

School for New Learning
DePaul University
AI 268 Chicago Authors
Fall 2009

Faculty: R. Craig Sautter
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Location: Loop Campus
Dates: Mondays, September 14– November 23, 2009
Hours: 6:00-9:00 p.m.
Credit: 4 Quarter Hours

Course Description

During the more than 172 years that it has grown from a prairie trading outpost to the major metropolis of the American Midwest, Chicago has earned a varied reputation for its gangsters, railroads, sports teams, politicians, architecture, commerce and music. Despite these achievements, in no area is Chicago's reputation surpassed than in its writing. Chicago authors are known throughout the world. Their novels and poetry have captured the changing historical image of the city and played a critical role in the development of American literary "Realism" and "Naturalism." This course will explore Chicago's literary history, probe its personalities, read and discuss some of its best fiction and poetry.

By the second decade of the twentieth century, national critics like H. L. Mencken were calling Chicago the "literary capital of the United States." Chicago already had been home to literary pioneers like Hamlin Garland, Henry Blake Fuller, Harriet Monroe, Theodore Dreiser, Floyd Dell, Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay, Sherwood Anderson, Edgar Lee Masters, Ben Hecht, Ring Lardner, and a host of authors whose names became well known to readers across the U.S. Since the early days of the "Chicago Literary Renaissance" beginning in the 1890s, the city has continued to attract and produce writers of the highest quality who have made their way to the national and world stage, including James T. Farrell, Meyer Levin, Richard Wright, Nelson Algren, Gwendolyn Brooks, Saul Bellow, and many others.

In this 10-week class, students will read, analyze, and discuss two novels, plus some short stories and poems, by important national writers who hail from the Windy City. The class will trace Chicago's literary movements and examine questions of form, content, and style. Along the way, students will demonstrate old or learn new competences of reading and discussing fiction and poetry, and gain a greater appreciation for the art of fiction, as well as Chicago's contribution to the nation's literary history.

Faculty

R. Craig Sautter is a poet, writer, editor, publisher and political consultant. He is the author of 10 books, including *New York Presidential Conventions*, *The Pre-TV Era 1839-1924*; *Philadelphia Presidential Conventions*; *Inside the Wigwam*, *Chicago Presidential Conventions 1860-1996* (with Alderman Edward M. Burke), see www.presidentialconventions.com; *The Wicked City: Chicago from Kenna to Capone* (with Curt Johnson); *26 Martyrs for These Latter Perilous Days* (with Curt Johnson); *Floyd Dell: Essays from the Friday Literary Review 1909-1913*; and *Expresslanes Through The Inevitable City* (poems). He also writes radio and television ads for candidates across the nation running for public office (see www.Sauttercommunications.com); and is a past

president of The Society of Midland Authors (see www.midlandauthors.com). Craig Sautter has taught a variety of courses in philosophy, politics, history, literature, and creative at SNL for the past 28 years and been presented with several teaching awards.

Competences

A-1-C Can analyze artistic or textual works in terms of form, content, and style.

- (Criteria) 1. Uses the vocabulary of criticism appropriate to the chosen art form;
2. Examines at least two works of art with respect to form, content, and style.

This competence will be fulfilled by reading and analyzing two novels and a few short stories in terms of form, content, and style in class discussions, reading notes, and a final book review of one of the novels.

A-1-E Can interpret the work of writers or artists within an historical or social context.

1. Chooses an artistic or literary work to consider.
2. Identifies an historical or social context relevant to the work.
3. Analyzes the work from the perspective of that historical or social context.

This competence will be fulfilled by reading and analyzing two novels and a few short stories in terms of their historical and social contexts in class discussions, reading notes, and a final book review of one of the novels.

A-3-G Can assess the assumptions and implications of significant ideas about human experience.

1. Identifies a significant philosopher, theologian, tradition or thinker's ideas that address the meaning of human experience.
2. Identifies appropriate criteria to assess these ideas.
3. Applies these criteria to the assumptions and implications of these ideas.

Students demonstrate this competence by analyzing the ideas of one or more significant thinkers or traditions about the meaning of some aspect of human experiences (for example, friendship, racism, beauty, suffering, hope, sexuality, oppression). Students will identify appropriate criteria to assess these ideas and their assumptions and implications. Students should reflect on how these ideas relate to their own experiences.

This competence will be fulfilled by reading and analyzing two novels and a few short stories in terms of the author's assumptions class discussions, reading notes, and a final book review of one of the novels.

H-1-H Can describe and analyze the challenges faced by communities in urban, suburban, or rural areas.

1. Articulates the characteristics of an urban, suburban, or rural geographic area.
2. Identifies one or more communities that embody the attributes of an urban, suburban, or rural geographic area.
3. Provides an in-depth description and analysis of one or more challenges for the selected area(s).

Students demonstrate competence by describing the elements of a geographic areas that define it as being urban, suburban, or rural. Analysis may concentrate on either changes over time within one location, or compare and contrast several locations and their challenges (such as adequacy of housing and transportation, development of an adequate tax base, migration or emigration of population, planning for land use. Students should consider experiences they have had in their own community as the basis for approaching this competence.

This competence will be fulfilled by reading and analyzing two novels and a few short stories in terms of issues of rural and urban living in class discussions, reading notes, and a final book review of one of the novels.

A-5 Can define and analyze a creative process.

Can define the concept of creativity.

Can identify, analyze, and describe the components of a creative process in one or more fields of human endeavor.

Can explain how engaging in a creative process affects one's perception of the world.

