

Anoka Ramsey Community College – Coon Rapids Campus
English 2215: Special Topics in Literature: Minnesota Writers
Spring 2010 / Section 01

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Office Hours:

- 10:00-10:50 a.m. / M, W, Th, F
- 11:00-11:50 a.m. / Th
- Other times by appointment

Class Meetings:

- Section 01 / 11:00-11:50 p.m. / M, W, F / Humanities 121

Texts:

- *Staggerford*, by Jon Hassler (1977)
- *Riding Shotgun: Women Write about Their Mothers*, edited by Kathryn Kysar (2008)
- *Fiction on a Stick: Stories by Writers from Minnesota*, edited by Daniel Slager (2008)
- *Blood Ties and Brown Liquor*, by Sean Hill (2008)
- *The Piano Lesson*, by August Wilson (1990)
- **Five Texts of Your Own Choosing**

Other Necessities:

- Student MetNet Email Account
- D2L Access
- ARCC Network Access
- Student I.D. / Library Card
- A class notebook or loose-leaf paper/folder
- A college-level dictionary
- A stapler

Course Overview:

According to the “official” college documents, this course “will explore a specialized theme or field in literature, such as **Minnesota Writers**, Gothic Literature, Best Sellers, etc. The specific focus will be announced in the Class Schedule, and the course may be repeated under a different focus. Readings will include at least three of the five major **genres** of literature – novels, short stories, poems, plays, creative nonfiction – and emphasis will be on critical reading and discussion, the elements of literature, and analysis, interpretation, and evaluation.” (Be sure to also read the official objectives or learner outcomes for this course, which are posted on the [course website](#).)

This section of the course will introduce you to the very active Minnesota literary scene. Three of the five books were chosen because their writers will appear on our campus this semester; the other two were chosen as representative “classics” in Minnesota literature. In addition to the five required books, you will be asked to do research, preview, and share information about other writers. By the end of the course, you will have a broad range of Minnesota authors with whom you are at least nominally familiar, and can select for your own reading—and, possibly, your own teaching or writing purposes—from this list.

Another primary purpose of this course is to help you continue to develop as a reader, and more specifically, as a *reader of literature*—and we will discuss what “literature” means. Our emphasis will be on close reading and discussion: learning how to read carefully, ask good questions, and “speak on one’s feet” are important aspects of education. You will be asked to contribute questions, respond to questions, give opinions, and make assessments of what you are reading and learning. Another important goal for me is to engage all of you in the excitement of reading, studying, and sharing ideas about reading and literature.

The English Department does recommend successful completion of **English 1121** before taking this course—but please talk to me soon if you have questions or concerns about this recommendation. In addition, this course satisfies goal area 6 of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum.

Requirements and Evaluation:

- Pre-class reading and preparation
- Attendance in class
- Participation in class discussions (live and online), including pre-class D2L posts = 15%
- In-class quizzes, exercises, and informal writing = 15%
- Five one-hour exams = 45%
- Five mini-research projects = 25%

Schedule: The following schedule is tentative; any changes will be announced in class and online.

Pre-Class D2L Posts: **Group 1:** _____ - _____
 Group 2: _____ - _____
 Group 3: _____ - _____
 Group 4: _____ - _____

INTRODUCTION

M 11 Jan.		MPR Podcasts / In-Class Writing about Minnesota and Minnesota Literature / Discussion / Introduction to the Course and to Each Other / Syllabus / Schedule
W 13 Jan.		Review syllabus and schedule / Finish discussion and introductions from day one / Introduce and explain research and wiki reports assignment

MINNESOTA NOVELS

F 15 Jan.	Grp 1	Staggerford – Friday / Introduce Minnesota Novels, Novelists, and Bookstores / Discuss “Literary” vs. “Genre” Fiction / Introduction to Jon Hassler
M 18 Jan.		NO CLASSES – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
W 20 Jan.	Grp 2	Staggerford – Sat. / Sun.
F 22 Jan.	Grp 3	Staggerford – Mon. / Tues.
M 25 Jan.	Grp 4	Staggerford – Wed. / Thurs. / Fri.
W 27 Jan.	Grp 1	Staggerford – Sat. / Epilogue
F 29 Jan.		Research and Wiki Reports / Stump the Prof / Review for Exam #1
M 1 Feb.		Exam #1

