papers. You should know, therefore, that the Modern Language Association of America produces a book, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Paper*, that gives a handy outline of accepted rules for documenting and citing sources. Copies are available in the library.

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