



**ENG 522.001 (82483)—Major Figures in American Literature  
“Cormac McCarthy and the American South/West”**

**Fall 2015  
R—4:30 pm-7:10 pm  
Room: HL 304**

**Instructor:** (Christopher Gonzalez, PhD – Assistant Professor)  
**Office Location:** Hall of Languages (HL) 225  
**Office Hours:** MW 12:00 pm-2:30 pm and by appointment  
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NOTE: I reserve the right to revise the contents of this syllabus as I deem necessary.

<b>COURSE INFORMATION</b>
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**Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings:**

***Textbooks Required:***

**The following books by Cormac McCarthy are required:**

*All the Pretty Horses* (ISBN: 9780679744399)

*Blood Meridian: Or the Evening Redness in the West* (ISBN: 9780679728757)

*Child of God* (ISBN: 9780679728740)

*Cities of the Plain* (ISBN: 9780679747192)

*The Crossing* (ISBN: 9780679760849)

*No Country for Old Men* (ISBN: 9780307387134)

*The Orchard Keeper* (ISBN: 9780679728726)

*Outer Dark* (ISBN: 9780679728733)

*The Road* (ISBN: 9780307387899)

*Suttree* (ISBN: 9780679736325)

Fry, Stephen. *The Cambridge Companion to Cormac McCarthy*. (ISBN: 9781107644809)

Fry, Stephen. *Understanding Cormac McCarthy*. (ISBN: 9781611170184)

**Recommended:**

Abbott, H. Porter. *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, 2nd edition.

**(ENG 522 catalogue description):** Major Figures in American Literature. Three semester hours. A focused analysis on a significant figure in American literature, or a treatment of two or more important writers who bear some kind of close personal or thematic relationship. May be repeated for credit when the emphasis.

**Course Description**

ENG 522 is designed to provide graduate students with an opportunity to familiarize themselves with a specific American author that critics and scholars recognize as significant, important, and influential. In this particular iteration of ENG 522, the emphasis is on the author Cormac McCarthy—an author whose works have helped recast and critique America as a welcoming land of opportunity. Students enrolled in this course will take a methodological approach to understanding McCarthy’s body of work according to various formal, historical, ideological, and thematic elements, primarily, and other ancillary components in the process of creating and reading narratives. Further, American Literature is a capacious category; there are many orientations and approaches to it. Thus, the course aims to lay out the many theorists and perspectives that inform Cormac McCarthy and his position in American Literature.

This course is a graduate-level exploration of the works of Cormac McCarthy, whose *Blood Meridian* has been recognized as one of the greatest novels of the last 30 years. As we trace our way through McCarthy’s novels in order of publication, we will apply and test our ideas, and those of scholars we read, against the primary readings. At its core, this journey through the works of Cormac McCarthy will make you more cognizant of the structural, thematic, and dynamic features that undergird his narratives, how they are experienced, and how they persist in our changing world. Graduate students with specific thematic or scholarly interests are encouraged to integrate them into the coursework whenever possible. Students should plan to engage in and at times lead productive discussions based on the theoretical and commonplace readings; develop ideas via questions posed in response to the readings; hone the skills presenting before an academic audience, continue to develop writing via short, analytical essays, and write a final seminar paper aimed at publication in a peer-reviewed journal or section of a dissertation.

**Course Objectives:**

- Students will demonstrate their engagement with the scholarly community.
- Students will hone their ability to write an essay for publication.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

- Students will further develop their ability to discuss literary texts as measured by leading a class discussion.
- Students will hone their ability to write an essay for publication by submitting a final seminar paper for grading at the end of the course.

<b>COURSE REQUIREMENTS</b>
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**Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments**

This course consists of a series of activities and assessments to assist you in achieving the outcomes and objectives of this course and instructional units/modules. By the end of this course the class will read and discuss several book-length texts as well as secondary materials.

During the semester you will complete several major assignments designed to build on each other intellectually and conceptually. These assignments are:

**Class Participation** **20%**

Active class participation is vital in graduate classes, but it is at times difficult to measure. You should be prepared to discuss several aspects of the readings during each class meeting. Each class meeting ought to be viewed as a collaboration of an investigative team that is charged with examining a problem. Everyone's sustained attention and participation is key to this approach. Expect to be called on to discuss some facet of the day's readings and to elaborate on these points via discussion.

