

Lit 342
Spring 2011
TR 2:10-3:30
GBB 205
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Office hours: M 2-2:45, TR 3:30-4:15, and by appointment

Montana Writers

We will look at writing about Montana by Montanans of one sort or another, as we examine how Montana and its people look from the perspectives of genre, time, race, class, gender, and other markers of identity. What does a body of literature look like when viewed from the perspective of state identity? What does a regional literature look like? What historical, environmental, social, economic, and political issues emerge as important to Montanans? How does genre change or inflect such issues? How have Montana writers addressed the issue of audience? Have they assumed their audience to include Montanans? Readers outside Montana? How have Montana authors addressed the particularities of state or regional or local identities? How have they participated in, or commented on broader, national issues and movements?

We will briefly survey Montana's literary heritage and then focus on 20th-century texts. We will read some of the work by writers who seem to be "canonical" as well as by others writers not as well known. How has the canon of Montana literature been formed, if it has been? How do new writers get their work known? Why does writing about Montana seem to be so popular outside the state? What makes a work Montanan?

I expect faithful attendance, frequent and spirited discussion, and an open mind. You will be asked to write two short papers and one longer one, do some research, and take at least one exam. Quizzes will occur as needed.

Course Goals:

1. We will examine a range of writing by Montana authors, with an emphasis on 20th-century writing.
2. We will look at these works within historical and cultural contexts.
3. We will consider the politics of publication and canonization.
4. You will have an opportunity to develop your skills in literary and cultural analysis.
5. You will be encouraged to develop your oral and written communication skills.
6. You will have the opportunity to enjoy good writing in a number of genres.

BOOKS:

The UM bookstore should have all titles, but often at high prices. Many of these books can be ordered for less money, new or used, from Internet sources. Many of these books can be borrowed from a public library. Whenever possible, I will put a copy on reserve in the library. The price of books continues to rise: I encourage you to shop. Living writers often depend on book sales for a substantial portion of their income, so if you can afford to support living writers

by buying a new book, I encourage you to do so. The following authors could use your support: Blew, Kittredge and Jones, Vaughn. Money from the sales of the late James Welch's books helps support scholarships at UM, so you or your colleagues may benefit directly from new book sales. You will need to order the Anne McAllister book online. It is available used, for very little money, and as a Kindle edition.

REQUIRED BOOKS:

Mary Clearman Blew: *All But the Waltz*

Jamie Harrison: *Edge of the Crazies*

Joseph Kinsey Howard: *Montana: High, Wide and Handsome*

Kittredge and Jones, eds.: *The Best of Montana's Short Fiction*

Anne McAllister: *The Great Montana Cowboy Auction*

Darcy McNickle: *Wind from an Enemy Sky*

Bill Vaughn: *First, a Little Chee-Chee*

Mildred Walker: *Winter Wheat*

James Welch, *Winter in the Blood*

RECOMMENDED:

Bevis: *Ten Tough Trips*

Kittredge et al, eds. *The Last Best Place*

The Fine Print:

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

This course is a demanding one, but I expect it also to be invigorating and fun. You will be evaluated on work in **five** areas. They are as follows:

1. A reading/ thinking/observing/responding journal: In the journal you will write something about every reading assignment; you will record observations about the relationship between what you are reading and your academic life, as well as your life as a resident of Montana; you will query, extend and analyze the discussions about the literature you have both in and outside of class; and you will respond to your own changing perceptions about the textual representations of Montana. You will be expected to write often (at least three times per week) and substantively. I will read your journals periodically during the semester, and you will receive a grade for your journal work at the end of the semester. The journal will also serve to help you generate ideas for papers and it will help you evaluate what you accomplish this semester.
2. Presentations: You will be presenting both as part of a team, and on your own. The team presentation will be on a Montana writer, his or her work, the reception of that work, and the criticism of that work. Your individual presentation will be based on your interview with a Montana writer.
3. Papers: You will write two short papers. One will be on the writer you are researching for #2 (above) and one will be a close reading of one of the assigned texts. For the longer paper, you

will situate one of the texts for the class within a matrix of contexts within which the work circulates (such as how Blew's work captures tendencies in gender relations in rural Montana).