“Creativity is often associated with forms of human expression in the literary, fine, and applied arts. Because it involves the development of innovative ideas and fresh approaches to problems, however, the practice of creativity is no less integral a component of the social, physical, and technological sciences. In any field of human endeavor, the creative process requires an ability to questions accepted and ‘acceptable’ ways of perceiving and thinking, as well as a willingness to forge connections and refine ways of perceiving and thinking, as well as a willingness to refine knowledge through doubt, curiosity, and imagination. Through engagement, reflection, and analysis, this

competence invites students to understand how a creative process is born, how it functions, and how it changes our perception and experience of the world. Such insights may develop, for example, by analyzing the creative process in the writing of a poem, the production of a visual narrative, the planning of a city, the design of a web site, or the development of an innovative way of perceiving and explaining a natural phenomena.”

This competence will be fulfilled by reading and analyzing two novels and a few short stories by identifying elements of the creative process such as originality, imagination, new connections by the authors, during class discussions, reading notes, and a final book review of one of the novels.

Learning Experience

Learning Strategies

1. Reading, analyzing, informal lectures, and class discussion;
2. Each student will read two or more novels by Chicago authors;
3. Tapes and films;
4. Biographical research;
5. Keeping a reading notebook that outlines development of character, plot, setting, style, and theme, and that helps prepare for weekly class discussions;
6. Reading and reporting on at least one newspaper, magazine, or Internet book review per week;
7. Keeping a list and trying to use new vocabulary words from the novels;
8. Writing, and if need be, revising a final book review of one of the novels read in class.

Learning Tools

Required reading:

1. *Sister Carrie* by Theodore Dreiser; a Bantam Classic, ISBN 0-553-21374-1, \$5.99;
2. *Native Son* by Richard Wright; HarperCollins Perennial, ISBN 0--06-08977-9, \$7.50;
3. *1001 Afternoons in Chicago* by Ben Hecht, University of Chicago Press, ISBN 0-226-32279-3
4. Weekly book reviews of your choice.

Recommended reading for lifelong learning:

1. *Chaos, Creativity and Culture* by Kenan Heise, Gibbs-Smith, ISBN 0-87905-054-3
2. *Smokestacks and Skyscrapers, An Anthology of Chicago Writing* edited by David Starkey and Richard Guzman
3. *Chicago Stories* by James T. Farrell, University of Illinois Press, ISBN 0-252-01981-4

Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students should have:

1. An overview and appreciation of literary activity in Chicago from its origins to the present, and of the contributions of Chicago writers to the American literary tradition;
2. An appreciation and understanding of diverse literary styles and approaches;
3. An ability to analyze a novel for insights into character, plot, setting, style, and theme;
4. An ability to talk about fiction and writers;
5. Demonstrated their relevant competences.

Evidence Students Will Submit

1. On week 10, all students will submit a spiral notebook containing the evidence students wish to submit to support demonstration of their competences. This notebook should contain a record of everything they have done in the class.

2. Each notebook will be divided into several sections.

Section I. will be a log of weekly reading; i.e. number of pages read in the novel each week; names of book reviews read; other reading related to novels or writers; any clippings of articles or reviews you want to include.

Section II. will contain notes on the novel *Sister Carrie*, with observations (notes) on characters, plot development, scenes, theme, and style. This will be the biggest section of the notebook. For the first 50 pages of the novel, take notes to show me that you can think in terms of character, plot, setting, theme, and style. Stop after the first 50 pages. Then keep briefer notes that are detailed enough for you to remember important points to bring up in class discussions. Bring in a quote from the section you read each week for class discussion.

Section III. will list new vocabulary words you learned in the novels, plus a definition of the words.

Section IV. will contain book reviews you read for class discussion.

3. Additionally, weekly contributions to class discussion will be considered as major evidence of new learning or prior competence.

4. Students will also write and submit (tuck in their notebook) a final five-to-seven page book review of one of the two novels read in class, with particular focus on addressing your competences.

Criteria for Assessment

Your grade will be based on:

1. Completion of all reading assignments ... two novels, nine book reviews, hand-outs;
2. The quality of work in your notebooks as indicated above;
3. The quality of your class contributions to large and small discussion groups;
4. The quality of your final book review in analyzing the book through the prism of your competences;

5. Your development as an intelligent reader and person who can discuss what you are reading.

Despite all this, you should try to enjoy the novels we read together.

Fall 2009 Class Schedule

- Session 1: September 14, 2009Introduction, assignment of first chapters of *Sister Carrie*
- Session 2: September 21, 2009.....Discussion of *Sister Carrie*
- Session 3: September 28, 2009.....Discussion of *Sister Carrie*
- Session 4: October 5, 2009.....Discussion of *Sister Carrie*
- Session 5: October 12, 2009.....Discussion of *Sister Carrie*
- Session 6: October 19, 2009.....Final Discussion of *Sister Carrie*
Selections from *1001 Afternoons in Chicago*
- Session 7: October 26, 2009Discussion of *Native Son*
- Session 8: November 2, 2009Discussion of *Native Son*
- Session 9: November 9, 2009Discussion of *Native Son*
- Session 10: November 16, 2009..... Final book review and notebooks due,
final discussion of Chicago literary traditions
- Session 11: November 23, 2009.....No class; individual consultations if needed,
Final, final date for all notebooks and book reviews to receive a grade. Otherwise an incomplete must be negotiated
with a schedule for completion. Incomplete that are not finished after the following quarter are automatically turned
to an "F" by the university.*

Student Consultation

Feel free to contact the instructor to clarify work, discuss problems, or ask for guidance.

Call (before 9 p.m.) or e-mail rcsautter@aol.com to explain absences or get assignments or discuss other issues.
(First try to get assignments from classmates.)