



ENG 2540 | American Literature II | Section 100

Not Your Average High School Novel Class

Autumn 2026 | Ohio University

Dr. Edmond Y. Chang

ENG 2540
Section 100
CN 8748
MWF
10:45-11:40 AM
Ellis 012
Autumn 2026
Ohio University

Dr. Edmond Y. Chang
331 Ellis Hall
Office Hours:
MW 1:00-2:30 PM
or by appointment
change@ohio.edu



"A person who won't read has no advantage over one who can't read."
—Mark Twain

"You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, or who had ever been alive."
—James Baldwin

MAYA ANGELOU once said, "When I look back, I am so impressed again with the life-giving power of literature. If I were a young person today, trying to gain a sense of myself in the world, I would do that again by reading, just as I did when I was young." It is this sense that literature is important, that literature can reveal something about ourselves and the world, and that reading is a practice and lifeway maintained and sustained over time that is central to this class. In other words, literature is more than just words on a page, literacy is not a destination or a merit badge, and reading is as much about rereading as writing is as much about revising. This class will take up reading and rereading as critical practice by pointedly revisiting literature commonly taught in high school curricula in the US, literature needing rescue and revivification from this-is-so-boring mindsets, from the constraints of teaching-for-the-tests, and from the too easy themes and summaries of notes by Cliff and Spark. This is not your usual high school novel class. Texts may include in Mark Twain, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Nella Larsen, J.D. Salinger, John Okada, Toni Morrison, Qui Nguyen, Robin Wall Kimmerer, and Percival Everett.

A REQUIREMENT for this class is a well-developed curiosity about the world, about the cultures we live in, and about the cultural productions we imagine, produce, and consume. In other words, this class is about reading, critiquing, and analyzing our culture through different literatures and texts. We will engage different practices enjoying and analyzing literature and other media, as well as develop literary, feminist, queer, and intersectional strategies, habits, and perspectives of reading, thinking, and writing. Foremost, we will read and write and research with pleasure and for pleasure. We will also close read for analysis. And lastly, we will read and deploy literature as theory, as dramatizing the concerns, wonders, struggles, and politics of lived life and experience.

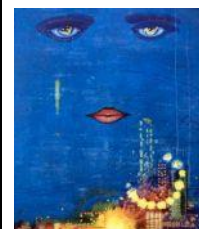
SPECIFICALLY, the ENG 2540 course goals and learning objectives include:

- Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of key authors and literary movements of American literature, 1865 to the present.
- Students will be able to apply an understanding of the historical and cultural contexts that shaped this literature when discussing and writing about it.
- Students will be able to employ appropriate literary terms and concepts to interpret and analyze the various literary forms and genres of the period.
- Students will be able to use appropriate textual evidence to accurately communicate the key themes, ideas, and stylistic features of the authors and movements studied.

IN OTHER WORDS, we will use literature, other mediums, and popular culture as vernacular theory to think, talk, write about and to interrogate the world around us. We will spend the semester asking and addressing difficult, challenging, and sometimes discomforting ideas, questions, and topics, focusing

"Do work that matters. *Vale la pena.*"
—Gloria E. Anzaldúa

"All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn.*"
—Ernest Hemingway



Required Course Texts & Materials

- Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*.
- Nella Larsen, *Passing*.
- J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*.
- John Okada, *No-No Boy*.
- Toni Morrison, *Sula*.
- Qui Nguyen, *She Kills Monsters*.
- Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults*.
- Percival Everett, *James: A Novel*.
- Web and Canvas access and an active Ohio University email account.



Course Requirements

Presentations
(20%)

Quizzes
(20%)

Creative Responses
(10%)

Critical Reflections
(30%)

Class Participation
(20%)

on different identities, bodies, histories, desires, experiences, and even struggles and violences. Whether on the page, screen, on campus, or in the community, we will explore and engage multiple perspectives, levels of familiarity with the material, and heady and heartfelt responses. In other words, our class will be a respectful, generous, collaborative, but not necessarily comfortable space. However, you do not have to believe in the ideas, theories, and analyses of the course, but you do have to demonstrate that you understand and can apply them. While pushing boundaries and comfort zones are essential to critical thinking, making connections, and intellectual and personal freedom, see me with concerns and queries, for reasonable accommodations, and for further resources on campus.