MINNESOTA CREATIVE NONFICTION

W 3 Feb.		<i>Riding Shotgun</i> – Introduction / Introduce Minnesota Creative Nonfiction, Writers, and Publications about Minnesota Literature
F 5 Feb.	Grp 2	<i>Riding Shotgun</i> – TBA – Prof Choice
M 8 Feb.	Grp 3	<i>Riding Shotgun</i> – TBA – Grp 3 Choice
W 10 Feb.	Grp 4	<i>Riding Shotgun</i> – TBA – Grp 4 Choice
F 12 Feb.	Grp 1	<i>Riding Shotgun</i> – TBA – Grp 1 Choice
M 15 Feb.		NO CLASSES – Presidents' Day
W 17 Feb.	Grp 2	<i>Riding Shotgun</i> – TBA – Grp 2 Choice
F 19 Feb.		Research and Wiki Reports / Review for Exam #2
M 22 Feb.		Exam #2

MINNESOTA SHORT FICTION

W 24 Feb.	Grp 3	<i>Fiction on a Stick</i> – Introduction (Daniel Slager) and “The Body Remembers” (Diane Wilson) / Introduce Minnesota Short Fiction, Writers, and Publishers
F 26 Feb.		NO CLASSES – Faculty RSP Conference at MCTC
M 1 Mar.	Grp 4	<i>Fiction on a Stick</i> – “Betty Garcia” (John Reimringer)
W 3 Mar.	Grp 1	<i>Fiction on a Stick</i> – “Assimilation” (Sarah Stonich) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three writers from the anthology, <i>Fiction on a Stick</i>, will give presentations at 1 p.m. and at 2 p.m. in the Legacy Room (SC 270/272). You are REQUIRED to attend at least ONE of these sessions. Take good notes!
F 5 Mar.	Grp 2	<i>Fiction on a Stick</i> – TBA – Prof Choice / Discuss <i>Fiction on a Stick</i> Presentations
M 8 Mar.	Grp 3	<i>Fiction on a Stick</i> – TBA – Grp 3 Choice
W 10 Mar.	Grp 4	<i>Fiction on a Stick</i> – TBA – Grp 4 Choice
F 12 Mar.	Grp 1	<i>Fiction on a Stick</i> – TBA – Grp 1 Choice
M 15 Mar.		NO CLASSES – Spring Break
W 17 Mar.		NO CLASSES – Spring Break
F 19 Mar.		NO CLASSES – Spring Break
M 22 Mar.	Grp 2	<i>Fiction on a Stick</i> – TBA – Grp 2 Choice
W 24 Mar.		Research and Wiki Reports / Review for Exam #3
F 26 Mar.		Exam #3

MINNESOTA POETRY

M 29 Mar.	Grp 3	Poems by James Wright (handouts) / Introduce Minnesota Poetry, Poets, and Spoken Word Artists
W 31 Mar.	Grp 4	Poems by Robert Bly (handouts)
F 2 Apr.	Grp 1	Poems by Louise Erdrich (handouts)
M 5 Apr.	Grp 2	<i>Blood Ties and Brown Liquor</i>, by Sean Hill – Copyright page, Dedication page, Contents, Acknowledgements, Epigraph, Pages 1-16
W 7 Apr.	Grp 3	<i>Blood Ties and Brown Liquor</i>, by Sean Hill – Pages 17-32
F 9 Apr.	Grp 4	<i>Blood Ties and Brown Liquor</i>, by Sean Hill – Pages 33-48
M 12 Apr.	Grp 1	<i>Blood Ties and Brown Liquor</i>, by Sean Hill – Pages 49-62
W 14 Apr.	Grp 2	<i>Blood Ties and Brown Liquor</i>, by Sean Hill – Pages 63-78 and Notes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sean Hill will give presentations at 1 p.m. and at 2 p.m. in the Legacy Room (SC 270/272). You are REQUIRED to attend at least ONE of these sessions. Take good notes!