**Two Position Papers** **20%**

As an opportunity to expand and deepen your understanding of the course material, you will write two short position papers (1,000-1,500 words) to be submitted on two different class meetings of your choice. The topics for your papers should **not** be a rehash of discussions we have had in class, though they may be an extension of some discussion we have had in class.

**Discussion Leader** **20%**

For this assignment you will prepare to lead the discussion of a given work on a given class meeting. You will prepare by indicating discussion topics and distributing them to the class beforehand. Also, you will incorporate no less than five (5) peer-reviewed articles or chapters into the discussion, as you will have located and read these materials in anticipation of your day to lead discussion.

**Annotated Bibliography** **20%**

This assignment may be a natural outgrowth of your preparation for discussion leader. You will prepare an annotated bibliography of no less than twenty (20) sources, all concentrated on some aspect of a specific issue in Cormac McCarthy's novels. If done wisely, these annotations may play a large role in the completion of your Final Seminar Paper.

**Final Seminar Paper** **20%**

At the culmination of the course, you will submit a well-organized, persuasively-argued, well-researched seminar paper approximately 15 pages in length. Your final paper must unite a theoretical position with one of our commonplace texts by Cormac McCarthy.

Class Participation	20%
Two Position Papers	20%
Discussion Leader	20%
Annotated Bibliography	20%
Final Seminar Paper	20%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Scale used to compute final letter grades:

### Percentage

A: 100-90

B: 89-80

C: 79-70

D: 69-60

F: 59-0

### Technology

This course is conducted face to face (f2f). However, some aspects of the course (e.g., grades, dropbox) are accessed via an online course site. (I do not use eCollege.) Many of your assignments will be submitted online, so it is essential to your success that you be able to access the online module in a relatively convenient manner. Because the university provides students access to computers and other technologies, please make use of these items if you do not have a computer of your own. Do not allow a technological problem or question keep you from a successful outcome in this course. Technology is designed to facilitate your learning experience in this class, not to hinder it.

*There will be no extra credit assignments. As a rule, I do not accept late work.*

<b>COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES</b>
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### Course Specific Procedures:

#### *Academic Honesty Policy*

Texas A&M University-Commerce and the Department of Literature and Languages do not tolerate **plagiarism** and other forms of **academic dishonesty**. Conduct that violates generally-accepted standards of academic honesty is defined as academic dishonesty. "Academic dishonesty" includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (the appropriation or stealing of the ideas or words of another person and passing them off as one's own), cheating on exams or other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material. Instructors uphold and support the highest academic standards, and students are expected to do likewise. Penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension and expulsion (Texas A&M University-Commerce Code of Student Conduct 5.b[1, 2, 3]). Cheating, including plagiarizing papers in whole or part, will result in a grade of zero (0) on the assignment for the first offense and failure of the course for any subsequent offenses.

#### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance in this graduate class equates to participation in the discussions and is important to the success of this class and to your development as a writer/scholar. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that you notify me of potential conflicts with course expectations. The expectation is that you will do more than simply show up to class. Your active participation, in the form of discussion responses and questions, is vital for success in this course. Deadline extensions and other allowances can often be accommodated before they are required, but this requires advance notice. Related to this, SEE ASSIGNMENT POLICY

#### **Assignment Policy**

Student work must be completed and submitted on time. All assignments should be turned in during the class period when they are due. Students who know they will miss class when an assignment is

due must contact the instructor as soon as possible in advance of class to arrange for submission of the assignment.

All papers should conform to the MLA style guidelines, with the exception of your weekly responses.

### **Late Work**

I will not accept any assignment after its due date. Assignments submitted after the due date may receive a score of zero (0).

### **Drop a Course**

A student may drop a course by logging into his/her myLEO account and clicking on the hyperlink labeled "Drop a class" from among the choices found under the myLeo section of the Web page.

### **Incompletes**

Incompletes (grade of "X") are granted only under rare and extraordinary circumstances.

### **Administrative Withdrawal**

I reserve the right to drop a student from the course administratively for excessive absences or violations of student conduct codes.

### **Grievances**

Students who have concerns regarding their courses should first address those concerns with the assigned instructor in order to reach a resolution. Students who are unsatisfied with the outcome of that conversation or have not been able to meet individually with their instructor, whether in-person, by email, by telephone, or by another communication medium, should then schedule an appointment with the Department Head or Assistant Department Head by completing a Student Grievance Form (available in the main office, HL 141). In the event that the instructor is the Department Head, the student should schedule a meeting with the Dean of the College of Arts, Sciences, and Humanities after following the steps outlined above; if the instructor is the Assistant Department Head, students should schedule a meeting with the Department Head. Where applicable, students should also consult University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.05 ("Student Appeal of Instructor Evaluation").

