

**AUCA**  
**Spring 2012**  
**Syllabus**<sup>1</sup>

**Course Title:** American Culture through Short Stories

**Course Number:** AMS 262

**Course ID:** 2622

**Course Status:** elective

**Number of credits:** 3

**Time:** Tuesday, Friday 10:50, Room 124, 312

**Instructor:** Irina Y. Larionova, MA in English

**Contact Information:** Tel.: (312) 661113(241), Email: [lirina@auca.kg](mailto:lirina@auca.kg)<sup>2</sup>

**Office Location:** 215/1 (American Studies Department)

**Office Hours:** by appointment

**Course Description and Goals:**

The course is designed to give American Studies students a feel for the geographical, ethnic, and cultural multiplicities of which the US is comprised through reading a selection of short stories written in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The students will also get familiarized with the biographies of the authors of the stories. The stories in the selection have been chosen to emphasize the fact that cultural diversity is one of the strengths of America.

Part of the course will be focusing on developing students' vocabulary skills. There will also be stories which will help students develop understanding of language variation in the country which is based on dialectal differences as well as on some social factors, such as age, gender, and ethnicity.

**Course Text:** Betty Keene Taska, American Patchwork. A Collection of American Short Stories for Advanced Students of English as a Foreign Language. USIA, 1995

**Course Requirements:**

1. Attendance is *mandatory*. It will comprise 10% of your final grade.

2. No late classes.

3. You will be withdrawn from the course with a grade of W in case you miss 3 classes without a good reason or come unprepared on a regular basis. This is likely to happen before **January 27**. A grade of X is also a possibility if you stop attending and never turn up or do not prepare for classes and turn in the assignments when they are due. The administrative drop with an X grade is likely to happen before **April 20**. "Incompletes" are only given at the student's request supported by sufficiently persuasive medical documents.

4. You will have to do 25 reading assignments throughout the course. All of them are *mandatory*. It is the responsibility of the student to be ready with them for each class. You have to read the material indicated for each class *before* the class and come ready to discuss it.

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<sup>1</sup> I reserve the right to change some assignments and requirements depending on the individual pace, interest and progress of students. The reading assignments might be supplemented with study guides and/or additional handouts.

<sup>2</sup> My email is NOT for submitting papers and assignments; contact me by email in case of emergency or if you want to make an appointment and have no opportunity to contact me in person.

5. You will be required to write short responses (1 to 2 pages) to the readings which will be based either on your own ideas or on the assignments that you will find in the book after each of the stories. I expect a minimum of 15 responses which will count for 20% of your final grade. Late written assignments **will not be accepted** which will result in a lower grade.

6. **Active** and **meaningful** participation in classroom discussions is expected and encouraged. It will add 15% to your final grade. Active participation means that you make your own comments, ask questions, listen to others attentively and express your original opinions. Please, be patient to listen to other opinions and do not get too emotional if you do not share them. Try to find convincing arguments to support your viewpoints. If you participate passively expressing your reactions non-verbally by means of smiles, nodding or some other body language, you will lose the 10%.

7. You are required to write one short research paper for this course on the topic of your choice. The ideas for the paper topics will pop up during classroom discussions and will be connected with issues of American society, ethnicity, culture, language and gender. The topics should be **really narrow** and **specific**. An **informal topic proposal must** be submitted for the topic to be approved by the instructor.

**The topic proposal** is worth 5 % of the course final grade and should meet the following requirements:

**Length:** maximum 1 page double spaced, Times New Roman, 12 – **1%**.

**Content:** the proposal should

- a. clearly identify **the goals** of your research – **1.5%**,
- b. have **a clear preliminary thesis statement** (the core idea of your paper) – **1.5%**,
- c. list **the sources** you are going to use for your research - **1%**.

**The paper** is worth 20% of the final grade. The 20% include working with 2 paper drafts, each for 5%. The revised version of the paper is worth 10% of the course grade. I also plan you to do 2 peer revisions of the papers in class.

**The paper requirements** are as follows:

**Length:** minimum 7 pages double spaced, Times New Roman, 12 – **1%**.

**Structure:** the paper must have an introduction, a clear thesis statement well developed and supported by sufficient evidence, and a thorough conclusion – **2%**.

**Content:** papers must analyze the sources, not summarize them. Plot summaries, quotations and paraphrases should be kept to a minimum. The text of the paper must consist mainly of **your own writing and thinking** – **4%**.

Accurate use of English is expected in terms of grammar, vocabulary and style - **2%**.

**Careful documentation and good organization** will also be evaluated. There must be at least **5** sources with no more than **2** online sources. **MLA** style requirements should be followed - **1%**.

**The due dates for the topic proposal and paper drafts as well as the final version of the paper are indicated in the daily schedule of the syllabus.**

**No late proposals and papers will be accepted. No papers will be accepted without drafts.**

8. You will also be required to give an interactive presentation for 10 minutes on the topic of your interest related to American culture. I expect you to identify the topic no later than **January 27** and share your ideas about the presentation in the classroom. I will pass around a sign up sheet on

January 27 so that you could schedule the date of your presentation. The presentation is worth 10% of the course grade. The deadline is **April 24**.