F 16 Apr.		Discuss Sean Hill Presentations / Research and Wiki Reports / Review for Exam #4
M 19 Apr.		Exam #4

MINNESOTA DRAMA

W 21 Apr.	Grp 3	<i>The Piano Lesson</i>, by August Wilson – Act One, Scene 1 / Introduce Minnesota Drama, Playwrights, and Theatres / Introduce August Wilson and Penumbra Theatre / Introduce Drama Theory and Terminology
F 23 Apr.	Grp 4	<i>The Piano Lesson</i>, by August Wilson – Act One, Scene 2
M 26 Apr.	Grp 1-2	<i>The Piano Lesson</i>, by August Wilson – Act Two, Scenes 1-3
W 28 Apr.	Grp 3-4	<i>The Piano Lesson</i>, by August Wilson – Act Two, Scenes 4-5
F 30 Apr.		<i>The Piano Lesson</i>, by August Wilson – watch video
M 3 May		<i>The Piano Lesson</i>, by August Wilson – watch video
W 5 May		<i>The Piano Lesson</i>, by August Wilson – watch video
F 7 May		Research and Wiki Reports / Prepare for Exam #5
T 11 May		Exam #5 – Our scheduled final exam time is from 11:50 a.m. to 1:50 p.m. We will only need the first hour, and we will meet in H 121.

Description of Expectations & Requirements:

1. **Pre-Class Reading and Preparation:** Please complete all assigned readings **BEFORE** coming to class. If you haven't read, you won't fully understand what we're talking about in class, nor will you be able to contribute very well. I have tried to carefully plan the amount of reading for each session so that you will have time to read slowly and closely. The reading load will vary depending on the literary genre, but a general guideline might be 4-6 poems or 10-40 pages of prose per class session. (Ideally, you should go over the readings again after having participated in the lectures and discussions about them.) Also, I encourage you to make notes, ideally **IN** your books, to help you remember key passages, questions, opinions, and ideas for class discussions. Finally, **BRING** the assigned book and your notebook with you to every class.
2. **Pre-Class D2L Posts:** As indicated on the course schedule above, each group of readers will have special responsibility for preparing the class discussion topics, on a cyclical basis. All members of the group are responsible for alerting the rest of us to especially interesting questions (and possible answers) prompted by a day's reading assignment. In a few sentences or a short paragraph (no longer), **explain 1-2 things that you KNOW and 2-3 things that you WANT TO KNOW about what you just read**—this is not a place to “show off” but to provide speculations/hypotheses and to ask genuine questions about what you do not understand. In your postings, please point to specific passages, as appropriate, and give page numbers. (Try also not to repeat each other.) **Post these messages to the appropriate discussion link in D2L by 11:59 p.m. of the day before the class meeting.**
3. **Attendance:** Please make every effort to attend every class and to arrive on time—so as not to be disrespectful of others with the distraction. Each class session will be primarily devoted to discussing the assigned literature, so if you do not attend, you cannot participate in and learn from the lectures and discussions. **IF** you must miss a class when an exam is scheduled or when a paper is due, **AND IF** the absence is due to one of the following—a serious illness (verified by a doctor's note), a death in your immediate family (a parent or sibling), jury duty, military duty, a religious holiday, or a college activity—**AND IF** you notify me **BEFORE** the absence and provide appropriate documentation immediately after, **THEN** I will work with you to arrange a “make up” and to avoid any reduction in your grade. (Absences due to medical or legal appointments, subpoenas or court dates, vacations, transportation problems, employment, or high-school events do **NOT** qualify for the above accommodation.) If you miss class, contact another student for notes and explanation of assignments, and check D2L for copies of any

handouts. Ultimately, attendance factors into determining grades, since your participation in discussions is a component of calculating your final grade.

