

Anoka Ramsey Community College – Coon Rapids Campus
English 2215: Special Topics in Literature: Minnesota Writers
Spring 2011 / Section 01

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Office Hours:

- 11:00-11:50 a.m. / TH
- 1:00-1:50 p.m. / M, W, TH, F
- Other times by appointment

Class Meetings:

- Section 01 11:00-11:50 a.m. M, W, F in H 122

Texts:

- *Driving to Heaven*, by Tracy Youngblom (2011).
- *Fiction on a Stick: Stories by Writers from Minnesota*, edited by Daniel Slager (2008).
- *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, by August Wilson (1985).
- *Riding Shotgun: Women Write about Their Mothers*, edited by Kathryn Kysar (2008).
- *Where No Gods Came*, by Sheila O'Connor (2003).
- **Three (3) Texts of Your Choice.**

Other Necessities:

- **Microsoft Live @ Edu** Email Account
- Desire-2-Learn (D2L) Access
- ARCC Network Access (on-campus computers; off-campus 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 English Department, 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 **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**. It is highly likely that some of the writers represented in these books will appear on our campus this semester. In addition to the five required books, you will be asked to do research, preview, and share information about three other writers and

their works. By the end of the course, you will have encountered a broad range of Minnesota authors with whom you are at least nominally familiar, and you can select for your own future 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. A third important goal for me is to engage all of you in the **excitement** of reading, studying, and sharing ideas about reading and literature.

To satisfy the **writing-intensive** (WI) requirements at other institutions, should you wish to transfer this course, we will spend some time studying how to write about literature, and we will draft, receive feedback, revise, edit, and proofread **one critical essay**. Because of this, the English Department **recommends** successful completion of **English 1121** before taking this course – but please talk to me soon if you have questions or concerns about this recommendation. Finally, 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 = **10%**
- In-class quizzes, exercises, and informal writing = **15%**
- One critical essay = **15%**
- Three research and wiki reports = **15%**
- Five in-class, one-hour exams = **45%**
- Attendance at visiting-writer presentations

Description of Expectations & Requirements:

1. **Pre-Class Reading and Preparation:** Complete **all** assigned readings **before** coming to class. If you haven't read, you won't fully understand what we're talking about, nor will you be able to contribute very well. I have tried to carefully plan the amount of reading for each day 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. 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, 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 passages, questions, debates, or connections prompted by a day's reading assignment. **In a post, you must provide three (3) items that you think will provoke good discussion in class, and try not to repeat each other.** In your postings, please point to specific passages, as appropriate, and give page numbers. **Your post is due to the appropriate discussion link in D2L by 11:59 p.m. of the day before the class meeting.**
3. **Attendance in Class:** Plan to attend **every class** and to arrive **on time** so you are not disrespectful to others with the distraction. Each class session will be devoted to discussing the assigned literature, so if you do not attend, you cannot participate in and learn from the discussions and lectures. **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 an doctor's note), a death in your family, 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, within the policies below, 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. I **do** take attendance for legal and financial-aid reasons, and I will consider attendance in borderline grades.

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. In addition, the **best** literature classes have **energy** and **animated discussion**. So listen actively and take notes, but also try to **contribute**: be prepared and willing to share your ideas, opinions, questions, and problems 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, 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.
5. **In-Class Quizzes, Exercises, and Informal Writing:** To encourage you to keep up with the reading assignments, there will be **at least one unannounced quiz each week**, which will include identification and/or short-answer objective questions. Other informal writing may include various in-class exercises and small-group projects. **Quizzes and in-class exercises cannot be made up if you are absent or arrive late, and you may not come to class only to take a quiz and then leave.**
6. **One Critical Essay:** The essay will be about 1000 words long (3-4 pages), and you will write a draft, receive feedback, and then revise and edit your paper before submitting it for a grade. This paper must be your own individual work, written especially for this course. If your draft is not ready for a peer review, or if you do not attend a peer review, the essay grade will be lowered one full letter (e.g., B to C); **peer reviews cannot be rescheduled or made up – and no excuses will be accepted, including illnesses and technology problems.** Late final papers will simply receive a grade, without comments; after one week, the grade will be a zero ("F").
7. **Three Research and Wiki Reports:** For the three additional authors whom you will research and preview, you should outline the authors, titles, publication dates, and types of books (e.g., novel, mystery, poetry, short fiction, memoirs, etc.). Your reports 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. **These reports will be posted to the Writing-Minnesota wiki.** Specific details and instructions will be provided on the assignment handout.
8. **Five In-Class, One-Hour Exams:** The exams may be a mix of **identification** (authors, biographies, titles, quotations, characters, etc.), **application** (definitions and examples of literary terminology), and **short-essay** (one paragraph each) questions; a longer essay question might be included in place of the short-essay questions. 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 ("F").
9. **Attendance at Visiting-Writer Presentations:** In addition to any writers who speak directly to our class during class time, you are strongly encouraged to attend as many other sessions as possible. See the schedule below for specific dates; other dates will be announced in class and on D2L. We will decide together how you will receive credit for attending these presentations.