4. Participation: your contribution to the intellectual work of the class and day-to-day group work.

5. An exam, quizzes, and any homework assignments

Homework and in-class assignments—you are expected to participate fully in your group and be prepared for your group task as assigned. Failure to participate may result in a reduction of your grade in one-third grade increments.

Evaluation for grading purposes will be based on 100 points available to be earned in the course. Possible points are as follows:

Journals:	20 points
Exam, quizzes, homework:	20 points
Formal Presentations:	10 points
Two Papers:	20 points
Longer paper:	20 points
Participation:	10 points

I will use the following scale to assign grades:

A = 93-100 points, A- = 90-92.9 pts, B+ = 88-89.9 pts, B = 83-87.9 pts, B- = 80-82.9 pts., C+ = 78-79.9 pts, C = 73-77.9 pts, C- = 70-72.9 pts, D+ = 68-69.9 pts, D = 60-67.9 pts, F = below 60.

In addition, attendance will affect your grade. Any more than two absences may hurt your grade. With 4 absences your grade might be lowered by one full letter (ie B- to C-). With 6 you may be subject to failure. You may offer reasons, excuses, etc. for absences. I appreciate hearing from you about an absence and I will listen, but nothing short of dire emergency, of a well-documented nature, can persuade me to alter this policy.

Cheating/Plagiarism: These will be treated according to university policies. All instances will go through the university procedure (see Student Conduct Code (Academic Conduct):

http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php). Plagiarism is an affront to the fundamental values of an academic institution, indicating a lack of respect for intellectual labor and a lack of responsibility for one's part in sustaining an academic community. All borrowing from another's work or text, whether paraphrased or quoted directly without attribution, may be considered plagiarism. Acknowledge, by citation of name, title, and page or location, all work that has influenced your thinking. You must document all sources using MLA guidelines. All work submitted for this course must be your own and be written for this course. You may not recycle work from another class.

Add/Drop deadlines and incompletes: Please see

http://www.umt.edu/registrar/documents/_notes/Important%20Dates%20201130.pdf

Students with Disabilities:

Students with documented disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations. Please speak with me privately about any accommodations you need at the beginning of the semester. Please be prepared to provide a letter from your DSS Coordinator. I will work with you and disability Services in the accommodation process.

University and Department Assessment:

The English Department may use, for assessment purposes, any work students produce in this class, including exam material and formal essays. No departmental assessment of student work will have any impact on a student's grade in the course or progress in the major. Throughout the assessment process, all summary data will be aggregated and student work will remain anonymous, with all characteristics identifying an individual student removed before the work is read by anyone other than the course instructor. Students who do not wish to allow their work to be used by the department for assessment may opt out by notifying the instructor in writing before the first assignment is completed.

My responsibilities to you:

No substantial changes to the syllabus without sufficient advance notice. Any major changes in grading or assignments will be voted on by the class.

I will accept revisions of papers within ten days of its return to you. **Before** you revise, you must have a conference with me. You may revise a paper only once for credit. No revisions accepted for work due the last week of class.

I will be available during office hours and at other times by appointment.

I will adhere to the set formula for grades. You will be graded on both the form and content of your written work.

I will encourage discussion, inquiry, and the open exchange of ideas and opinions. There are no "stupid" questions.

I will not always provide answers to questions posed in class, nor will I offer definitive or "correct" readings of the material. Instead, I will help you locate answers and analyze questions for yourselves.

Your responsibilities to the class:

You must fulfill all course requirements to pass. If you fail to submit work for each component of the course, you may fail, even if your total points suggest a passing grade.

Courtesy and respect for **all** questions and comments offered in class is required. We are in the process of educating ourselves, so while some remarks by others in the class may be distasteful to you, we should not presume that comments in the classroom are meant as hurtful or hateful. If you find any material or comments in the course deeply offensive, please state your case civilly in class or to me privately. **THOU SHALL NOT BE RUDE TO OR HEEDLESS OF OTHER STUDENTS.** You may learn as much from your peers as from anyone on campus.

Regular and prompt attendance. Please do not wander in late, leave early, or otherwise disrupt the class. Repeated tardiness will be treated as absence.

Come to class prepared for informed discussion.

Turn in all written work on time. Late work will be graded down accordingly.