**9.** It is *mandatory* that you should take a final exam for this course. The exam is worth 25% of the course grade. It will be based on the contents of readings and discussions.

**10.** The syllabus requires you to fulfill all the assignments, participate in all the activities, and submit the written assignments on time. This is what will make it possible for you to get a satisfying grade. Please, be aware that there *will not be any bonus assignments* to help you improve your grade at the very last moment, except if you choose to write 25 short responses to the readings instead if the required minimum of 15. This will add 10% more to your final grade.

**11.** The University maintains and enforces a strict policy against academic dishonesty. . Academic dishonesty is representing another’s work as one’s own, active complicity in such falsification, or violating test conditions. Plagiarism is stealing and passing off the ideas and words of another as one’s own or using the work of another without crediting the source. Prompting & cheating during classes & exams, plagiarism, using false citations, and submitting false data will result in the course failure.

**Grading Policy:**

Attendance - 10%

Active and Meaningful Participation in Classroom Discussions – 10%

An Interactive Presentation for 10 minutes – 10%

Short responses to reading assignments (a minimum of 15) – 20%

Informal paper topic proposal – 5%

Paper and 2 drafts – 20%

Final Examination – 25%

The course will be graded on the following letter-grade scale:

<b>A</b> - 100-95 %	<b>B+</b> - 89-87 %	<b>C+</b> - 79-77 %	<b>D+</b> - 69-67 %
<b>A-</b> - 94-90 %	<b>B</b> – 86-84 %	<b>C</b> –76-74 %	<b>D</b> – 66-64 %
	<b>B-</b> - 83-80 %	<b>C-</b> - 73-70 %	<b>D-</b> 63-60 %
		<b>F</b> – less than 60 %	

**Tentative Daily Schedule**

<b>WEEK</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Home Assignments and In-Class Activities</b>
1	January 10	Introduction to course. Syllabus and Course Requirements Discussion. Course Expectations. Textbook Presentation.
	January 13	<b>Reading Assignment 1. THE CITY. <u>Pillar of Salt</u> by Shirley Jackson. Pp. 1-14.</b> Tentative questions for classroom discussion: What is an allusion? What is your overall impression of the story? What new information about America did you learn from it? What issues from the story would you like to research?
2	January 17	<b>Reading Assignment 2. <u>The Somebody</u> by Danny Santiago. Pp. 15-23.</b> Tentative questions for classroom

		discussion: What does the term 'Chicano' mean? What language issues attracted your attention in the story? Which of them do you think you could research? What's ethnicity? What's identity? How similar/different are the terms?
	January 20	<b><i>Reading Assignment 3. <u>How the Devil Came Down Division Street</u></i></b> by Nelson Algren. Pp. 42-31. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: What non-standard speech forms did you come across in the story? How would you explain their use? What is Chicago famous for?
3	January 24	<b><i>Reading Assignment 4. <u>THE NORTHEAST. The Family Meadow</u></i></b> by John Updike. Pp. 33-39. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: What does the term 'extended family' mean? Is family life in the US different from family life in this country? Why? Why not?
	January 27 <i>Sharing ideas about presentation topics. Scheduling presentations.</i>	<b><i>Reading Assignment 5. <u>The Bedquilt</u></i></b> by Dorothy Canfield Fisher. Pp 40-51. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: Why do you think the book we are reading is called 'American Patchwork'? What is another cultural metaphor to indicate American nation? What are the most important cultural issues that you learned about from the story? Are there any issues that you would like to research in your paper?
4	January 31	<b><i>Reading Assignment 6. <u>Grubbing for Roots</u></i></b> by Stephen Minot. Pp. 52-60. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: How does the story contribute to your knowledge of the Northeast? What makes the story similar/different to the stories you read before?
	February 3	<b><i>Reading Assignment 7. <u>Grubbing for Roots</u></i></b> by Stephen Minot. Pp.61-65. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: What are the activities described in the story? What information does the story give you about the state of Maine?
5	February 7	<b><i>Reading Assignment 8. <u>THE SOUTH. A Respectable Woman</u></i></b> by Kate Chopin. Pp.66-72. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: What is the South in the US famous for? What French dialects spoken in Louisiana did you learn about? Do you find this story informative in terms of American culture?
	February 10	<b><i>Reading Assignment 9. <u>The Man Who Saw the Flood</u></i></b> by Richard Wright. Pp. 73- 80. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: What is the dialect spoken in the story? Do you know the linguistic term to denote the dialect? What are the most distinctive features of the dialect? Why do you think the dialect is spoken in the USA?
6	February 14	<b><i>Reading Assignment 10. <u>I Came from Yonder Mountain</u></i></b> by Evan S. Connell, Jr. Pp. 81-89. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: What peculiarities of the English language does this story reveal? What examples of archaic usage can you give? What are the distinctive features of rural speech?
	February 17	<b><i>Reading Assignment 11. <u>APPALACHIA. Good Morning</u></i></b> by Mark Hager. Pp.90-97. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: Why is the story called Good Morning? Does the title have any symbolic significance?
7	February 21	<b><i>Reading Assignment 12. <u>The Clearing</u></i></b> by Jesse Stuart. Pp.98-105. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: What word games do you know? Playing the Guinea Game as a team