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	GPA	%	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
D-/F	0.50	60	60	0.5
F	0.00	59 – 0	55	0

Participation Grading Criteria:

A	I am fully and clearly prepared for each class. I have carefully and thoughtfully read all the assigned material ahead of time. I offer thoughtful and insightful comments and questions during small-group work and full-class discussions. I encourage all discussions, and I do not dominate them.
B	I am prepared for each class. I have carefully read all the assigned material ahead of time. I sometimes offer appropriate comments and questions during small-group work and full-class discussions. I try to encourage all discussions, and I do not disrupt them.
C	I am mostly prepared for each class. I have read most of the assigned material ahead of time. 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 discussions.
D	I am often unprepared for each class. I do not always read all the assigned material ahead of time. 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. I do not read all the assigned material ahead of time. 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:

- An evaluation sheet will be handed out before the essay is due/collected, so you will know exactly how it will be graded. In sum, I'll consider not only what you say but how well you say it – organization, logic, and grammar will matter. Please proofread your papers carefully before turning them in.

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: 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.

Cell Phones, Texting, and Other Disruptions: This is a **college** class, and I expect that we will all behave maturely, responsibly, and respectfully. I also expect that we will all be attentive and focused. Any disruptive behavior – including arriving late, packing up early, leaving early, having private conversations during discussions or lectures, eating, sleeping, sending or receiving cell phone calls or text messages, bringing friends/siblings/children/pets to class, etc. – will be dealt with immediately, first individually, and then with 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 do **not** regularly check voice mail. When emailing me, be sure to **clearly identify yourself and the course**.

Conferences: Please come talk to me during my office hours, or schedule an appointment with me, 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 late papers. Essays are due in **hard-copy form**, 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 (or e-mail) **by March 31, 2011**. 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. If you are asked, you **must** provide an **electronic copy** of your paper, which will be submitted to **TurnItIn.com** for verification.

Record Keeping: 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, drafts, and other materials for each exam and paper; if questions about **plagiarism** arise, you will need to prove you did your own writing.

SCHEDULE: The following schedule is subject to change—any changes will be announced in class and online.

Pre-Class D2L Posts: **Group 1:** _____ - _____
 Group 2: _____ - _____
 Group 3: _____ - _____
 Group 4: _____ - _____
 Group 5: _____ - _____

INTRODUCTION

M 10 Jan.		Introduction to the Course and to Each Other / Syllabus / Schedule
W 12 Jan.		In-Class Writing about Minnesota and Minnesota Literature / What does it mean to be Minnesotan? / MPR podcasts? / YouTube videos? / Discussion / Introduction to the Critical Essay / Introduction to the Research and Wiki Reports

MINNESOTA DRAMA

F 14 Jan.		Bring your copy of August Wilson's play, <i>Ma Rainey's Black Bottom</i> / Introduction to Minnesota drama, playwrights, and theatres / Introduction to reading drama, theory, and terminology / Introduction to August Wilson in Minnesota and Penumbra Theatre in Saint Paul
M 17 Jan.		NO CLASSES / Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
W 19 Jan.	Grp 1	<i>Ma Rainey's Black Bottom</i> – read from the front cover to the bottom of page 35 / QUIZ / Discussion / In-class writing
F 21 Jan.	Grp 2	<i>Ma Rainey's Black Bottom</i> – read from the top of page 36 to the bottom of page 47 / QUIZ / Discussion / In-class writing
M 24 Jan.	Grp 3	<i>Ma Rainey's Black Bottom</i> – read from the bottom of page 47 to page 71 / QUIZ / Discussion / In-class writing
W 26 Jan.	Grp 4	<i>Ma Rainey's Black Bottom</i> – read from page 73 to _____ / QUIZ / Discussion / In-class writing
F 28 Jan.	Grp 5	<i>Ma Rainey's Black Bottom</i> – read from _____ to the end / QUIZ / Discussion / In-class writing
M 31 Jan.		Prepare for Exam #1 / Brainstorm questions for the Penumbra visitors / Research and wiki reports? / Q&A
W 2 Feb.		EXAM #1

