



ENGLISH 356  
**AMERICAN TEXTS**  
**LATER 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY**  
SPRING 2007

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**Meeting Place & Time**

190 Dwyer | TTh | 12:30-2:10

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**Course Description**

English 356 surveys representative works of major American writers from the Civil War to World War 1 while examining these works' appropriation by twentieth and twenty-first century cinema. Broadly stated, the course explores the process of the filmic adaptation of themes, motifs, plots, narrative structures, styles, and characters that appear in a multigeneric range of literature. Written texts will be studied individually as literary and historical documents. Viewing how these texts have been translated (and transformed) by cinema will ultimately allow us to discuss the ways in which we reconstruct the past through the filter of postmodern capitalist media and technology. The goal of English 356 is to critically engage students with the growing practice of intertextuality and how this practice speaks to contemporary society and the human condition.

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**Texts**

**Novels & Stories**

Bellamy, Edward. *Looking Backward*. 1888. New York: Signet Classics, 2000.

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *The Yellow Wallpaper*. 1892. New York: Dover Publications, 1997.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter*. 1850. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005.

Melville, Herman. *Bartleby the Scrivener*. 1853. New Jersey: Melville House Publishing, 2006.

Twain, Mark. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. 1889. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982.

### Films

*Army of Darkness*. Dir. by Sam Raimi. Perf. Bruce Campbell, Embeth Davidtz and Marcus Gilbert. 1992.

*Bartleby*. Dir. by Jonathan Parker. Perf. Crispin Glover and David Paymer. 2001.

*Metropolis*. Dir. Fritz Lang. Perf. Alfred Abel, Gustav Fröhlich and Brigitte Helm. 1927.

*The Hours*. Dir. Stephen Daldry. Perf. Nicole Kidman, Meryl Streep and Julianne Moore. 2002.

*The Village*. Dir. M. Night Shyamalan. Perf. Joaquin Phoenix, Bryce Dallas Howard and William Hurt. 2004.

(NOTE: Students are not responsible for purchasing films, which will be shown in class.)

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### Grading Scale

Course grades will be based on the following percentages:

Attendance & Participation	10%
Assignments & Quizzes	20%
Minithemes	40%
Final Essay	30%

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### Attendance

Attendance is an essential part of this course. It is expected that you will come to each class period prepared for the day's activities; when you do not show up, or when you show up unprepared, the quality of the class's labor suffers. As we only meet twice weekly for seven weeks, it is important that you attend class, barring any unforeseen illnesses, family emergencies, religious observances, etc. More than TWO absences will negatively affect your grade. For each additional absence beyond two, one letter grade will be deducted from your final grade (e.g. a B will become a C). Any student

that accumulates more than FIVE absences will automatically receive a failing grade. You are responsible for all assignments given during a class period you miss.

Tardiness affects your number of absences. Continual tardiness disrupts the class and demonstrates a lack of respect for your professor and fellow students. Anybody that is more than 10 minutes late to class will receive an absence for the day.

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### **Participation**

This includes in-class speaking, activities, and responsive listening. Participation is crucial. Simply showing up for class does not constitute participation. You are expected to present your informed ideas and show respect for others in the classroom. Participation is mental attendance. You will be graded on how much you contribute to the learning environment of each class session.

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### **Assignments & Quizzes**

Throughout the semester, you will be given a number of assignments to be completed both in and out of the classroom. In-class assignments will generally not be given ahead of time; they will be issued during class and are to be completed during that class session. If you are absent, you will not be able to make up those assignments. Quizzes will be given periodically to ensure that the reading schedule is being followed. They will usually be administered at the beginning of class. If you are absent or tardy on a day that a quiz is administered, you will not be able to make it up.

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### **Minithemes**

A minitheme is a one page, single-spaced work in which you will be required to engage with the reading material for the class. The purpose of writing a minitheme is to develop your skills as a critical thinker and reader. In order to write a successful minitheme, you should keep a reading journal. As you read the course texts, look for recurring symbols, images and ideas and write them down in your journal along with anything else that seems interesting, disturbing or provocative. Then amass the information you have collected. Take one of the themes you have been focusing on in your reading journal and flesh it out with details, citations, and page numbers. Minithemes should exhibit SIX primary things: 1) an imaginative title that entices readers' attention; 2) a concise, specific, argumentative thesis; 3) evidence of attentiveness to the text under consideration; 4) strong textual support for your argument; 5) an explanation of the significance of the theme you have chosen to focus on; 6) questions or concerns for further investigation.

Minithemes serve as models for the sort of process that should be undergone when you write longer essays. In short, you must first read a given text, taking notes and underlining important phrases and passages. Then gather and sort out your notes, making sure your

focus is clear and sufficiently narrow. Finally, develop a meaningful and interesting reading of the text.

A total of FIVE minithemes will be due at the beginning of our discussion sessions for each major written text. Your first minitheme, for instance, will be on Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and is due on the first day we discuss that novel. You are not required to write minithemes on films.

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### **Final Essay**

This 5-6 page essay should be based upon the ideas developed in your minithemes and our class discussions and assignments. As a piece of literary criticism, the essay should argumentatively compare and contrast a novel and film. Students are responsible for developing their own topics. Final essays must be distinguished by the following:

12 TIMES NEW ROMAN FONT  
DOUBLE-SPACED TEXT  
1 INCH MARGINS (TOP, SIDES, BOTTOM)  
IMAGINATIVE, DISCERNING TITLE  
IMAGINATIVE, ARGUMENTATIVE THESIS  
8 CITATIONS FROM PRIMARY TEXTS  
5 SECONDARY SOURCES  
BIBLIOGRAPHY  
MLA STYLE

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### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism occurs when a writer: (1) copies verbatim from an author without quotation or attempts to disguise the act by selective omissions or alterations; (2) paraphrases from an author without naming the source in the text of the paper or providing a list of references at the end; (3) turns in a paper written by somebody else. As a point of academic integrity, you are required to submit original material of your own creation. Plagiarism of any material is a serious offense and, if established with sufficient evidence, can result in failure of the course or dismissal from the university.

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### **Writer's Hotline**

This service is available for quick or one-time questions that can be answered over the phone and usually involve grammar or writing mechanics. The phone number is **937.775.2158**. The hotline is open daily until 4 p.m.

## Class Calendar

Week	Schedule
1	Introduction to the Course <i>Army of Darkness</i>
2	<b>Due:</b> Minitheme #1 Mark Twain, <i>A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court</i>
3	<b>Due:</b> Minitheme #2 Herman Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener"
4	<i>Bartleby</i>
5	<b>Due:</b> Minitheme #3 Edward Bellamy, <i>Looking Backward</i>
6	<i>Metropolis</i>
7	<b>Due:</b> Minitheme #4 Nathaniel Hawthorne, <i>The Scarlet Letter</i>
8	<i>The Village</i>
9	<b>Due:</b> Minitheme #5 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"
10	<i>The Hours</i>
E	<b>Due:</b> Final Essay

(NOTE: This schedule is subject to changes.)