ALL WRITTEN WORK (EXCEPT JOURNAL) SHOULD BE TYPED (12 point font), DOUBLE-SPACED, WITH ONE-INCH MARGINS.

You should have mastered the material covered in the university's basic writing courses. You should have full command of standard written English, as well as of the rudiments of university-level analytic writing. I will also assume a familiarity with the material covered in Lit 201 and one of the American literature surveys.

If you do not understand something—a word, a concept, a process, a text, an assignment—let me know immediately.

The use of cell phones, text messaging, Internet connections (unless part of a class assignment), or other communication devices is not permitted. Please turn off phones, pagers, etc. before entering my classroom. I prefer you not eat while in the classroom.

Codes: You will be assigned to a group, whose responsibilities are listed on a class-by-class basis. T=transitions, Q=questions, P=passages. If you have "transitions," you need to help bridge discussion and content from previous class to current one. Did we leave questions hanging? Is there something we discussed earlier that would be relevant to today's discussion? If you have "questions," you need to come to class with at least one prepared question that will spark discussion. If you have "passages," you should come prepared with a short passage from today's reading. Offer a close reading of that passage in the context of today's class or previous classes.

Course Schedule

All reading assignments should be FINISHED by beginning of class on date assigned.

1/25: Introduction, homework assignment

1/27: Representing the Past: Homework due, discussion; Howard: pp v-101

2/1: Howard: pp 102-224; T=group1, Q=group2, P=group3

2/3: Howard: pp 225-end; T=group4, Q=group5, P=group6

2/8: Assessing character and experience: reserve reading—Fiedler, Hugo; T=group1, Q=group 2, P=group 3

2/10: reserve reading; T=group 4, Q=group 5, P=group 6

2/15: Identity and experience: McNickle: 1-136 (Chapters 1-18); T=group 1, Q=group 2, P=group 3

2/17: McNickle: 136-265 (Chapter 18-end and Afterword); T=group 4, Q=group 5, P=group 6

2/22: Walker: i-104 (Part I, I); T=group 1, Q=group 2, P=group 3

2/24: Walker: 105-192 (II, Part II- Chapter 7); T=group 4, Q=group 5, P=group 6

3/1: Walker: 193-end; T=group 1, Q=group 2, P=group 3 **Assignment due**

3/3: Blew: 1-99; T=group 4, Q=group 5, P=group 6

3/8: Blew: 101-end; T=group 1, Q=group 2, P=group 3

3/10: Blew: reserve; T=group 4, Q=group 5, P=group 6

3/15: Welch: introduction-end of Part I (i-47); T= group 1, Q= group 2, P=group 3

3/17: Welch: Part 2 (48-138), reserve; T= group 4, Q=group 5, P=group 6

3/22: **Mid term exam**

3/24: Identities and place: Short Fiction from *The Best of Montana's Short Fiction*: Earling;
T=group 1, Q=group 2, P=group 3

3/29: Short Fiction: Introduction, McGuane (reserve), Jones, Offutt; T=group 4, Q=group 5,
P=group 6

3/31: Short Fiction: Kittredge, Zupan, McMahon; T=group 1, Q=group 2, P=group 3

4/5, 7: SPRING BREAK

4/12: Short Fiction: Blew, Davis, Thon; T=group 4, Q=group 5, P=group 6

4/14: Short Fiction: Ford, DeMarinis, Canty; T= group1, Q=group 2, P=group 3 **Assignment due**

4/19: Short Fiction: Meloy, Smith; T= group 4, Q=group 5, P=group 6

4/21: Short Fiction: from *The New Montana Story* (reserve): McNamer, McLaughlin; T=group 1,
Q=group 2, P=group 3

4/26: non-fiction: from *The New Montana Story* (reserve): Williams, Haefle, Meloy; T=group 4,
Q=group 5, P=group 6

4/28: Formula, genre, and place: McAllister: 1-159; T=group 1, Q=group 2, P=group 3

5/3: McAllister 160-299; T=group 4, Q=group 5, P=group 6

5/5: Genre, humor, and place: Vaughn: ALL (except "Survive This" and "Come Mudwalk With Me")

5/6: Final papers due by 5 PM.

5/11: Final Exam: 1:10- 3:10