

Carleton University
Fall 2020
Department of English
ENGL 2700 American Literature I
Walking in American Literature
Thursday: 2:35-5:25
Format: Blended
Instructor: Franny Nudelman
Email: franny.nudelman@carleton.ca
Office Hours Wednesday 2-4 and by appointment

Walking in American Literature

This course explores literary representations of walking from the early nineteenth century to the present day. Although we often think of walking as a lonely or solitary enterprise, this class will focus on the ways that walking is deeply entangled with public life. We will encounter those who walk to escape from bondage and those who march into battle; those who are forced to walk away from their homes and those who choose to walk with others in acts of resistance. In each instance, walking is a form of expression that joins the movement of the individual body to the history of the broader community—a physical action with social significance. We will also consider how writers use walking to think about writing and reading. A story, like a walk, proceeds step by step; when we read a text, we move through it, sentence by sentence and page by page. Many writers have used walking to structure their narratives and to comment on the ways that we order time and communicate meaning. In this pandemic moment, the theme of walking will allow us to return to some of the basics—reading, thinking, talking—as we move forward.

This course engages walking as a daily activity with the diverse histories and assumes that walking bears some deep connection to thinking, reading, and discussion—all vehicles for contemplation and for learning. In keeping with the topic, what we learn we will learn together through shared exploration and conversation. I have designed this course to counteract the isolation that some of us have experienced during the pandemic and look forward to finding ways that we can work together and learn from one another—as well as from the artists and authors we study—in these less-than-ideal conditions.

Teaching Assistant: Veronika Kratz (VeronikaKratz@email.carleton.ca)

Veronika Kratz is a fourth year PhD candidate in the English Department. She studies American literature with a special interest in how narratives shape our interactions with the land and help us to understand environmental crisis. Next semester Veronika will be teaching ENGL 2701, American Literature II.

Blended Format:

The format of this class will be **blended**. I will post a relatively brief lecture to CU Learn on Tuesday of each week. At the start of the term, you will be divided into three groups and each group

will meet with me on Zoom for one hour on Thursday to discuss both the lecture and the readings for the week. **Each of you will be required to attend class for one hour each week so in order to take this course you must be available to meet during the scheduled time (Thursdays from 2:35-5:25).**

Books

Teju Cole, *Open City* (2011)

Muriel Rukeyser, *The Book of the Dead* (1930) and Catherine Venable Moore, *The Book of the Dead* (2016)

(Note that these are published together in a single edition available at Haven Books.)

Film

Ava DuVernay, *Selma* (2014)

Books for the course will be available from *Haven Books*, and books and films will be on reserve at the library. Other materials for the course (videos, readings, images) marked with a * on the syllabus will be available on ARES and/or CU Learn.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Class Participation

On September 10, we will meet on Zoom to discuss the course and go over assignments and policies. At this first meeting, you will each be assigned to one of three groups. Each of these groups will meet with me for one hour each week throughout the term. If you are in group #1, for example, you will be expected to attend a discussion session on Zoom from 2:30-3:30 every Thursday. Attendance in these sessions is mandatory and you will be expected to have 1) done the reading and 2) listened to the lecture (posted on Tuesday) before our Thursday meeting.

Portfolio

Your assignments for the course will all be submitted on CU Portfolio. These will include:

Journal:

Each week you will make a single entry in your journal that records your responses to our readings, reflects on key ideas generated by my lectures, and records your developing ideas. The sky is the limit in terms of approach: Your journal may include still and moving images; recorded sound; found materials. It may combine analytical, autobiographical, and creative writing. It may comment on contemporary events in light of the historical events that we study. Veronika and I will read/watch/listen to your journal at scheduled points during the semester in order to give you feedback.

Walking Reflections

You will each write two short (2-3 page) papers over the course of the term. These will use particular walks—either ones you take or ones that you read about—to work through one of more of the texts on our syllabus. I will give more detailed instructions and we will discuss these assignments during class.

Map

At the end of the term you will produce a map of a walk or journey. This map can take many forms. For example, it might be a map of our course that charts the relationship between texts and ideas. It might be the map of a journey that one of the texts we have read documents and describes. It might be a map of a walk that you take repeatedly during the semester. We will explore the possibilities for this assignment, and you will be encouraged to come up with ideas of your own for the form that your map will take.

Evaluation

I will ask you to write two self-evaluations—one at the beginning and one at the end of the term—that will be included in your portfolio. In the first, you will describe your objectives for the term, identify the grade that you would like to receive, and explain what you plan to do in order to achieve it. Together we will work toward this goal. At the end of the semester, you will reflect on what you have learned and what grade you feel you have earned. Given the stress of our current circumstances, I will adopt a simple grading rubric for our course (A, B, C, D, F) and Veronika and I will evaluate your portfolio at regular, announced intervals to let you know what grade you are receiving up to that point. My final evaluation will take into account: attendance and class participation as well as the engagement, polish, creativity, and independent thought reflected by your portfolio.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Reading Schedule

September

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Introduction

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Rebecca Solnit, “Tracing a Headland,” Introduction to *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*
Teju Cole, *Open City*, Chapter 1

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Open City

October

1

Open City

John Gast, “American Progress” (1872)

John G. Burnett, *John G. Burnett's Story of the Removal of the Cherokees* (1890)

Robert Lindneux, “Trail of Tears” (1942)

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*Walt Whitman, "Song of the Open Road" (1856)
*Woody Guthrie, "The Land is Your Land" (1940)

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Muriel Rukeyser, "The Book of the Dead" (1930)
Catherine Venable Moore, "The Book of the Dead" (2016)
(Note that the texts by Rukeyser and Moore are both included in a single book published by West Virginia University Press.)

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Jacob Lawrence, *The Migration Series* (1941)
<https://lawrencemigration.phillipscollection.org/the-migration-series>
Kevin Young, "Thataway," from the Migration Series Poetry Suite
<https://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2015/onewayticket/perspectives/poetry/>

Fall Break

November

5

*Henry David Thoreau, "Walking" (1862)

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*Rebecca Solnit, "Like Moths to a Candle" and "Lise Meitner's Walking Shoes" from *Savage Dreams: A Journey into the Landscape Wars of the American West* (1994)
*Richard Misrach, "Desert Cantos" (selected images)

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Martin Luther King:
*"Palm Sunday Sermon on Mohandas K. Gandhi" (1959)
*"I Have a Dream Speech" (1963)
*"Nonviolence and Social Change" (from *The Trumpet of Conscience*, 1968)
*"Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence" (1968)
*James Baldwin, "The Dangerous Road Before Martin Luther King," (Harper's Magazine, 1963)
*G. Christiansen, "The Spirit of Freedom: Quebec-Washington- Guantanamo Walk for Peace," from *Liberation* (November 1964)

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Ava DuVernay, "Selma"
Rahawa Haile, "I Walked from Selma to Montgomery," *Buzzfeed*, April 1, 2018
<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/rahawahaile/selma-civil-rights-hiking>
"John Lewis, Towering Figure of the Civil Rights Era, Dies at 80"
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/17/us/john-lewis-dead.html>

December

3

William Kentridge, “More Sweetly Play the Dance” (2015), on display at The National Gallery of Canada

<https://www.gallery.ca/whats-on/exhibitions-and-galleries/william-kentridge-more-sweetly-play-the-dance>

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Maps and self-evaluations due

Plagiarism

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft. It is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include failure of the assignment, failure of the entire course, or suspension from a program. For more information please go to:

<https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

Requests for Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details click [here](#).

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details click [here](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520- 6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>