

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

**Fall Term 2023 Syllabus**

***“Lost Cause” Letters:***

***20<sup>th</sup> Century Literary Representations of the Old 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 books of 1936: *Absalom, Absalom!* and respectively *Gone with the Wind*. My focus is on the (mock)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 Southern mentality, as depicted in some short-stories about the post-bellum clash between generations. Here we will concern ourselves with two exquisite short-stories: one by Flannery O’Connor “Everything That Rises Must Converge”/ “The Artificial Nigger” and the other one by Eudora Welty, “A Worn Path”/ “Petrified Man”.

The third section of this course will be about three celebrated literary renderings of 20<sup>th</sup> century New Orleans, Louisiana, and/or (“modern”) Houston, Texas: on the one hand, the play “A Streetcar Named Desire” by Tennessee Williams; the novel *The Moviegoer* by Walker Percy; on the other hand, the novel *Terms of Endearment* by Larry McMurtry and the successful film inspired by it.

## 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.

## 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 “The Artificial Nigger”

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/film “A Streetcar Named Desire” by Tennessee Williams

Week 9: New Orleans in Walker Percy's poetic novel *The Moviegoer*, or, Houston,

Texas, in Larry McMurtry's novel *Terms of Endearment*, and the successful film inspired by it. From "the Old South" to "the New South"

Week 10: Students' debates and essay-plans presentation

Week 11: "Gone with the Wind" – the Hollywood cult-movie

Week 12: "A Streetcar Named Desire" – the Hollywood cult-movie

Week 13: Students' debates upon the two classic movies

Week 14: Conclusions, opinions, dilemmas

### **Reading List**

William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*

Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* – at least the first volume

Flannery O'Connor, "Everything That Rises Must Converge", "The Artificial Nigger"

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

Tennessee Williams, "A Streetcar Named Desire"

Walker Percy, *The Moviegoer*

Larry McMurtry, *Terms of Endearment*

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