4. **Participation in Class Discussions:** I once heard, "You won't care if you don't share," and I think it's true. Participation automatically increases your investment in and enjoyment of the class. Listen actively and take notes, but also try to contribute—be prepared and willing to share your ideas, opinions, and questions with the rest of us. If you are naturally shy, then participate more actively in small groups and contribute to class discussions when more open-ended questions are asked. If you are naturally talkative, you will be more comfortable, but monitor yourself so that you allow time and room for others to contribute. Above all, everyone should be respectful of one another's contributions, even if you disagree, and be sure to acknowledge, encourage, or affirm one another. Both the quantity and quality of your participation will be considered.
5. **In-Class Quizzes, Exercises, and Informal Writing:** Classes will usually begin with some sort of reading quiz or response; we may also do more writing and other exercises throughout class. Quizzes will normally include identification and/or short-answer objective questions. Informal exercises may include in-class writings, small-group projects, and take-home responses. Quizzes and in-class exercises **CANNOT** be made up if you are absent or arrive late; in addition, you may **NOT** come to class, take a quiz, leave early, and expect to get full credit.
6. **Five Research and Wiki Reports:** For the additional research and short papers, you should outline the title, author, publication date, and type of book (e.g., novel, mystery, poetry, short fiction, memoirs, etc.). Your report should indicate strengths, weaknesses, plot/idea/theme, location, characters/speakers, and anything else of particular importance. Note especially any connections to Minnesota character types, stereotypes, landscapes, themes, etc. Also note connections to 1 or more of the 5 required works. More details will be provided on the assignment handout.
7. **Five In-Class, One-Hour Exams:** The exams will be a mix of identification (authors, biographies, literary periods, titles, quotations, etc.), application (definitions and examples of literary terminology), and short-essay (one paragraph each) questions; depending on the size of the group, longer essay questions might also be included. More information will be provided in class before each exam. An exam can be rescheduled only under extraordinary circumstances and must be arranged **BEFORE** the exam begins; an exam not rescheduled prior to the start time will be lowered one letter grade; after one week the grade will be a zero.
8. **Attend 2-3 Visiting Writer Presentations:** In addition to poet Sean Hill, various writers from our two anthologies, *Riding Shotgun* and *Fiction on a Stick*, will be speaking on campus this semester. (See schedule above for specific dates; other dates will be announced in class and on D2L.) Because all of these presentations relate directly to what we are reading in this class, you are **REQUIRED** to attend at least two sessions (by two different writers), take notes, and then write a final response; more details will be provided on the assignment handout. If you attend all three, you will receive **EXTRA CREDIT**.

A.R.C.C. Grading System:

- A = Superior achievement
- B = Above average achievement
- C = Average achievement
- D = Below average achievement
- F = Inadequate achievement

Numerical Grading Scales:

Grade	G.P.A.	%	D2L %	11-point
A	4.00	100 – 93	95	11

A-	3.67	92 – 90	92	10
A-/B+	3.50	90	90	9.5
B+	3.33	89 – 88	88	9
B	3.00	87 – 83	85	8
B-	2.67	82 – 80	82	7
B-/C+	2.50	80	80	6.5
C+	2.33	79 – 78	78	6
C	2.00	77 – 73	75	5
C-	1.67	72 – 70	72	4
C-/D+	1.50	70	70	3.5
D+	1.33	69 – 68	68	3
D	1.00	67 – 63	65	2
D-	0.67	62 – 60	62	1
F	0.00	59 – 0	55	0

Informal Grading System:

Plus (+)	Very Good	Quizzes = 10, 9, 8
Check (✓)	Acceptable	Quizzes = 7, 6, 5
Minus (-)	Unacceptable	Quizzes = 4, 3, 2, 1, 0

Participation Grading Criteria:

A	I am fully and clearly prepared for each class session. I have carefully and thoughtfully read all the assigned material prior to each class. I voluntarily offer thoughtful and insightful comments and questions during small-group work and full-class discussions. I encourage class discussions and small-group work, but I do not dominate them.
B	I am prepared for each class session. I have carefully read all the assigned material prior to each class. I sometimes voluntarily offer appropriate comments and questions during small-group work and full-class discussions. I try to encourage class discussions and small-group work, and I do not disrupt them.
C	I am mostly prepared for each class session. I have read all the assigned material prior to each class. I rarely volunteer a comment or question relating to the discussion, but I do respond when called upon and I often contribute to small-group work. I neither encourage nor disrupt class discussions and small-group work.
D	I am often unprepared for each class session. I do not always read all the assigned material prior to each class. I don't enter discussions and small-group work at all, either voluntarily or when called upon. I sometimes say or do things which discourage or disrupt class discussions and small-group work.
F	I am rarely prepared for each class session. I do not read all the assigned material prior to each class. I offer nothing to class discussions or small-group work. I often say or do things which discourage and disrupt class discussions and small-group work.

Essay Evaluation Criteria:

- We will discuss different evaluation criteria and grading rubrics in class. In addition, an evaluation sheet will be handed out before each essay is due/collected, so you will know exactly how each will be graded.

Other Policies and Information

Absences for Religious Observances: The College allows absences from class for participation in religious observances. Students who plan to miss class for sincerely-held religious beliefs are required to (1) inform me at

the beginning of the semester (within the first two weeks) of anticipated absences, (2) meet with me to reschedule any missed quizzes, exams, peer reviews, or paper due dates, and (3) obtain class notes from other students. I am required to assist you in obtaining course materials and assignments distributed during class sessions you miss and to make arrangements for taking missed examinations or making up peer reviews.

