

**ENGL 6360 / Studies in American Literature**  
**The New Critical Regionalism: Place, Space, and Borders**

Alex Hunt

OFFICE  
651-2457, ahunt@wtamu.edu  
Fine Arts Building 113C  
T/Th 11-1, W 11-12

CLASS  
W 6:00-8:40  
FAC 109

We got amber waves of grain and bathtub speed  
We even got Starbucks—what else do you need?  
--“Out Here in the Middle,” James McMurtry and the Heartless Bastards

In the age of globalism, renewed interest in space and place has given rise to new forms of literary regionalism. Though characterized in large part by interest in regionally specific cultures and environmental issues, this is neither a nostalgic return to local color nor a back-to-the-earth movement. Rather, we see concern over the extent to which regional people and places are determined by powerful economic forces and an exploration of the possibilities for smaller communities to defend traditional lifeways, forms of labor, cultural difference, and ecological integrity. New regional literatures develop a complex geographical identity, less an essential sense of place than a dynamic map characterized by overlapping borders. As all places become borderlands, new regional literatures engage their own fraught histories and identities in a disturbing critique of contemporary U.S. culture.

**Primary Texts:**

Dorothy Allison, Bastard Out of Carolina 1992 (South Carolina)  
Carolyn Chute, The Beans of Egypt, Maine 1995 edition (Maine)  
Barbara Kingsolver, Prodigal Summer 2000 (southern Appalachia)  
Cormac McCarthy, No Country for Old Men 2005 (Texas border)  
Richard Powers, Gain 1998 (Illinois)  
Annie Proulx, The Shipping News 2002 (New York/Newfoundland, Canada)  
Richard Russo, Nobody’s Fool 1993 (upstate New York)  
Alfredo Vea, La Maravilla 1993 (urban Arizona)  
Karen Tei Yamashita, Tropic of Orange 1997 (Los Angeles, California/Mexico)

**Secondary Texts (articles, book excerpts—this list will be in constant flux)**

Robert Brinkmeyer, Remapping Southern Literature: Contemporary Southern Writers and the West (2003)  
Charles Crow, A Blackwell Companion to the Regional Literatures of America (2003)  
Kenneth Frampton, “Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points of an Architecture of Resistance” (1983)  
David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity (1990)  
Ursula Heise, Sense of Place and Sense of Planet (2008)  
Hsuan Hsu, “Literature and Regional Production” (2005)  
Brian Jarvis, Postmodern Cartographies: The Geographical Imagination in Contemporary American Culture (1998)  
Bruce Katz, Reflections on Regionalism (2000)  
Linda McDowell, Gender, Identity, and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies (1999)  
Potteiger & Purinton, Landscape Narrative (1998)  
Douglas Powell, Critical Regionalism (2007)  
Paul Ricoeur, “Universal Civilization and National Cultures” (1965)  
Edward Soja, Thirdspace (1996)

## **Work**

### **Shorter Papers (40%):**

**Bibliographical Entry:** Find a scholarly article, book chapter, or book relevant to ideas of the course (not necessarily scholarship on the authors we are reading). My intention is that I will select some of your findings for distribution to the class as a whole, so please spend time finding the best source you can find. I suggest you begin your search with the MLA International Bibliography (vs. Full Text Now!) Keep in mind that journal articles can be interlibrary loaned (they often come by FAX, which doesn't take too long). For your source, write an MLA style bibliographic entry and a ~250 word annotation which summarizes the work and explains your sense of its relevance. Staple this to a copy of the article/chapter. Also be prepared for the possibility of giving an informal presentation of your work to the class. Due no later than class on February 11.

**Short Papers:** I will assign two short papers (3-4 pages) along the way. Each will ask you to perform a close analysis of a primary text in light of some secondary text that we have read. You will have some flexibility about which primary text you write about. Paper prompts will be provided.

**Topic Proposal:** 2 page proposal for your Final Researched Essay, with initial bibliography. Due approximately week 14.

### **Presentations (30%):**

Three: 1) a ten-minute bibliographical and critical introduction to one of the authors we are reading; 2) a ten-minute discussion of some secondary critical or theoretical source that is relevant to the course as a whole and/or your final paper (this may or may not be your Bibliographical Essay source); 3) conference-style presentation (probably 15 minutes) of your final paper / research project, during final exam period.

### **Final Researched Essay (30%):**

I will set more specific parameters later, but basically this will be your major assignment for the semester. You will submit a topic proposal near end of term, but I encourage you to think about paper topics throughout the semester and to discuss ideas with me at any time. Your paper should, obviously, address the ideas, issues, and themes of the seminar (feel free to use the secondary materials assigned/discussed) and should demonstrate thorough research as befits a graduate seminar. I am open to your writing about authors not included in the reading list, provided that we agree on this well beforehand.

## **Policies**

I expect participants in this seminar to comport themselves with the utmost professionalism and to be fully engaged participants. Avoid absences. Late work penalized.

WTAMU seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for all qualified persons with disabilities. This university will adhere to all federal, state, and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal educational opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to register with Disability Support Services and to contact the faculty member in a timely fashion to arrange for suitable accommodations.

**Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:** All work submitted for this course must be your own and must be written exclusively for this course. The use of all sources (ideas, paraphrases, summaries, quotations) must be properly documented. Academic dishonesty has dire consequences at WTAMU. I photocopy suspected plagiarized papers for a leisurely investigation that may continue long after I hand them back. For university rules and consequences, check the following link:

WT Academic Integrity Code:

<http://www.wtamu.edu/administrative/ss/code/appendix1.htm>

**Schedule (subject to modification, esp. addition of theory/criticism)**

**Week 1**

Jan. 14 Intro to Course; Critical Regionalism

**Week 2**

21 Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina*; Ricoeur, "Universal Civilization and National Cultures"

**Week 3**

28 Allison, continued; Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance"

**Week 4**

Feb. 4 Guest Presentation; Harvey, "Spatial and Temporal Compression"; Be Reading Russo

**Week 5**

11 Russo, *Nobody's Fool*; Hsu, "Literature and Regional Production"

**Week 6**

18 Proulx, *The Shipping News*

**Week 7**

25 Veá, *La Maravilla*

**Week 8**

March 4 Chute, *The Beans of Egypt, Maine*

**Week 9**

11 Kingsolver, *Prodigal Summer*

**Week 10**

Spring Break

**Week 11**

25 Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange*; Soja, "Thirdspace"

**Week 12**

April 1 Yamashita, continued

**Week 13**

8 Powers, *Gain*

**Week 14**

15 Powers, continued

**Week 15**

22 McCarthy, *No Country for Old Men*

**Week 16**

29 McCarthy, continued

Finals: May 1-7