



**Syllabus for English 3388.01
(Texas Crossroads)
Spring 2018—Tuesday-Thursday 12:30 to
1:50—Evans 417
CRN: 20807—Credit: 3 hours.**



Instructor: Gene Young

Office and Hours: Evans 416—Tuesday and Thursday 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and Tuesday and Thursday 3:30 to 4:30. Feel completely free to drop in with problems, questions, or just chit-chat. I could see you on MWF, by appointment. If you can't catch me in my office, e-mail is probably the best way to communicate with me.

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Catalogue Course Description. ENGL 3388 Texas Crossroads. [formerly ENG 388] An interdisciplinary study of intersections among literature, history, science, culture and politics of the "Crossroads" area of Texas. Prerequisites: ENG 164 <ENGL 1301>, 165 <1302>, either 265 <2331> or 266 <2332>, and 3 hrs. of ENG 300-level. Credit 3.

Expanded Course Description. Befitting the title of this course, our focus will be the many "crossroads" of Texas—crossroads formed by Texas culture, literature, history, landscape, environment, and language reflected in the disciplines found across this university. As you can tell from the course schedule, many of our discussions and activities will be based on works of literature, but most of the time we will be looking beyond the literature to other disciplines that affect the Crossroads, especially films made about or filmed in Texas. Even when we do read and discuss literary works, our emphasis is likely to be at least as much cultural, political, social, or historical as it is literary. So, while this edition of Texas Crossroads is listed and credited as an English course, it will—in its "crossroads" or "intersections" orientation—play out much differently from an ordinary English course. I hope you enjoy that difference, and possibly begin to understand that no discipline exists "uncrossed" by the influences of other disciplines.

The American Studies Minor. “Texas Crossroads” is one of the options in the American Studies minor. American Studies makes an excellent minor for many majors. The applications and possibilities are unlimited. If you have questions about the American Studies minor, please ask.

Course Goals. Our examination and definition of the many “Texas Crossroads” will be the front-and-center focus of the course. Beyond that, I want this course to provide you useful insights into the crossroads between the literature, film, history, geography, environment, politics, and culture of Texas. Using those insights, you should be able to examine in a much clearer and more reflective sense, your own crossroads with the culture and history of Texas and this region. In other words, the chief goal of the course is to emphasize (and to have you reflect on) both interdisciplinary and interpersonal connections. On the other hand, this is not simply an “I love Texas” course, nor does it privilege or favor in any way, those of you who are Native Texans. We will engage some of the less-appealing aspects of Texas, and we will value the input of the “outsiders” in the class.

Course Objectives. At the end of “Texas Crossroads,” you should be able to

- Define and explain the concept of “Texas Crossroads”
- Identify and place in context the major literary, cultural, and historical figures in Texas history studied in this course
- Articulate how the disciplinary and sub-disciplinary areas studied in this course (literature, history, politics, popular culture, etc.) intersect with one another, as evidenced in course readings and discussions
- Explain the “South by Southwest” distinction that will arise in course readings and discussion
- Explain how the course material intersects with your own experience in and with the State of Texas

Required Texts: (Note: These are the specific editions that are in the bookstore, but any editions will do for this course.)

- *Lone Star Literature*, Edited by Don Graham. Norton (ISBN 978-0-393-32828-8)
- *All the Pretty Horses*, by Cormac McCarthy. (978-0-679-74439-9)
- *Goodbye to a River*, by John Graves. (978-0-375-72778-8)
- In addition, there will be various other resources placed on Blackboard.

Note: These are the specific editions ordered for the course, but any edition will do.

The Readings and How to Read Them. This grouping of readings will keep us talking throughout the semester, and I hope you enjoy them all. With a couple of exceptions, the readings aren’t particularly dense, though a couple of them are long. Except for a few of the *Lone Star Literature* selections and the Cormac McCarthy novel, the readings are not High Art. In fact, some of them are downright popular, which does not bother me a bit. I hope that your refined literary sensibilities are not offended. Each reading has plenty to offer—in history and culture, if not in pound sterling literary quality. What follows here is a brief description of each reading and the reason for its inclusion in the course.

