

Course Outline: American Literature: 21st Century

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH | FALL/WINTER 2026-2027

Note for students: This short course outline is provided for planning purposes only. Course information is tentative and subject to change; the final course syllabus will be available by the first day of classes.

Course Code

AP/EN 3323 3.0A – American Literature: 21st Century

Course Description

The United States has entered the twenty-first century amid profound social, political, technological, and environmental change. Contemporary American literature offers one of the richest ways of understanding these transformations, exploring how writers have responded to shifting ideas of national identity, globalization, race, gender, sexuality, migration, class, and the changing relationship between individuals and communities.

This course examines a diverse range of twenty-first-century American fiction, graphic narrative, memoir, and literary nonfiction, exploring lives shaped by digital technology, economic precarity, environmental crisis, migration, family, and intimacy. Through close reading and discussion, students will consider how recent writers experiment with narrative form, voice, perspective, and genre as they respond to the complexities and contradictions of contemporary American life.

Treating contemporary American literature as an ongoing conversation about the meanings and possibilities of American life, the course develops students' abilities to analyse literary texts closely, construct persuasive written arguments, and situate works of literature within their broader cultural and historical contexts.

Course Delivery

Delivery Mode: LECT

Lecture: Online via eClass, posted Mondays at 12 noon

Tutorial 1: Thursdays 2:30-3:20 PM, TBA

Tutorial 2: Thursdays 3:30-4:20 PM, TBA

Tutorial 3: Thursdays 2:30-3:20 PM, TBA

Informed Tutorial Participation

Informed participation is not the same thing as attendance, though regular attendance is necessary for meaningful participation. Students are expected to arrive having completed the assigned readings and prepared to contribute thoughtfully to tutorial discussion.

Participation grades reflect the quality, consistency, and preparedness of

contributions to discussion. Meaningful participation may take many forms, including asking questions, offering interpretations, drawing connections among readings and course themes, responding constructively to the ideas of others, and helping to sustain a productive intellectual conversation. Students who contribute regularly,

thoughtfully, and respectfully should expect to do well in this component of the course.

Tutorials work best when they are collaborative rather than competitive. Contribute your ideas. Listen carefully to the ideas of others. Respond and help others to learn. Let yourself take a chance and be surprised.

Course Materials

Required

Cline, Emma. The Guest. New York: Random House, 2023. \$25.00

Cole, Teju. Open City. New York: Random House, 2011. \$24.00

Drnaso, Nick. Sabrina. Montreal and New York: Drawn & Quarterly, 2018. \$40.00

Ma, Ling. Severance. New York: Picador, 2018. \$24.00

Machado, Carmen Maria. Her Body and Other Parties. Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2017. \$23.00

McCann, Colum. Let the Great World Spin. New York: Harper Perennial, 2009. \$25.00

Sedaris, David. Calypso. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2018. \$22.00

Books are available through the York University Bookstore. Students are welcome to obtain copies from any bookseller or to use library copies where available.

Tentative Grade Breakdown and Deadlines

Assessment	Weight	Mode	Tentative Deadline
Midterm Examination	20%	In-person, during scheduled tutorials	October 22, 2026
Essay 1 – Literary Analysis (5-6 pages)	20%	Take-home	October 26, 2026
Essay 2 – Comparative Analysis (7-8 pages)	25%	Take-home	November 30, 2026
Final Examination	20%	In-person	Date TBA during the Fall Examination Period (December 10-23, 2026)
Informed participation in tutorials	10%	In-person	Throughout the course
	100%		

Additional Information

Category:	C
Historical Requirements:	N/A
Open To:	EN, CRWR, and ENPR students – Year 3 or 4