

**The University in Fiction & Theory**  
**English 8320: Studies in Twentieth-Century American Literature**  
**Prof. Samuel Cohen, University of Missouri**  
**Fall 2017, Tuesday 7-9:30 PM, Tate 310**  
**Office hours: M 1-3 PM, F 11 AM-1 PM, Tate 333**  
**cohenss@missouri.edu; <http://faculty.missouri.edu/cohenss>**

### **The Course**

This seminar will have two foci: American fiction about higher education and American higher education. We will split our time on the fiction talking about contemporary American fiction as a field of study and about the intersection between the works we read and our study of higher education. Students will be responsible for writing daily questions about the reading, giving presentations about our reading, writing and presenting book reviews, and writing and presenting conference-length papers.

### **The Texts**

Marc Bousquet, *How the University Works: Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation*  
 Don DeLillo, *White Noise*  
 Roderick Ferguson, *We Demand: The University and Student Protests*  
 James Hynes, *Publish and Perish: Three Tales of Tenure and Terror*  
 Mary McCarthy, *The Groves of Academe*  
 Louis Menand, *The Marketplace of Ideas: Reform and Resistance in the American University*  
 Christopher Newfield, *Unmaking the University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class*  
 Ishmael Reed, *Japanese by Spring*  
 Julie Schumacher, *Dear Committee Members*  
 Jane Smiley, *Moo*  
 Thorstein Veblen, *The Higher Learning in America: A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Businessmen*  
 John Williams, *Stoner*

Secondary reading listed in “Schedule” below will be available on Canvas.

### **Ten Things You Should Know**

1. This is a graduate seminar, and as such is intended to be a discussion. You will need to take part in the discussion for this class to work, or we will spend a lot of time staring at each other. You will also need to take part to earn an A in the class. I also have an annoying rule about not eating in class that I’m going to stick to no matter how annoying people think it is. We’ll take a short break halfway through.

2. You will print out and bring to class all of the assigned secondary reading for that day's meeting, with scribbles all over indicating that you've taken notes. If you are one of those electronic people who take electronic notes with their electronic gadgets, you will show me your system so that I can be impressed by the sophistication of your gadgetry.
3. You will bring to each class a question (typed, no more than a page long) prompted by some part of the day's reading. Questions should be interpretive rather than informational, exploratory rather than rhetorical; they should be the kind of questions that could lead to discussion. They will be shared in class.
4. You will give a presentation of no more than fifteen minutes on one meeting's reading (for fiction days, the secondary reading; for the other days, the primary reading and/or reviews of that reading). Presentations must not be read, though you can have notes (but no handouts, please); think of your presentation as a chance to teach.
5. You will write a 2000-word book review of a book on contemporary fiction (criticism and/or theory) published in the last five years. Prior approval of book required. You will make a presentation to the class about the book you review (though, as with your other presentation, you will not read it but rather work from notes).
6. You will write a conference-style paper of eight to ten pages related to the course topic and built on original research (following MLA style). Paper topics must be approved in advance in a meeting with me; if you cannot make my office hours, we will set up an appointment at another time.
7. You will present a six-page version of your paper during our last meeting. Presentations should be no more than twelve minutes. There will be a q&a after each presentation. Full length (see #6) papers will be due a week later.
8. Your grade for the course will consist of your participation in class discussion (20%), your daily questions (10%), your presentation on secondary reading (10%), your conference paper (40%), and your book review and paper presentations (10% each). (Note: I will be availing myself of the +/- grading option.)
9. Students with Disabilities: If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need to make arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please let me know as soon as possible. If disability related accommodations are necessary (for example, a note taker, extended time on exams, captioning), please establish an accommodation plan with the MU Disability Center, S5 Memorial Union, 573-882-4696, and then notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. For other MU resources for persons with disabilities, click on "Disability Resources" on the MU homepage.
10. University of Missouri System Executive Order No. 38 lays out principles regarding the sanctity of classroom discussions at the university. The policy is described fully in section 200.015 of the Collected Rules and Regulations. In this class, students may not make audio or

