



Instructor: Ira Wells

~ ira.wells@utoronto.ca

Course Number: ENG364Y5Y

Course Title: Twentieth-Century American Literature

Course description: This course investigates the prose, drama, and poetry produced during what Henry Luce called “The American Century.” In a widely celebrated (and criticized) 1941 editorial of that name, Luce – the founder of Time and Life magazines – urged the nation to abandon its isolationist attachments and remake the world in its own image. But at the same time, America was busily making and remaking its own image, as exemplified in the astonishing diversity of literature considered in this course. The literature of this period registers the shock of modernity along with the cultural energy of heterogeneity: the influx of millions of new Americans from overseas; the staggering internal migrations from South to North, from rural to urban (and from urban to suburban); and the exhilaration of a culture coming to grips with automobiles, Mickey Mouse, and atomic bombs. Beginning with Theodore Dreiser and ending with a memoir by the sitting American President, we will familiarize ourselves with the major writers and critical debates of the century.

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Required Reading:

Texts likely to include: Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*; Willa Cather, *My Antonia*; William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*; Nathaniel West, *Miss Lonelyhearts*; Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*; Richard Wright, *Native Son*; Richard Yates, *Revolutionary Road*; James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*; Eudora Welty, *Collected Stories*; David Mamet, *Glengarry Glen Ross*; Philip Roth, *The Counterlife*; Barack Obama, *Dreams from My Father*. Poetry by Robert Frost, Langston Hughes, Elizabeth Bishop, Sylvia Plath, and John Ashbery.

First Three Texts/Authors to be Studied: Dreiser, Cather, Faulkner.

Method of Instruction: Lecture / Discussion

Method of Evaluation: Two essays, one class presentation, final exam, class participation.