MINNESOTA SHORT FICTION

F 4 Feb.	Grp 1	<i>Fiction on a Stick</i> – Slager – pp. vii-viii – and Titus – pp. 101-105
M 7 Feb.	Grp 2	<i>Fiction on a Stick</i> – Stonich – pp. 40-54
W 9 Feb.	Grp 3	<i>Fiction on a Stick</i> – Wilson – pp. 93-100
F 11 Feb.	Grp 4	<i>Fiction on a Stick</i> – Kolaya – pp. 106-116
M 14 Feb.	Grp 5	<i>Fiction on a Stick</i> – Reimringer – pp. 145-162
W 16 Feb.	Grp 1	<i>Fiction on a Stick</i> – Voedisch – pp. 208-218 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NOTE: The associate director and at least two actors from Penumbra Theatre Company will be on campus today, in the Legacy Room, from 12:00 to 12:50 p.m., and from 1:00 to 1:50 p.m., to give presentations about this play. You are REQUIRED to attend one session and take notes.
F 18 Feb.		Discuss the Penumbra presentations / Introduce Minnesota short fiction, writers, and publishers
M 21 Feb.		NO CLASSES / Presidents' Day
W 23 Feb.	Grp 2	<i>Fiction on a Stick</i> – Rutherford – pp. 219-235
F 25 Feb.		NO CLASSES / Faculty Development Day
M 28 Feb.		Prepare for Exam #2 / Research and wiki reports? / Q&A
W 2 Mar.		EXAM #2

MINNESOTA POETRY

F 4 Mar.	Grp 3	Poems by James Wright (handouts) / Introduce Minnesota Poetry, Poets, and Spoken Word Artists
M 7 Mar.	Grp 4	Poems by Robert Bly (handouts)
W 9 Mar.	Grp 5	Poems by Louise Erdrich (handouts)
F 11 Mar.	Grp 1	Poems by Richard Broderick (handouts)
M 14 Mar.		NO CLASSES / Spring Break
W 16 Mar.		NO CLASSES / Spring Break
F 18 Mar.		NO CLASSES / Spring Break
M 21 Mar.		Richard Broderick – guest lecture and reading (TBD)
W 23 Mar.	Grp 2	<i>Driving to Heaven</i> – read:
F 25 Mar.	Grp 3	<i>Driving to Heaven</i> – read:
M 28 Mar.	Grp 4	<i>Driving to Heaven</i> – read:
W 30 Mar.		Prepare for Exam #3 / Research and wiki reports? / Q&A
F 1 Apr.		EXAM #3

Continued →

MINNESOTA CREATIVE NONFICTION

M 4 Apr.		PEER REVIEW - Bring four (4) copies of a COMPLETE draft of your Critical Essay <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You must attend this peer review and be fully prepared to be able to receive full credit on the Critical Essay.
W 6 Apr.	Grp 5	Riding Shotgun - read: Introduce Minnesota creative nonfiction, writers, and publications about Minnesota literature
F 8 Apr.	Grp 1	Riding Shotgun - read:
M 11 Apr.	Grp 2	Riding Shotgun - read:
W 13 Apr.	Grp 3	Riding Shotgun - read:
F 15 Apr.	Grp 4	Riding Shotgun - read:
M 18 Apr.	Grp 5	Riding Shotgun - read: Prepare for Exam #4 / Research and wiki reports? / Q&A
W 20 Apr.		EXAM #4

MINNESOTA NOVELS

F 22 Apr.	Grp 1	Where No Gods Came - pp. 1-27 (27 pages) Introduce Minnesota Novels, Novelists, and Bookstores / Discuss "Literary" vs. "Genre" Fiction / Introduction to Sheila O'Connor
M 25 Apr.	Grp 2	Where No Gods Came - pp. 28-62 (35 pages)
W 27 Apr.	Grp 3	Where No Gods Came - pp. 63-96 (34 pages)
F 29 Apr.	Grp 4	Where No Gods Came - pp. 97-128 (32 pages)
M 2 May	Grp 5	Where No Gods Came - pp. 129-166 (38 pages)
W 4 May	Anyone	Where No Gods Came - pp. 167-196 (30 pages)
F 6 May		Prepare for Exam #5 / Research and wiki reports? / Q&A
F 13 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 122. We will do both the exam and the final course evaluation at this time.

REMINDER: The course syllabus and schedule are subject to change, and all changes will be announced in class; significant changes will result in a revised schedule being printed, handed out, and posted on D2L. You are responsible for any changes in deadlines or assignments announced during any class you miss.