		game.
	February 24	<b>Reading Assignment 13. THE MIDWEST. <u>A Day's Pleasure</u></b> by Hamlin Garland. Pp.108-117. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: What information about religion in the USA did you find in the story? Do you know anything about other religious denominations in the US?
8	February 28	<b>Reading Assignment 14. <u>Sophistication</u></b> by Sherwood Anderson. Pp. 118-123. Develop your own set of questions (5 or 6) for classroom discussion.
	March 2 <i>(due date for the informal paper topic proposal)</i>	<b>Presentations of informal paper topic proposals and their discussion.</b> I expect you to bring a printed version of your topic proposal in the classroom and make a mini-presentation of what exactly you will be doing research on. The proposals have to be turned in.
9	March 5-9	<b>Spring Break, no classes</b>
10	March 13	<b>Reading Assignment 15. <u>Sophistication</u></b> by Sherwood Anderson. Pp.123-126. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: What makes this story similar/different to the other stories that you read? How would you define the genre of the story?
	March 16	<b>Reading Assignment 16. <u>The Roundhouse</u></b> by Gayl Jones. Pp.127-132. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: What's your impression of the story? Why does the main character seem strange to other characters in the story? What makes Americans feel uncomfortable if other people do not talk to them? Do you know anything about the rules of communication in American discourse?
11	March 20 <b>Due date for Paper Draft 1 (3+ pages)</b>	<b>Peer revision of Draft 1.</b> Identifying paper thesis statements and sharing impressions. Expressing criticisms. Providing suggestions.
	March 23	<b>Reading Assignment 17. <u>The Roundhouse</u></b> by Gayl Jones. Pp.133- 136.Tentative questions for classroom discussion: Sharing my personal experience of staying in Indiana for two years as a grad student.
12	March 27	<b>Reading Assignment 18. THE SOUTHWEST. <u>The Hammon and the Beans</u></b> by Americo Paredes. Pp.137-145. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: This story concerns Mexican-Americans living in a border area of the United States. What do you think their experiences with the dominant culture might be? Do you know of any linguistic phenomena language contact might produce? What occurs as a result of English and Spanish contact? What is the phenomenon that people have to experience when they speak two languages?
	March 30	<b>Reading Assignment 19. <u>Companero, Never Tell Anyone</u></b> by Harvey Fergusson. Pp.146-153. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: What's a stereotype? What are ethnic stereotypes expressed by characters in the story? Why does the author use the stereotypes?
13	April 3	<b>Reading Assignment 20. THE WEST. <u>Looking into Nothing</u></b> by Kent Nelson. Pp.154- 165. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: What traditional folk

		songs does the story introduce you to? Do you know any other folk songs that are popular in the US? Listening to songs by John Denver. (Pay attention to the images created in the songs. Do they have any connection with the cultural notes that you read?)
	April 6 <b><i>Due Date for Paper Draft 2 (6+ pages)</i></b>	<b><i>Peer revision of Draft 2.</i></b> Expressing criticisms. Providing suggestions. Is there any improvement?
14	April 10	<b><i>Reading Assignment 21. In the Silence</i></b> by Peggy Simson Curry. Pp.168-177. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: What cultural issues does the story explore or is connected with?
	April 13	<b><i>Reading Assignment 22. The Chessmen</i></b> by Toshio Mori. Pp. 178-187. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: What did you learn about California and San Francisco? What did you learn about the life of Japanese-Americans in the US?
15	April 17	<b><i>Reading Assignment 23. THE NEWEST STATES. The Eskimo Widow</i></b> by Louise Untermeyer. Pp.190-195. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: What are the things that impressed you most about Eskimos and Alaska?
	April 20 <b><i>(Paper due date) I expect you to turn in your papers when you come to class.</i></b>	<b><i>Short summaries/mini presentations of the results of your research.</i></b> Classroom discussion of each others' findings.
16	April 24 <b><i>Presentation Deadline.</i></b>	<b><i>Reading Assignment 24. Molokini</i></b> by T.W.Hard. Pp.196-207. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: Do you know anything about Hawaiian culture? Does the story expand your horizons about Hawaii?
	April 27	<b><i>Reading Assignment 25.</i></b> I will select this assignment after the classroom discussion with you. I plan it to be a folk tale by Native American people that represents oral tradition literature in the US. Tentative questions for classroom discussion: I expect you to outline questions for classroom discussion on your own after you read the tale.
17	May 4	<b>Final Examination</b>