Requirements & Grading

Your grade should not be the sole exigence or motivation for this class. It is the hope of the course that you walk away from the class with something more. Find some pleasure and some edification and some knowledge from this class (or any class really) and success is usually not far behind. With that in mind, your grade will reflect your engagement, effort, close reading, critical thinking, writing, and participation.

Critical Question Presentation and Roundtable (20%)

You will be required to sign up in small groups for an oral presentation and roundtable during the course of the semester. For your presentation, you will read the literature and scholarship assigned for a particular week, summarize and contextualize the literary text, summarize and articulate two or three main points from the week's critical text, generate a critical question connecting the theory to the text, and contribute to in-class and online discussion for the week. Curations should have a group presentation plan, a substantive framing post, may include media, and each group member must contribute to the discussion and post.

In-Class Quizzes (20%)

There will be **ten** or more in-class five-minute quizzes at various times during the semester. These quizzes serve as a review of the week's main ideas, terms, texts, and readings. These quizzes might include brief identifications, fill-in-the-blanks, definitions, and short answers. A missed quiz must be made up within a week of its original date.

Creative Responses (10%)

Over the course of the semester, you will write a short-short story or poem, create a drawing, and generate a critical review as an alternative way to explore and demonstrate the ideas and goals of the course. These creative responses will be evaluated on completion and your critical, thoughtful engagement with the prompts.

Critical Reflections (30%)

Over the course of the semester, you will have **four** opportunities to complete short, analytical reflections that ask you to respond to the literature, the theoretical texts, and to assess your own work and performance in class. These reflections will be due (tentatively) at the end of Week 4, Week 8, Week 12, and Week 15. You must complete **two** of the three opportunities, one of which must be in the first half of the term. Critical reflections will be cumulative and based on the class readings, literature, other media, and course discussions.

"Authors do not supply imaginations, they expect their readers to have their own, and to use it."
—Nella Larsen



"Books are a uniquely portable magic."
—Stephen King

"When I look back, I am so impressed again with the life-giving power of literature. If I were a young person today, trying to gain a sense of myself in the world, I would do that again by reading, just as I did when I was young."
—Maya Angelou

Participation and Preparedness (20%)

Preparedness and participation form a large component of your final grade. It is essential that you prepare, attend, and participate in class. Missing class may seriously compromise your ability to do well in this class. Moreover, negative participation will hurt your participation grade. Participation is determined by 1) your **respectful** presence in class and interactions with me and others, 2) your **willingness** to discuss, comment, and ask questions, 3) your **preparation** for class, which includes having the required materials and doing all of the assigned reading or work for class, 4) your **engagement** and **collaboration** in group work, presentations, office hours, and course events, and 5) your completion of all **required threads**, other weekly posts, and overall care and use of the class Canvas—bookmark the address, check and respond regularly, and think of the blog as an extension of class:

<https://ohio.instructure.com/courses/81397>

Attendance

This is not a self-paced course. Attendance is required. If you are absent, you miss the explanation of an assignment, the discussion of a reading, the chance to participate, and overall, the class as a community of learning. Also, you are expected to be in class on time. Chronic or conspicuous attendance or tardiness problems will negatively affect your overall participation grade.

Moreover, absences for a third or more of the course / 14 class sessions may result in a failing grade regardless of reason. University-sanctioned and reasonable accommodations will be taken into account. **All absences are your responsibility.** If you know you are going to miss class, please let me know (via email) as soon as possible and make any necessary arrangements. When you do miss class, always find another student to get class notes or see me during office hours to discuss or make up missed work in a timely manner. You are always responsible for all material covered during your absence.

Assignment Format

All papers must be produced on a word processor. All documents should be saved in Microsoft Word format (or if necessary as a PDF). All papers must follow the manuscript format outlined by the assignment. Unless instructed otherwise, **all papers must use MLA citation and documentation conventions.** All papers must be neatly printed (in black), stapled in the top, left-hand corner, and should not be three-hole punched. Papers that do not follow these format guidelines will not be accepted. They will be returned unread to you. Papers will be regarded as late until they are resubmitted in the proper format.

