

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Anca Peiu,**

**Elective Syllabus Spring Term 2021**

***Lost Cause Letters: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Representations of the Old/New South***

**Argument**

In this endeavor my first task is double: on the one hand I propose a return – from our now 21<sup>st</sup> century viewpoint – to some classics of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century American literature, such as William Faulkner and Margaret Mitchell, with their world-famous 1936 books: *Absalom, Absalom!* and respectively *Gone with the Wind*. My focus is on the meta-epistolary side of these two novels. I will also employ the 1939 Hollywood cult-movie, for the students to better grasp the fine levels of irony in this artistic approach of a most painful historical moment, i.e. the American Civil War (1861-1865).

On the other hand, I intend to inspire my students toward a meditation upon some echoes of the so-called Lost Cause still lingering within the new Southern mentality, as depicted in some short-stories about the post-bellum clash between generations. Here we will concern ourselves with four exquisite short-stories: two by Flannery O'Connor: "Everything That Rises Must Converge" and "Good Country People"; and the other two by Eudora Welty, "A Worn Path" and "Petrified Man".

The third section of this course will be about one celebrated classic literary rendering of 20<sup>th</sup> century New Orleans: the play "A Streetcar Named Desire" by Tennessee Williams. We shall also consider the Hollywood cult-film, with a script by the playwright himself.

**Requirements**

"Read, read, read" (William Faulkner) & DO NOT (even try to) CHEAT! Plagiarism can be quite easily discovered, thus leading to your utter failure.

Attend at least 75% of the classes.

Write two essays, on two different themes suggested by the **Reading List**, the **Bibliography**, and the class debates.

Your final grade shall be provided by an average result of my evaluation of your entire activity.

Needless to say, the highest challenge here is represented by the study of William Faulkner's generally acknowledged masterpiece, *Absalom, Absalom!* Therefore students aspiring to the highest grades should approach this task.

### **Proposed Themes of Discussion**

Week 1: A general introduction to our main concerns in terms of themes, authors and literary works for study.

Week 2: Letters in *Absalom, Absalom!* by William Faulkner.

Week 3: Letters in *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell.

Week 4: Students' debates and essay-plans presentation.

Week 5: The clash between the generations in Flannery O'Connor's short-stories "Everything That Rises Must Converge" and "Good Country People".

Week 6: The clash between the generations in Eudora Welty's story "A Worn Path"; sharp social satire in "Petrified Man".

Week 7: Students' debates and essay-plans presentation.

Week 8: New Orleans in the play and the film "A Streetcar Named Desire" by Tennessee Williams.

Week 9: Students' debates and essay-plans presentation.

Week 10: "Gone with the Wind" – the Hollywood cult-movie. Conclusions, opinions, dilemmas.

## Reading List

William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*

Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*

Flannery O'Connor, "Everything That Rises Must Converge", "Good Country People"

Eudora Welty, "A Worn Path", "Petrified Man"

Tennessee Williams, "A Streetcar Named Desire"

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