English 5750    Studies in 19th Century Literature: The Closing Decades
Online course    Fall 2017
Professor Howard Horwitz    3619 LNCO; x7353; h.horwitz@utah.edu
Office hours: MW, noon-1:15 PM; Tues., 2:15-3:15; or by appt.

We will study novels and some non-literary materials written during what is called the period of realism and naturalism. Because the authors associated with these genres characterized them in such various ways, we will not be very concerned to define the terms realism and naturalism. But the authors we will study were uniformly interested in representing the social world, or what Frank Norris called the “elemental forces” impelling society. We will look at the ways writing figured the social in an age of burgeoning consumerism and various forms of social (racial and class) conflict. How did writing in the period imagine the relation between aesthetics and the social?

This course is an online course. A week or so before we arrive at each text in the syllabus, I will post a video lecture on the Canvas site, in the page titled Lessons. (I will post PDFs of the Lessons as well, for students who prefer just to read text. I myself would prefer to watch the video and follow along, as the text scrolls down.) Because we want to help students in English classes attend to the language and structure of texts, the Lessons will often focus on specific passages in the primary texts and on passages in any ancillary materials. While the class is studying each text, students will participate in Canvas Discussions of the materials. Generally, two Canvas Discussions will take place each week. Each student will be required to initiate three Canvas Discussions during the term. The students who initiate Discussions will be able to respond to study questions that will be posted for each text, or they can develop new questions. For each Discussion, the other students will respond to one of the initial posts. Please note that on the syllabus short works often fall between longer works, to give students the opportunity to complete a longer text by the time we begin to study it.

Writing assignments: regular, brief exercises (@ 100 words) on the major texts we study (10% of the final grade); one 2-page, optional, ungraded, diagnostic essay, to begin a conversation about writing with individual students; three 4-5 page essays, one 6-8 page essay. I will distribute questions for the first three graded essays; students will develop their own questions for the final essay; we will have discussions about ways to form the question for the fourth essay. No exams. Contributions to the Discussions on Canvas will be worth 10% of the final grade. If you submit responses to all the Canvas Discussions, you automatically receive an “A” for this portion of the final grade. Otherwise, your grade for the Discussions will reflect the percentage of posts you submit during the semester. In addition, as I do for traditional class discussion, I will add a bonus to some students’ grade for the Discussions, if their Discussion posts are particularly helpful. The first formal essay is worth 15% of the final grade; the second and third formal essays are each worth 20% percent of the final grade; the fourth formal essay is worth 25% of the final grade. Students can revise the first three graded essays, and the grade on the revision replaces the grade on the first version. The brief exercises enable me to gauge whether students are keeping up with assignments and understanding the material as we proceed. The exercises help
students gain practice articulating ideas about the course materials. The stakes are low for any single exercise, and so you can try out ideas. As I comment on the exercises, I can often identify the germ of an argument for the formal essays. Submitting the exercises regularly can only help a student’s grade; if you don’t submit the exercises, your grade by definition will suffer.

You will likely have questions about any number of the matters I have outlined above. For example, how should students go about developing a topic for the fourth essay? How do I evaluate the Exercises? What does the optional, diagnostic essay involve? Or, what do I expect on revisions of essays? In ordinary classroom settings, we regularly discuss such issues during class meetings. Later in the summer, you will find on the course Canvas site explanations of these and other matters in the pages General Instructions and Writing Assignments. As specific issues or questions arise, I can communicate with individual students or the entire class via email or in a Canvas Discussion or by posting a video or PDF.

In a traditional classroom setting, we discuss matters of composition for 5-10 minutes each class meeting. About once a week I will post discussions of some element of composition. Some of the brief exercises may ask students to revise a sentence that in present form is ineffective. I try to help students learn to organize essays around a concrete thesis, with every stage of the essay developing this core argument. I try to help students learn to organize sentences around concrete, active verbs. Ultimately, the Lessons, Canvas Discussions of course materials, and discussions of matters of composition will help prepare students to develop their own question for the fourth essay.

REQUIRED TEXTS AVAILABLE AT THE UNIVERSITY BOOKSTORE:

Stephen Crane, Maggie: A Girl of the Streets (Penguin, 978-0140437973)
Theodore Dreiser, Sister Carrie (3rd Edition; Norton, 978-0393927733)
Pauline Hopkins, Of One Blood (Washington Square Press, 9780743467698)
Frank Norris, McTeague (2nd edition; Norton, 978-0-393-97013-5)
Mark Twain, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Penguin, 9780143107323)
Zitkala-Sa, American Indian Stories (Penguin, 9780142437094)

University Writing Center:
The University Writing Center offers one-on-one assistance with writing. Tutors can help you understand your writing assignments, work through the writing process, and/or polish your drafts for all the courses in which you are enrolled. Sessions are free of charge, and you can meet as often as you need. To make an appointment, call 801.587.9122. The Writing Center is located on the second floor of the Marriott Library. Visit the website at writingcenter.utah.edu. Let me suggest that before you visit the Writing Center, come to my office, and certainly show me outlines and drafts of the formal essays. I myself have helped train some of the tutors at the University Writing Center, and these tutors are well trained and experienced. But bring me your writing first. Discussing with me your exercises, on which the stakes are low, might
be useful as preparation for longer writing assignments.

Disabilities:
The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

University Accommodations Policy:
Students should visit http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php to review the university’s Accommodations Policy (Policy 6-100-Q., especially Q1.-Q3, and in particular Q3a.-Q3d). Students should notify me if they seek any scheduling accommodations under the terms of Policy 6-100-Q. Also in accord with this policy, please note that the content of course materials and consequently of class discussions may conflict with some students’ deeply held core beliefs. Any student has the right to petition the instructor in writing for a content accommodation. Please review the syllabus carefully, and if you have a concern about the content of any course materials, please discuss it with me immediately. If you wish to petition for an accommodation, I recommend that you submit it as soon as possible.

Plagiarism:
Plagiarism is one form of “academic misconduct” (see Policy 6-400 (Student Code), Section 1.B. 2., at http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php). University Policy 6-400, Section 1.B. 2.c., defines plagiarism as “the intentional unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person’s work in, or as a basis for, one’s own work offered for academic consideration or credit for public presentation. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, representing as one’s own, without attribution, any individual’s words, phrasing, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression.” You must cite any material you have consulted on the web or in a library; otherwise you have plagiarized the material, whether you quote (or copy) passages or just allude to concepts discussed on a website. Do not adapt other students’ work nor collaborate with others on your essays. The work you submit must be your own.

Student plagiarism is often easy to detect, because plagiarized passages do not sound like student writing and often depart from a thesis you have developed for this course. Google and other digital tools make plagiarism increasingly easy to document. Faculty are required to report for disciplinary action all instances of plagiarism to the Offices of the Vice President for Student Affairs and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Students who plagiarize have not learned the skills any discipline tries to cultivate, and professors are authorized to decide appropriate penalties. We can fail plagiarized work or even fail for the course students guilty of plagiarism. Plagiarized work is generally not high quality anyway, so better to discuss with your instructor any difficulties you encounter while crafting essays. Learn from these difficulties; do not try to disguise them. In general, do not use sources you find on the web to help you fulfill assignments for this course, because you will be unable to evaluate the
quality of the source. The questions we discuss in class are specific to this course, and websites will provide only general information.

In the next few weeks, I will post a provisional syllabus on the Class Schedule, and by the middle of July I will start to post on Canvas files about the course and the online format and also post PDFs of many of the shorter readings.