Academic Support Center (ASC): The College offers free, trained writing tutors who work with writers at any stage in the writing process to improve their writing. Please meet with a tutor for an “objective/outside” opinion, if you want more extensive help than I can reasonably provide during 10-15 minutes of an office hour, or if I am not available when you need help.

Accessibility / Universal Instructional Design: My goal is for our classroom and course work to be equally accessible to everyone. I think I have designed the class flexibly to accommodate different learning styles and approaches. I am also eager to make reasonable accommodations to guarantee persons with disabilities access to class sessions, the course materials, and the activities of the class. Let me know as soon as possible if you have a disability for which accommodations will be requested. If you need further information about disabilities and possible accommodations, please contact Scott Bay, Director of Access Services, at 763-433-1334, at scott.bay@anokaramsey.edu, or stop by C255.

Collegiate Behavior: This is a **COLLEGE** class, and I expect that we will all behave maturely, responsibly, and respectfully. Any disruptive behavior—including arriving late, packing up early, leaving early, having private conversations during discussions or lectures, eating, sleeping, receiving cell phone calls or text messages, bringing friends/siblings/children/pets to class, etc.—will be handled first on an individual basis; if the disruptive behavior continues or if it is very serious, I will ask you to leave class, and I will contact the Dean of Educational Services—see the Code of Student Conduct in the Student Handbook.

Communication: I do prefer email rather than “telephone tag,” and I also tend to check voice mail only when I am on campus. While the College prefers you to use your MetNet email account, you can use any email program to contact me; just be sure to clearly identify yourself and the course.

Conferences: Please come talk to me during my office hours, or schedule an appointment if my office hours do not work for you, if you have any questions or problems at any time during the semester.

Credit and Workload Expectations: For undergraduate courses, one credit is defined as equivalent to an average of three hours of learning effort per week (over a full semester) necessary for an average student to achieve an average grade in the course. For example, a student taking a three-credit course that meets for three hours a week should expect to spend an additional six hours a week on coursework outside the classroom.

Electronic Files / Submitting Work: Back up your work often, and in more than one place—e.g., your home computer or laptop, your college network space, and your USB memory stick. Computer or printer problems are **NOT** a valid excuse for lateness. Essays are due in hard-copy form, anything other than a hard copy will be considered late, and email attachments are not acceptable.

Incompletes: Incompletes will only be granted to students who have a **DOCUMENTED** medical or family emergency during the last two (2) weeks of the semester. These students must have completed all the other work for the course with an average grade of “C” or better, must not have more than six (6) other absences, and must demonstrate the ability and willingness to complete the work before the third week of the following semester or summer session.

Pass / No Credit Option: You may elect to take this course on a “Pass / No Credit” basis instead of receiving a traditional letter grade. An average of “C” or higher on all of the required work for the course would be considered a “passing” (P) grade. If you desire to take the “Pass / No Credit” option, you must request it in writing (e-mail is acceptable) **by March 1, 2010**. Once you elect this option, you may NOT switch back to the letter grade option later in the semester. Think carefully about the issues surrounding this option, including transferring the course to another institution, before making a final decision.

Plagiarism: In addition to accepting, buying, or downloading a paper or project someone else has written, plagiarism includes but is not limited to (1) failing to cite quotations and borrowed ideas from any outside sources, even if the borrowed ideas are in your own words, (2) failing to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks, and (3) failing to put summaries and paraphrases into your own words. (This definition of plagiarism was derived from Diana Hacker's *Rules for Writers*, 5th edition, Boston: Bedford-St. Martin's, 2004.) Presenting another person's ideas or writing as your own without clear, accurate, and complete citation and documentation will result in a zero ("F") for that assignment and notification of the Dean of Educational Services—see the Code of Student Conduct in the Student Handbook.

Record Keeping: Please make back-up copies of all your work, and keep all quizzes, exercises, exams, and papers returned to you. If questions about grades arise, you will need to produce the original documents. In addition, keep track of all your notes and other materials for each exam and paper; if questions about plagiarism arise, you will need to prove you did your own writing.

NOTE: The course syllabus and schedule are subject to change, and changes will be announced in class; updates will also be regularly posted on D2L. You are responsible for any changes in deadlines or assignments announced during any class you miss.