Always make a backup copy of every paper you turn in, lest you be one of the unhappy people whose paper is eaten by the computer. You may even want to take the precaution of e-mailing your paper to yourself as an attachment during the drafting process and certainly before you exit the document and leave the computer. Or you may want to invest in cloud-based file storage like OneDrive (which all OHIO students have already have access) or DropBox.

Evaluation Rubric

Over the course of the semester, your assignments will receive feedback and comments that will identify what you are doing well and what still needs improvement. Your grades assess your fulfillment of the assignment, the quality of work, detail, analysis, and argumentation, overall effort, and finally, style, polish, and risk taking. Consider the following evaluation rubric as signposts or a kind of legend to your progress and evaluation:



MLA Paper Formatting

- 1) 1" margins top, bottom, left, and right on each page.
- 2) Single-spaced block header on the first page only with your name, date, course, my name:
- Student Name
ENG 2450
August 24, 2026
Dr. Chang
- 3) Appropriate title.
- 4) Papers are double-spaced with paper page numbers in the upper right hand corner; no extra space between paragraphs.
- 5) Standard Times Roman Font, 12 point only.
- 6) Correct MLA citation and bibliographic format. A paper turned in without a bibliography automatically fails and will be returned with no comments.
- 7) No generative AI.



Late Assignments

All assignments must be done completely and turned in on time. Late assignments will be penalized half a grade for every day that they are late. So, if your essay is late by one day and you received a B- for your work, then your final grade would be a C+. Moreover, I will not comment on late work. However, you still need to complete late work or you will receive a zero. If you miss class on the due date of a paper, you must notify me and make arrangements to get the paper to me as soon as possible. **Unless previously arranged, I DO NOT accept assignments via email.** Remember that a paper has not been officially handed in until it is in my hands. Never turning anything in late is always the best policy.



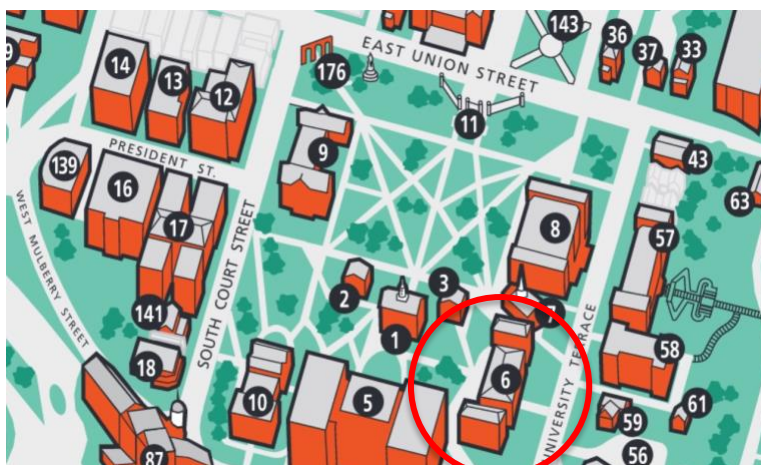
Contact Dr. Chang

Office:
331 Ellis Hall
Office Hours:
MW 1:00-2:30 PM
or by appointment
E-mail:
change@ohio.edu

- **Outstanding (A):** Offers a very highly proficient, even memorable demonstration of the trait(s) associated with the course or assignment goal(s), including some appropriate risk-taking and/or creativity. No generative AI.
- **Strong (B+/A-):** Offers a proficient demonstration of the trait(s) associated with the course or assignment goal(s), which could be further enhanced with revision, additional support, and creativity.
- **Good (B-/B):** Effectively demonstrates the trait(s) associated with the course or assignment goal(s), but less proficiently; could use revision to demonstrate more skillful and nuanced command of trait(s).
- **Acceptable (C/C+):** Minimally meets the basic course or assignment requirement, but the demonstrated trait(s) are not fully realized or well-controlled and would benefit from significant revision. Some generative AI (with permission).
- **Inadequate (D/D+):** Does not meet the course or assignment requirement; the trait(s) are not adequately demonstrated and require substantial revision on multiple levels. Relies on generative AI.

Finding Help

My office and office hours are listed to the left. I am available during these times or by appointment (which can be held virtually). I encourage you to come by early in the term even if it is just to talk about the class, about the assignments, or about school in general. (Pro tip: office hours count toward weekly participation.) I may ask you to meet when I think a conference would be useful. My office is located on the third floor of Ellis Hall in Room 331.



