

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

**Fall Term 2024 – Early Spring , 2025,**

**Elective 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 (so much more than) 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 five exquisite Southern short-stories:

- a) three by Flannery O’Connor: “Good Country People”, “Everything That Rises Must Converge”, “The Artificial Nigger”;
- b) and two 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”; “The Artificial Nigger”; “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/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, "Good Country People", "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*

## Bibliography

- Brinkmeyer, Robert H., Jr., *The Art and Vision of Flannery O'Connor*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge and London, 1993 (1989)
- Faulkner, William, *Absalom, Absalom!*, The Modern Library, NY, 1993 (1936)
- Gray, Richard, *A History of American Literature*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2004
- Gray, Richard and Owen Robinson, Eds., *A Companion to the Literature and Culture of the American South*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2007 (2004)
- Hahn, Stephen and Robert W. Hamblin, Eds., *Teaching Faulkner: Approaches and Methods*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 2001
- Marcus, Greil and Werner Sollors, Eds., *A New Literary History of America*, Belknap, Harvard, 2009
- McMurtry, Larry, *Terms of Endearment*, Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, NYC, 1989 (1975; film: 1983)
- Mitchell, Margaret, *Gone with the Wind*, Pan Books, London, 2014 (1936)
- Moreland, Richard C., Ed., *A Companion to William Faulkner*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2007
- O'Connor, Flannery, *The Complete Stories*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, NY, 1971
- O'Connor, Flannery, *Mystery and Manners*. Occasional prose, selected and edited by Sally and Robert Fitzgerald, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, NY, 1995
- Peiu, Anca, *Trecutul timpului perfect: de la Thomas Mann la William Faulkner*,

- EUB, 2001(*The Past of a Time Perfect: from Thomas Mann to W. Faulkner*)
- Peiu, Anca, *FAULKNERIANA: Back to (and Beyond Yoknapatawpha)*, Editura "C. H. Beck", București, 2019
- Peiu, Anca, "Lost Cause Letters: An Epistolary Bridge between two Great American Novels", in vol. *Spații intermediare/Spaces In Between*, Scientia Press, Sapientia University Cluj-Napoca, 2020, pp. 177 – 200, [https://real.mtak.hu/111349/1/Spatii\\_intermediare\\_REAL.pdf](https://real.mtak.hu/111349/1/Spatii_intermediare_REAL.pdf). CEEOL.
- Peiu, Anca, *Sophisticated Ladies in Life and Literature: Selective Portraits*, C. H. Beck, Bucharest, 2022
- Percy, Walker, *The Moviegoer*, Vintage Books, NY, 1989 (1961)
- Whitt, Margaret Earley, *Understanding Flannery O'Connor*, Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1997 (1995)
- Williams, Tennessee, "A Streetcar Named Desire", in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, Shorter Seventh Edition, W. W. Norton & Co., NY, 2008; pp. 1161-1222.