- *Lone Star Literature*: This will be our anchor text throughout the semester. It is a landmark anthology of Texas literature (both fiction and non-fiction) edited by the Texas literature icon, Don Graham. We won't be reading nearly all of the book, but what we do read will provide us a rich cross-section of Texas literature, history, and culture.
- *All the Pretty Horses*: By one of the great American authors of our time (and, though I'm a fan, I'm not the only one who says so), this winner of the 1992 National Book Award is a carefully-told coming of age story set in 1950s Texas and Mexico. It is the first of McCarthy's "Border Trilogy" (and was made into a film produced by Billy Bob Thornton and starring Matt Damon and Penelope Cruz). It is a great story.
- *Goodbye to a River*: John Graves' philosophical travelogue is a classic of Texas (and American) literature. Many of the historical people and places we will be reading earlier in the semester will appear in this book.
- We will also be reading some short excerpts to be placed on Blackboard. I will also let you choose a back issue of the *Texas Monthly*, which you will report on and which we will discuss in class.

I've tried to pace the reading assignments as best I can, but you're better off reading out ahead as much as possible, particularly for nights when the reading assignment is long. I've set up the weekly schedule so that there are weeks in which the activities (or invited speakers) are the show and the readings are minimal. During these weeks you should be reading ahead, particularly for *All the Pretty Horses*. As for how to read, I want you to read for a discussion-group environment rather than a typical English class. Try to read the way books ought to be read, which is for the sort of discussion such as takes place in good book clubs. Read for absorption and reflection, not for rote memorization.

Course Requirements and Evaluation. I'll be talking in greater detail about all of this, but here is the breakdown of the course requirements.

- **Daily Work/Participation/Special Projects (25%).** Your participation grade will consist of several factors, such as participation in Blackboard and/or class **discussions** and any separate special projects that we do (such as the *Texas Monthly* report and blog). Class **attendance** is also a factor. On occasion, I may give you a brief "**daily work**" task, such as a short writing, or a reading quiz. At certain times during the semester, you will do short assignments or special projects. (As an example, I may ask you to do a Blackboard blog entry about a piece of Texas music.) I already have some of them mapped out, but others will be guided by our class discussions and what you seem to be interested in. You'll probably have one of these short assignments only a couple of times a month. You need to pay attention, because you won't have much turnaround time for them. I'll announce them in class, probably the week before they are due. (This is a good reason for you to avoid missing class.) The final exam, if there is one, will also be part of this grade component. All of these factors will go together to make up the participation grade. To get an "A" in this component of the grade, you will need to participate at a high level, week in and week out. The grade for this component won't be elegantly mathematical, but I'll let you know where you stand.
- **Reading/Reaction Journal (25%).** You will keep a semi-regular journal on Blackboard. I will give you more information later, but this will be a place for you to reflect personally

about what we are reading, viewing, and talking about this semester. You will probably have eight journal assignments—one for every other week.

- **Short Papers (25%).** You will write two short essays this semester. These will be brief semi-formal writings (but more formal than journals). I haven't yet determined the topics or due dates. I will provide you written directions and criteria for each assignment, and you will turn each in through the "Assignments" section on Blackboard. The paper you have the best grade on will count 15%; the other one will count 10%.
- **Final Paper (25%).** You will write one moderate-length paper for this class, due the last week of the semester. I will describe the requirements in much more detail later on, but while the paper will include some research, the emphasis will be on your own thinking and observations about a larger-scope view of some aspect of "Texas Crossroads."

Attendance Policy. University policy allows you three hours of absences, which for a T-R class means only two class meetings. I'll give you those two absences, no questions asked (although this does not excuse you from any course requirement work done during the meeting you missed). If you don't miss a single time, you'll get a boost in your participation grade. For each absence above two, you'll lose 5 points from your participation grade, and if you miss more than five times, the penalty will double for each absence. If you miss many more than that, you might not be able to pass the class. If you have something besides an official university event that causes your absence, tell me about it, but I still have to count them as absences.