Otherwise, **email** is the best way to contact me (rather than Teams or other platforms). I will do my best to answer your emails, usually **within 24 hours**. If there is an emergency, please contact the main English office in 201 Ellis Hall.

You can also find additional writing and academic help at the Writing Commons on campus, a good resource for this class and other classes. The Writing Commons is located in the Academic Advancement Center (AAC) on the second floor of Alden Library and offers a variety of services including help with reading, writing, brainstorming ideas, organization, citation, and research. See <https://www.ohio.edu/student-success/academic-achievement-center> to make an appointment and for more information. Further resources, both on- and off-campus can be found on the Links page of the course website: <https://www.edmondchang.com/courses/2540/links.html>.

Generative AI-Free

This course will be a generative AI free zone. Students are encouraged to explore and understand their relationship to and limits for technology and to



Learning (With) Technology

Unless you have an official accommodation, the use of technology in our classroom is a privilege, not a right. Mobile devices like phones, media players, and cameras should be off and put away. Computers and tablets should be used for note-taking, in-class work, and readings only. Print is generally preferred for course texts and readings, but full-size e-versions are acceptable provided the student is able to readily highlight, annotate, and index. Finally, be conscientious and respectful in the use of the course website and social media and post no material from class to the internet or non-class sites without explicit permission from the instructor and the class. Keep in mind these three rules:

- 1) Use the Right Tool for the situation and the task—keep it simple and elegant,
- 2) Practice Best Practices—it must improve or enhance your learning (this includes generative AI),
- 3) Be a Good Neighbor—it cannot distract or detract from others' learning.

Inappropriate use and abuse of technology in class will result in the taking away of technology privileges for the offending student and/or class as a whole.

develop a philosophy of technology use that reflects their social, cultural, ethical, environmental, and creative values. **This course asks you to make informed, ethical, and consensual choices about generative AI.** All formal and informal assignments submitted for this course should represent your own thinking and effort and should be prepared entirely by you. There may be times when the use of AI-generated text or images would be appropriate in this course, particularly regarding reasonable accommodations and accessibility, but you should **obtain advance permission** from the instructor for any use of generative AI technologies. Without clearance, the use of generative AI at any stage of your work in this course (as indicated by manual and/or cross-digital detection) will be zeroed and constitutes academic dishonesty, a violation of course policy and of the Ohio University Student Code of Conduct (see below).

Accommodations

Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should see me or contact me **in the first week of class** to discuss their specific needs and provide written documentation from Student Accessibility Services. If you are not yet registered as a student with a disability, please contact Accessibility Services at 740-593-2620 or visit the Accessibility Services office in Alden Library 230. The OU Accessibility Services website is: <https://www.ohio.edu/accessibility>.

Academic Integrity

All students are required to uphold the highest academic standards. Plagiarism, or academic dishonesty, is presenting someone else's ideas or writing as your own. In your writing for this class, you are encouraged to refer to other people's thoughts and writing—as long as you cite them. Many students do not have a clear understanding of what constitutes plagiarism, so feel free to ask questions at any time. For our class, plagiarism includes:

- a student failing to cite sources of ideas
- a student failing to cite sources of paraphrased material
- a student failing to cite sources of specific language and/or passages
- a student submitting someone else's (including an AI's) work as their own
- a student submitting their own work produced for another class

If you have any doubt about how to cite or acknowledge another's writing, please talk to me. Any plagiarism or academic dishonesty will result in failure of an assignment or of this course, and the Office of Community Standards and Student Responsibility may impose additional sanctions. It is always better to be safe than sorry. Please review the Ohio University Student Code of Conduct, which includes full definitions, procedures, and appeals processes: <https://www.ohio.edu/student-affairs/community-standards/student-code-of-conduct>.

Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Misconduct

Ohio University and our course are committed to a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment. All OHIO faculty and staff share in the responsibility to create a safe learning environment for students and for the campus as a whole. With the exception of the confidential resources listed below, all OHIO employees are required to report any instances of sexual harassment or other sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Civil Rights Compliance (CRC), even if they learn of it through classroom assignments, discussions, or the like. Reports are made to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Civil Rights Compliance and can be made electronically at <https://www.ohio.edu/civil-rights> by selecting the "report sexual misconduct" tab, by phone at 740.593.9140, by fax at 740.593.9168, or

"If you don't tell your story, somebody else will."

