

# English 252

Jo Ann Dadisman, ENGL 252, Spring 2004, Appalachian Fiction

English 252/001 Appalachian Fiction  
Spring Semester 2004  
M-W-F 10:30-11:20 340 Brooks

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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is designed as an introduction to Appalachian fiction, with an emphasis on critical reading and thinking about the literature of the region. The course will attempt to increase understanding of this regional literature by reading what outsiders and insiders have to say about the region, its people and its rich literary heritage; by reading some stories which generally take the oral tradition and both short and long forms of fiction by Appalachian poets, short story writers and novelists. In addition to reading fiction, students will also be exposed to film medium and recordings from radio in which writers talk about their work. Students will have the opportunity to respond critically to the course content during group discussions, writing assignments and in class activities.

## **TEXTBOOKS AND MATERIALS:**

Giardina, Denise. *Storming Heaven*. New York: Ivy, 1987.  
Kingsolver, Barbara. *Prodigal Summer*. New York: Perennial, 2000.  
McCrum, Sharyn. *She Walks These Hills*. New York: Signet, 1994.  
Morgan, Robert. *Gap Creek: The Story of a Marriage*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin, 1999.  
Smith, Lee. *Saving Grace*. New York: Ballantine, 1995.

Some readings will be found on the internet and others on electronic reserve at Wise Library. The password for these materials is 245. Additional materials will be distributed by the instructor.

Because of the nature of the class and the wealth of materials you will be acquiring, I recommend that you use a 3-ring binder for this class. Materials can be organized easily and stored for your changing needs. Many quizzes will be open-note, so you will need a record of your readings, reactions and class discussions.

In addition, you must have an active MIX account, for I will frequently post messages to you through that account.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Students are expected to attend all class sessions, be prepared for all class activities and complete one 6-8 page paper on a topic relating to our readings which you have chosen and presented in a proposal for approval. You will submit an initial draft for evaluation before the final draft due date. I

## **SCHEDULE OF READINGS/ACTIVITIES**

### **Week #1: January 12-16**

•Course introduction: syllabus and policies; assignment: bring 3 internet articles dealing with Appalachia

Discussion of Appalachia: reading assignment: Caudill and Williams (electronic reserve)  
•Discussion of Appalachia: reading assignment: Jones (electronic reserve); begin week #2 readings

**Week #2: January 21-23 (Jan. 19 is holiday)**

•Film: Strangers and Kin; reading assignment: Emerging relationships: "Serena and the Wild Strawberries" (Dargan) and "It's a Sign" (Adams); "Common Lot" (Miles); begin Gap Creek; download George Washington Harris story #6 ("Old Skissim's Middle Boy") for Friday's class  
•Discussion of readings: in class reading from Tony Beaver (Up Eel River) and Harris; reading assignment: first 7 chapters of Gap Creek

**Week #3: January 26-30**

•Free reading day  
•Discussion of Morgan and Gap Creek; in class activities; reading assignment: finish novel  
•Discussion of novel; in class activities; research assignment: Mary Draper Ingles

**Week #4: Feb. 2-6**

•Introduction to McCrumb: the Ballad Series; in class activities; reading assignment: Chapters 1-6, She Walks These Hills  
•Class discussion; reading assignment: 7-12  
•Discussion of novel: reading assignment: finish novel

**Week #5: Feb. 9-13**

•Changing lifestyles: railroad, timber and coal: impact on West Virginia; reading assignment: Hawk's Nest excerpt and "John Henry"  
•Discuss industrialization in West Virginia: poetry of Louise McNeill Radio broadcast: Denise Giardina (WV Public Radio); reading assignment: begin Storming Heaven

**Week #6: Feb. 16-20**

•Film: Matewan  
•Discussion of Storming Heaven; reading assignment: finish novel  
•Free reading day

**Week #7: Feb. 23-27**

•Discussion of novel  
•Exam#1  
•Film: Night of the Hunter; writing assignment; reading assignment: Steele and Pancake

**Week #8: Mar. 1-5**

•Violence begets violence: Steele and Pancake; reading assignment: "Melungeon-Colored" (Haun); ASSIGNMENT: PROPOSAL FOR FORMAL PAPER; reading assignment: "Shannaganey Blue" (Berkley)  
•Discussion of "Blue"; q/a on proposal  
•Proposal due; individual workday; research assignment: religion in Appalachia

**Week #9: Mar. 8-12**

•Small group activities; introduction to Lee Smith; reading assignment: pages 3-118, Saving Grace  
•Discussion of reading: assignment: pages 119-204  
•Finish novel discussion; in class activities

**Week#10: Mar. 15-19**

**SPRING BREAK!**

**Week #11: Mar. 22-26**

- Film: Songcatcher; writing assignment;
- Role of music in Appalachian literature: folk ballads and traditional tunes; assignment: collect selections for class discussion/bring recordings (small groups)
- Finding music in Appalachian literature: in class activities

**Week #12: Mar. 29-April 2**

- Pinckney Benedict as a voice of the people: research assignment: Pinckney Benedict: a voice of the people (bring in a favorite story by this writer)
- Class discussions on stories
- Pinckney Benedict (WV Public Radio)

**Week #13: April 5-7 (no Friday class)**

- Introduction to Barbara Kingsolver: a major Appalachian voice; reading assignment: Chapters 1-8, Prodigal Summer
- Discussion of readings; assignment: Chapters 9-16; note 11M

**Week #14: April 12-16**

- reading assignment: finish novel
- Small group conferences (discussion of formal essay)
- Small group conferences 7

**Week #15: April 19-23**

- First draft of essay is due; discussion of Prodigal Summer
- Small group conferences (return of essay)
- Exam #2

Week #16: April 26-30

- Appalachian fiction: films/ extra credit opportunity
- Submission of final essay on April 28

**GRADES:**

In class writing, homework and participation, including 45%  
Friday quizzes (available only to those in attendance)

Exam #1 15%

Formal essay 25%

Exam #2 15%

During the last week of classes, students will have the option of gaining extra credit through the viewing and analyzing of additional Appalachian films. Five percentage points can be earned from participating.

**ATTENDANCE:** Please note that attendance has not been factored into the grading system. It is my philosophy that students are taking this class because they have an interest in the material and a desire to learn more about Appalachian literature. Each Friday that we meet as a class, you will be asked to take a quiz on the week's work. Failure to attend the previous class sessions will impact your preparedness for the class. Certainly failure to attend all class meetings will also affect your understanding of the material and your chances for being successful with both exams and the term project.

**DUE DATES**

Work with due dates have been identified on the course syllabus. Students are encouraged to read and work ahead of deadlines for readings, especially the novels. Assignments can be submitted to me by 4:30 on the due date and still be considered current. These submissions are to be placed in my mailbox in

room 231 of Stansbury, after Karen has signed and dated them. Do not place any work under my office door. Late papers will be docked a half letter grade.

WVU is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to foster a nurturing learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect and nondiscrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodations in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services (293-6700).

**FINAL NOTE**

I believe that all students can succeed in this class by staying abreast of the reading and writing assignments. Attendance can only strengthen your understanding of the material, how it relates to you and your world and your self confidence in articulating thoughts about the readings. I look forward to a good semester with each of you and will maintain an "open door" policy throughout the semester. Please contact me when you are in doubt or are struggling with an assignment.