Make-ups for Missed Classes. If you miss a class, excused or not, you are required to write a two-page makeup based on the readings for the day you missed. Turn this in to me in hard copy on the day you return to class.

Blackboard. We will make considerable use of Blackboard this semester. You are probably already familiar with it; if not, you need to get that way. I can help you. You also need to ensure that you will not be hampered by your own technology—such as unreliable connections or computers. If you anticipate any such problems, you will need to arrange to use the computers here on campus. I sympathize with your problems; however, you can't let technological or access problems hinder your ability to view materials online or to submit your assignments. Plan ahead.

Plagiarism. Plagiarism means taking words or ideas from a source without giving proper credit. There are different types of plagiarism, ranging from relatively innocent to serious. The opportunities and temptations to plagiarize have become much more available, but there are also increasing ways for plagiarists to be caught. Whatever the case, plagiarism is a serious academic offense, and I do not take it lightly. (Neither does the University. See the student guidelines for a discussion of the penalties.) The message is simple: Don't do it. It won't be hard to write your own papers, and you'll have plenty of help with them. Just sweat it out and do the work yourself. I guarantee it is better that way.

Course Assessment. Toward the end of the term, you will do an "IDEA" assessment of the course. These evaluations are a part of our faculty evaluation system, but even if we didn't do them, I take student evaluation seriously. In addition to the formal university teaching evaluation, I will be seeking feedback from you about the course. I never begin planning a course until I have considered student feedback from previous classes.

Tentative Course Schedule.

English 3388 (Texas Crossroads)/Spring 2018 Schedule (Draft)

Thursday, January 18. <i>Course Introduction (Texas Film and Literature)</i>
Tuesday, January 23. <i>Coming to Grips with Texas</i> STEPHEN HARRIGAN “What Texas Means to Me” (676-91); BETTY SUE FLOWERS— “Why Texas Is the Way It Is” (692-97)
Thursday, January 25 Online viewing and journal response. More Texas film.
Tuesday, January 30. <i>Tough Texas Women</i> ROBERT A. CARO “The Sad Irons” (235-46); MOLLY IVINS “Texas Women: True Grit and All the Rest” (698-704)
Thursday, February 1 WILLIAM HUMPHREY “A Voice from the Woods” (219-31); HALLIE CRAWFORD STILLWELL “The Bride” (104-14)
Tuesday, February 6. <i>Cajun History and The Cajuns in East Texas</i> <u>Presenter:</u> Dr. Terry Thibodeaux: “Acadians, Cajuns, and Southeast Texas's Cajun Culture.”
Thursday, February 8. <i>Cajun Symposium and Dance</i> The Jambalaya Cajun Band; <u>Thursday Evening:</u> Cajun Symposium and Cajun dance
Tuesday, February 13. <i>Deep East Texas</i> BILL BRETT “The Way It Was—Southeast Texas, 1915” (232-35); WILLIAM OWENS “Hangerman John” (196-210)
Thursday, February 15 MARY KARR from <i>The Liars’ Club</i> (626-30), plus selections from the book itself.
Tuesday, February 20. <i>Texas and Mexico (and Sam Houston)</i> RAFAEL CASTILLO “The Battle of the Alamo” (505-14); The De La Peña Diaries (online)
Thursday, February 22 Online readings and viewings; Film Versions of the Alamo; myth versus truth in the Alamo story.
Tuesday, February 27. <i>The “never-to-be-misunderstood” Comanche</i> WALTER PRESCOTT WEBB “The Texans Touch the Plains” (77-83); JOHN GRAVES “The Last Running” (143-159)
Thursday, March 1 CORMAC MCCARTHY, from <i>All the Pretty Horses</i> and from <i>Blood Meridian</i> (on Blackboard); LUCIA ROBSON, Selected chapters and reports from <i>Ride the Wind</i>
Tuesday, March 6. <i>The Cowboys and the Railroads</i> <i>Lone Star Literature</i> —J. EVETTS HALEY “Graveyard of the Cowman’s Hopes” (84-89); ANDY ADAMS “A Dry Drive” (25-33); J. FRANK DOBIE “Bogged Shadows” (126-31)
Thursday, March 8 JOHN A. LOMAX from <i>Adventures of a Ballad Hunter</i> (44-52); DAVE HICKEY “I’m Bound to Follow the Longhorn Cows” (160-174). <u>Viewing:</u> Scenes from <i>Lonesome Dove</i>
March 12-16: Spring Break