—Frank X. Walker



"You must write, and read, as if your life depended on it."

—Adrienne Rich

"I just write all the time. In my whole life I've never had what I've heard people talk about writer's block. I've never had that. Life is like a song to me. I just hear everything in music, so I have never once thought, 'Well, I'm never gonna be able to write again.' I've got thousands of songs."

—Dolly Parton

by email at titleix@ohio.edu or civilrights@ohio.edu. If you are not yet ready to have something that happened to you or someone else reported to CRC, you can speak confidentially with the Survivor Advocacy Program (740-597-SAFE or <https://www.ohio.edu/survivor>), Counseling and Psychological Services (740.593.1616 or <https://www.ohio.edu/student-affairs/counseling>) or Campus Care (740.592.7100).

Other Policies

See the Course Policies & Syllabus page on the class Canvas for a more detailed list of statements, requirements, and guidelines:

<https://ohio.instructure.com/courses/81397>

syl-la-bus: n 1: a summary outline of a discourse, treatise, or course of study
or of examination requirements 2: subject to change

Dr. Chang / ENG 2540 / Autumn 2026 / Ohio University

Week 1: August 24-28: INTRODUCTION, CLOSE READING

Introduction to the Course, Outcomes, & Syllabus

Defining 20/21C American Literature, Canons

Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn* (1884)

"American Dream," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Dream

Gruesz, "America," Keywords

Week 2: August 31-September 4

Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn* (1884)

Davis, "On Teaching *Huckleberry Finn*"

Gray, "Race," Keywords

Week 3: September 7-11

Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn* (cont.)

Thomas, "Is *Huck Finn* Still Relevant?"

Week 4: September 14-18

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925)

Howes, "'To Be Young, Gifted, and Black': Making *The Great Gatsby*

Relevant to Black, Indigenous, and Students of Color"

Henderson, "Representation," Keywords

Week 5: September 21-25

Nella Larsen, *Passing* (1929)

Moynihan, "Beautiful White Girlhood?: Daisy Buchanan in Nella

Larsen's *Passing*"

Halberstam, "Gender," Keywords

Ferguson, "Race," Keywords

Week 6: September 28-October 2

J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)

Hekanaho, "Queering *Catcher*: Flits, Straights, and Other Morons"

Somerville, "Queer," Keywords

Mon 8/24
First Day of Classes

-AUGUST-

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

Mon 9/7
Labor Day

Sign Up for
Presentations

-SEPTEMBER-

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11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

Critical Reflection #1
due.

Fri 10/2
Fall Break

OCTOBER

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Week 7: October 5-9

J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (cont.)

Ginsberg, "Howl" (1955)

Enke, "Cis," *Keywords*

Lau, "Trans," *Keywords*

Week 8: October 12-16

John Okada, *No-No Boy* (1957)

Cannon, "Shattering the Binary: Teaching Critical Thinking Through John Okada's *No-No Boy*"

Tchen, "Asian," *Keywords*

Week 9: October 19-23

John Okada, *No No Boy* (cont.)

Week 10: October 26-30

Toni Morrison, *Sula* (1973)

Ferguson, "Something Else to Be"

Week 11: November 2-6

Nguyen, *She Kills Monsters* (Young Adventurer's Edition, 2012)

Bray, "Off-Off-Broadway's Performance of Geek Culture"

Adams, Reiss, Serlin, "Disability," *Keywords*

Week 12: November 9-13

Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults* (2022)

Justice, "Preface" & "Introduction," *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*

Alston, "Environment," *Keywords*

Warrior, "Indian," *Keywords*

Week 13: November 16-20

Percival Everett, *James* (2024)

Sun, "'Not Believing in Race': Racial Performativity in Percival Everett's *James*"

Johnson, "Black," *Keywords*

Week 14: November 23-27

Percival Everett, *James* (2024)

Week 15: November 30-December 4

13th (2016, documentary)

Week 16: December 7-11: FINALS WEEK

Fri 10/30
Last Day to Drop

NOVEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

Wed 11/11
Veterans Day

Critical Reflection #2
due.

11/25-11/27
Thanksgiving Recess

Critical Reflection #3
due.

DECEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
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