video recordings of course activity, except students permitted to record as an accommodation under section 240.040 of the Collected Rules. All other students who record and/or distribute audio or video recordings of class activity are subject to discipline in accordance with provisions of section 200.020 of the Collected Rules and Regulations of the University of Missouri pertaining to student conduct matters. Those students who are permitted to record are not permitted to redistribute audio or video recordings of statements or comments from the course to individuals who are not students in the course without the express permission of the faculty member and of any students who are recorded. Students found to have violated this policy are subject to discipline in accordance with provisions of section 200.020 of the Collected Rules and Regulations of the University of Missouri pertaining to student conduct matters.

### Schedule

- Aug 22 Thorstein Veblen, *The Higher Education*
- Aug 29 Mary McCarthy, *The Groves of Academe*  
Christopher Findeisen, “‘The One Place Where Money Makes No Difference’: The Campus Novel from Stover at Yale through The Art of Fielding”; Jeffrey J. Williams, “The Rise of the Academic Novel”
- Sep 5 Jeffrey J. Williams, “The Post-Welfare State University” & “Deconstructing Academe”; Leonard Cassuto, “Conclusion: In Search of an Ethic,” *The Graduate School Mess*; Christopher Newfield, “Introduction,” *The Great Mistake*; Patricia Matthew, “Introduction” & “Tweeting Diversity: Race and Tenure in the Age of Social Media,” *Written/Unwritten: Diversity and the Hidden Truths of Tenure*; Heather Steffen, “Intellectual Proletarians in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”
- Sep 12 John Williams, *Stoner*  
Steve Almond, “You Should Seriously Read *Stoner* Right Now”; Morris Dickstein, “The Inner Lives of Men”; Tim Kreider, “The Greatest American Novel You’ve Never Heard of”; Elaine Showalter, “Classic *Stoner*? Not So Fast”
- Sep 19 Don DeLillo, *White Noise*  
John Duvall, “The (Super)Marketplace of Images: Television as Unmediated Mediation in DeLillo’s *White Noise*”; Alworth, David J, “Supermarket Sociology”; Sally Robinson, “Shopping for the Real: Gender and Consumption in the Critical Reception of DeLillo’s *White Noise*”
- Sep 26 Christopher Newfield, *Unmaking the University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class*  
Paul Reitter & Chad Wellmon, “Field of Dreams: Public Higher Education in the United States”
- Oct 3 Ishmael Reed, *Japanese by Spring*  
David Palumbo-Liu, “Introduction,” *The Ethnic Canon: Histories, Institutions,*

*and Interventions*; Kenneth Womack, “Campus Xenophobia and the Multicultural Project: Ethical Criticism and Ishmael Reed's *Japanese by Spring*”; Crystal S. Anderson, “Racial Discourse and Black-Japanese Dynamics in Ishmael Reed's *Japanese by Spring*”

- Oct 10 Louis Menand, *The Marketplace of Ideas: Reform and Resistance in the American University*  
Paper proposals due
- Oct 17 Jane Smiley, *Moo*  
Mark McGurl, “The Program Era: Pluralisms of Postwar American Fiction”;  
Eric Bennett, “Introduction” and “Conclusion,” *Workshops of Empire*
- Oct 24 Book reviews due  
Presentations
- Oct 31 Marc Bousquet, *How the University Works: Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation*  
Gerry Canavan, untitled review
- Nov 7 James Hynes, *Publish and Perish: Three Tales of Tenure and Terror*  
Heather Steffen, “Beyond Proletarianization: Imagining Academic Labor in the Modern University”
- Nov 14 Roderick Ferguson, *We Demand: The University and Student Protests*  
Reading on Fall 2015 protests at MU, reading TBA
- Nov 21 Thanksgiving
- Nov 28 Julie Schumacher, *Dear Committee Members*
- Dec 5 Conference Paper Presentations
- Dec 12 Papers due