### **University Specific Procedures:**

#### *ADA Statement*

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

**Office of Student Disability Resources and Services**  
**Texas A&M University-Commerce**  
**Gee Library 132**  
**Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835**  
**Fax (903) 468-8148**  
[StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu)  
[Student Disability Resources & Services](#)

#### *Student Conduct*

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. It is next to impossible to explore ideas in a classroom setting if students and instructors do not feel safe or otherwise supported. I will not tolerate discrimination in all its forms. Likewise, rudeness has no place in any classroom, and I will ensure that my classroom remains a rudeness-free environment. (See *Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook*).

*Responsibility*

You are responsible for understanding all of the material contained in this syllabus, as well as any announced changes to this syllabus. You are also responsible for understanding instructions and directives related to assignments, exams, and grades. This means visiting your professor during office hours if instructions and/or directives remain unclear. Unless you state otherwise, I will assume that you have understood what is expected of you in this class.

<b>COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR</b>
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The following course schedule is subject to revisions and other modifications as the instructor deems necessary for the course. Any changes to the course schedule will be announced on the course website in advance of the week in which the change will occur.

Fall 2015

Date	Agenda
Week 1 Sept 3	Introduction, syllabus overview, discussion and overview of narrative theory “Understanding Cormac McCarthy” ( <i>Understanding</i> ) “Histories, Novels, and Ideas” ( <i>Cambridge Companion</i> )
Week 2 Sept 10	<i>The Orchard Keeper</i> (1965) “The Southern Works” ( <i>Understanding</i> )
Week 3 Sept 17	<i>Outer Dark</i> (1968) Woodson, “McCarthy’s Heroes and the Will to Truth” ( <i>Cambridge Companion</i> ) Giles, “ <i>Outer Dark</i> and Romantic Naturalism” ( <i>Cambridge Companion</i> )
Week 4 Sept 24	<i>Child of God</i> (1974) Snyder and Snyder, “Modernism, Postmodernism, and Language” ( <i>Cambridge Companion</i> )
Week 5 Oct 1	No Class

Week 6 Oct 8  <b>Paper 1 Due</b>	<i>Suttree</i> (1979) Cooper, “McCarthy, Tennessee, and the Southern Gothic” ( <i>Cambridge Companion</i> ) Evenson, “McCarthy and the Uses of Philosophy in the Tennessee Novels” ( <i>Cambridge Companion</i> )
Week 7 Oct 15	Attend Jaime Hernandez and Gilbert Hernandez lecture (tentatively scheduled from 3:00pm-5:00pm). Details to come.
Week 8 Oct 22	<i>Blood Meridian, Or the Evening Redness in the West</i> (1985) “Into the West” ( <i>Understanding</i> ) Parrish, “History and the Problem of Evil in McCarthy’s Western Novels” ( <i>Cambridge Companion</i> ) Frye, “ <i>Blood Meridian</i> and the Poetics of Violence” ( <i>Cambridge Companion</i> )
Week 9 Oct 29  <b>Paper 2 Due</b>	<i>All the Pretty Horses</i> (1992) “The Border Trilogy” ( <i>Understanding</i> ) Monk, “ <i>All the Pretty Horses</i> , the Border, and Ethnic Encounter” ( <i>Cambridge Companion</i> )
Week 10 Nov 5	<i>The Crossing</i> (1994) Link, “McCarthy and Literary Naturalism” ( <i>Cambridge Companion</i> )
Week 11 Nov 12	<i>Cities of the Plain</i> (1998) Lagayette, “The Border Trilogy, <i>The Road</i> , and the Cold War” ( <i>Cambridge Companion</i> )
Week 12 Nov 19  <b>Annotated Bibliography Due</b>	<i>No Country for Old Men</i> (2005) “The Later Works” ( <i>Understanding</i> )
Week 13 Nov 26	<b>No Class Scheduled (Thanksgiving break)</b>
Week 14 Dec 3	<i>The Road</i> (2006) Josephs, “The Quest for God in <i>The Road</i> ” ( <i>Cambridge Companion</i> )
Week 15 Dec 10	Course Wrap up Peebles, “McCarthy and Film” ( <i>Cambridge Companion</i> ) Dudley, “McCarthy’s Heroes” ( <i>Cambridge Companion</i> )
	<b>Final Papers due at Midnight, December 18, 2015</b>