<p>Tuesday, March 20. <i>The Frontier Life</i> SALLIE REYNOLDS MATTHEWS “The Stone Ranch” (65-76); DOROTHY SCARBOROUGH from <i>The Wind</i> (90-103)</p>
<p>Thursday, March 22 <i>Lonesome Dove</i>, the Film; time permitting, scenes from other Texas western films</p>
<p>Tuesday, March 27. <i>The Border and Mexico</i> ELMER KELTON “North of the Big River” (324-34); NAOMI SHIHAB NYE, “Tomorrow We Smile” (589-95). Selection from Cormac McCarthy’s <i>The Crossing</i> (on Blackboard) <u>Activities:</u> Continue with Texas film: <i>Giant</i> and the Hispanic theme</p>
<p>Thursday, March 29 AMÉRICO PAREDES “The Hammon and the Beans” (272-77); <u>Activity:</u> Film—<i>The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez</i></p>
<p>Tuesday, April 3. <i>Texas Music: Roots and Deeper Roots</i> Gene Young—“Deep Texas Roots Music: The Origins”</p>
<p>Thursday, April 5 Gene Young—“Texas ‘Roots’ Music Today”; <u>Read</u> first 37 pages of <i>All the Pretty Horses</i></p>
<p>Tuesday, April 10. <i>Cormac McCarthy: An Introduction to the Fiction and Films</i> Begin reading and discussing <i>All the Pretty Horses</i></p>
<p>Thursday, April 12 Finish discussing <i>All the Pretty Horses</i></p>
<p>Tuesday, April 17. <i>All the Pretty Horses</i> (the novel and the film) Follow-up discussions of the novel and begin watching the film</p>
<p>Thursday, April 19 Finish the film; Discuss ATPH film versus novel. View selections from other films.</p>
<p>Tuesday, April 24. <i>Deconstructing the Frontier Myth; Modern Texas</i> KATHERINE ANNE PORTER “The Grave” (177-84); Larry McMurtry, from <i>The Last Picture Show</i> (377-87); View scenes from the 1972 film</p>
<p>Thursday, April 26 BILLY BRAMER from <i>The Gay Place</i> (411-27); AARON LATHAM; “The Ballad of the Urban Cowboy” (645-66); KINKY FRIEDMAN “Social Studies” (698-704)</p>
<p>Tuesday, May 1. <i>John Graves, The Thoreau of Texas Letters</i> <i>Goodbye to a River</i></p>
<p>Thursday, May 3 finish <i>Goodbye to a River</i></p>
<p>Final Exam: Tuesday, May 8, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.</p>

Student Conduct and Syllabus Guidelines. Refer to the following links for the various university and department statements and policies indicated:

- *The official university Code of Student Conduct and Discipline:*
<https://netreg.shsu.edu/mirror/codeofconduct.html>
- *University guidelines and policies on Academic Dishonesty, Americans with Disabilities Act, Absences for Religious Holy Days, and Visitors in the Classroom:*
<http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus>
- *University policy on Academic Dishonesty:*
<http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/728eec25-f780-4dcf-932c-03d68cade002.pdf>

My Classroom Policies. I'm not especially fussy about what you do in class. Don't fall asleep, and do not leave early unless you have cleared it with me first. It doesn't bother me if you are a little late to class on occasion, but if you are late, make sure you check after class to see that I got you marked present. The one thing that has become an issue with me and many other faculty is the use of cell phones and laptops (and other electronic devices) during class. Please avoid constant checking of your cell phone during class. That can wait. Also, don't use a laptop during class, unless you have discussed with me how you intend to be using it. I may require some proof that you are doing class-related things. That's about it. Mainly, just come to class prepared and ready to take part.

