

English 4375: Literature and Culture: The Automobile in American Literature and Culture
Spring 2014
Dr. Patricia Lee Yongue

Our focus in this course will be the way in which American literature, against a foreground and background of other cultural media, represents the automobile as a vehicle of personal, cultural, social, and economic mobility, communication, and identity and the experience of space/place. Inarguably, the automobile affected twentieth century life (and continues to affect life) as the computer has already dramatically overhauled twenty-first century life. What is so interesting (and aggravating) is America's conflicted attitude about the automobile, the love/hate relationship with the car that has existed from its introduction. The hate aspect is particularly true of academia. What is this attitude's genesis and progress? We shall look at the cultural representation of the car in terms of technology, gender, race, environment.

The course will require extensive research. Our Blackboard Learn virtual classroom will be a valuable and necessary resource.

Learning Outcomes

1. Students participating responsibly will become acquainted with some of the major issues of Critical Cultural Studies and automobile history and American literature and culture.
2. Students participating responsibly will learn how to discuss those issues in terms of American cultural media, including and especially literature.
3. Students participating responsibly will develop their research, writing, and critical skills.

Texts

Tarkington, *The Magnificent Ambersons*

Cather, *One of Ours*

Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

Gaines, "A Long Day in November"

Kerouac, *On the Road*

Erdrich, "The Red Convertible"

King, *Christine*

Ingrassia, *Engines of Change: A History of the American Dream in Fifteen Cars* **or**

Lackey, *Road Frames: The American Highway Narrative*

Assignments

There will be a midterm (on a date scheduled by the instructor) and a three-hour final exam (on the date scheduled by the university). Details about the format and scope of the exams will be presented during the semester.

Written assignments (exclusive of the exams) will consist of short critiques and commentaries, one of making use of media other than literature. Details about content and format will be provided.

Late essays, postings, quizzes, and exams are not accepted.

Emergency situations will be handled on an individual basis.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Students who accrue three recorded absences before the midterm will be dropped. Students who do not take the midterm will be dropped. After the midterm and before the last day to drop established by the university, students who have accrued three recorded absences will be dropped from the course. After the last day to drop, students whose total recorded absences exceed three will incur a loss of one full grade (E.g., A to B, etc.) on the final grade. Students who anticipate being absent for a number of days should not take this course. Please keep in mind that, after the twelfth class day, Ws will count toward the cap of six allowed undergraduates at state funded institutions of higher learning. If, after the twelfth class day and before the last day to drop with a W, you wish to drop the course, please fill out the paperwork yourself (or you can drop online), lest you end up with an F. When we are busiest, I may not take attendance every class period and therefore not have recorded enough absences to drop you.

Department

We are a university, not a daycare center. Mature adult behavior and courtesy is expected of all students both online and in the classroom. Students must not wander in and out of class, a discourtesy as well as a distraction to the instructor and classmates. Take care of personal matters before class. Late attendance will be recorded. Two late arrivals will normally result in one recorded absence. Turn phones, texting devices, recorders, cameras, pagers, etc. off, and save the reading of non-class materials for later.