

ENG 358: Poor White Southerners

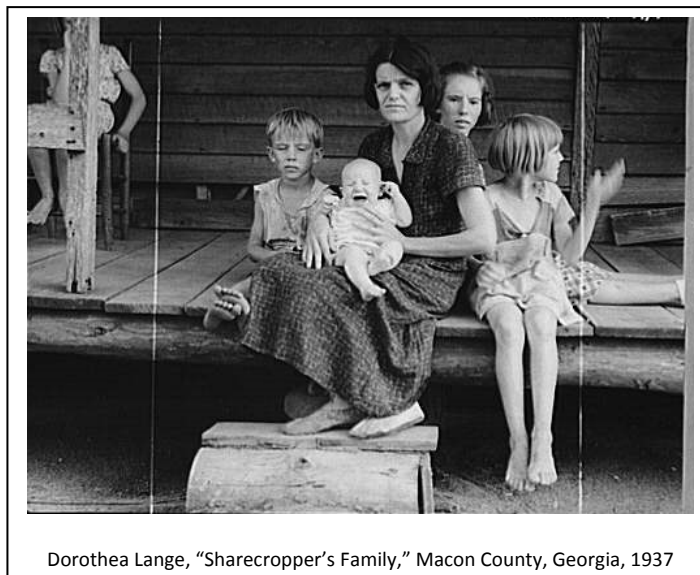
Poor whites challenge the southern social hierarchy. Often represented as dirty, ignorant, and dangerous, poor whites are the South's abject other, the South's southerners. This course will examine how southern writers portray poor whites and will explore issues of poverty, sharecropping, racial antagonism, depravity, humanity, and material culture.

Professor

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Course Objectives

- To read and discuss texts portraying poor white southerners.
- To learn techniques for literary research and criticism.
- To cultivate skills in reading comprehension, analysis, and critical thinking.
- To practice oral and written communication.



Course Requirements & Grading Policies

English 358 is a discussion-based course that uses a modified seminar format. Your success in this course depends upon attending every session prepared to contribute to our mutual understanding of the text. Attendance constitutes 19% of your course grade. Attendance grades are computed according to the following scale:

Absence	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Grade	100	97	93	85	75	60	40	20	0	failure

Entering class after attendance has been taken will count as a tardy, and three tardies will count as an absence. Missing class for a verifiable family emergency, participation in a university-sanctioned athletic event, or religious holidays will not result in a deduction from your final grade, but it is your responsibility to inform me of your absence.

During the semester I will administer seven unannounced quizzes that will cover the reading assigned up to the day of the quiz. Quizzes constitute 21% of your course grade. You may replace up to two quizzes by writing replacement assignments. The replacement assignment requires that you write a seven hundred word synopsis of the reading assignment due the day of the missed quiz. Replacement assignments should be submitted on the day of the second class meeting after the missed quiz. Any missed quizzes beyond the two replacement assignments will factor into your quiz grade as a zero.

Your other assignments will allow you to practice your interpretive skills and to develop a significant level of expertise on the literature. You will deliver two eight-minute presentations on topics related to the day's reading assignment. Presentations will constitute 10% of your course grade each. One week after each presentation, you will submit an eight-hundred word book review on your topic. The entries will constitute 10% of your course grade each. Your most significant assignment will be a research-based interpretive assignment, which will constitute the remaining 20%.

Papers will be submitted to my email, davis_da@mercerv.edu, by 6:00 pm on the due date. I will grade the paper electronically in Microsoft Word and return it with embedded comments. Papers will be returned to the initiating address, so be sure to send the paper from your own email account.

You may rewrite and resubmit a written assignment after it has been graded. Revised papers should be submitted at the beginning of the class meeting immediately after original papers have been returned. Revised papers should include a self-critical analysis that explains how the paper has been improved. In cases of revision, the revised grade will be added to the original grade and averaged together for the overall paper grade. Keep in mind that revising means more than correcting minor errors. In fact, a cursory revision could result in a lower grade. Papers submitted after the due date will automatically receive an F, but they may be revised to improve the final grade.

The students of Mercer University have a long tradition of honorable conduct, and I expect all students in this class to continue that tradition. Cheating, plagiarism, or other acts of academic misconduct will result in prosecution from the honor court, who may censure, suspend, or expel a guilty student. If you ever have any concerns about plagiarism, please consult me, and I will be happy to discuss your situation confidentially.

Students requiring accommodations for a disability should inform the instructor at the close of the first class meeting or as soon as possible. The instructor will refer you to the Disability Support Services Coordinator to document your disability, determine eligibility for

accommodations under the ADAAA/Section 504 and to request a Faculty Accommodation Form. Disability accommodations or status will not be indicated on academic transcripts. In order to receive accommodations in a class, students with sensory, learning, psychological, physical or medical disabilities must provide their instructor with a Faculty Accommodation Form to sign. Students must return the signed form to the Disability Services Coordinator. A new form must be requested each semester. Students with a history of a disability, perceived as having a disability, or with a current disability who do not wish to use academic accommodations are also strongly encouraged to register with the Disability Services Coordinator and request a Faculty Accommodation Form each semester. For further information, please contact Carole Burrowbridge, Disability Services Coordinator, at 301-2778 or visit the Disability Support Services website at <http://www.mercer.edu/studentaffairs/disabilityservices>

In an ongoing effort to improve the quality of instruction, each student enrolled in this course is required to complete an end-of-semester course evaluation, to be administered on blackboard during the last week of class. Students failing to submit the evaluation by December 11 will be assigned the grade of "Incomplete," which will automatically turn into an "F" if the evaluation is not submitted by the midterm of the very next semester.

As a final note, I realize that you are busy and that unexpected crises sometimes arise, but as a general rule I do not give extensions on any assignments. I also do not excuse absences. If you have a major emergency or extended illness, you should contact Associate Dean Ed Weintraut to intervene on your behalf. I do not ever give extra credit assignments.

Course Schedule

August 24	Course introduction
August 26	Erksine Caldwell, <i>God's Little Acre</i> , ch. 1-5
August 29	Caldwell, ch. 6-10
August 31	Caldwell, ch. 11-15
September 2	Caldwell, ch. 16-20
September 5	Labor Day
September 7	Zora Neale Hurston, <i>Seraph on the Suwannee</i> , ch. 1-4
September 9	Hurston, ch. 5-9
September 12	Hurston, ch. 10-16
September 14	Hurston, ch. 17-21
September 16	Hurston, ch. 22-25
September 19	Hurston, ch. 26-27
September 21	William Faulkner, <i>As I Lay Dying</i> , 1-46
September 23	Faulkner, 47-99

September 26	Faulkner, 100-151	
September 28	Faulkner, 152-205	
September 30	Faulkner, 206-261	
October 3	<i>The Southerner</i>	
October 5	James Agee and Walker Evans, <i>Let Us Now Praise Famous Men</i> , photos	
October 7	Agee, 7-53	
October 9	<i>Gone with the Wind</i> at Cox Capital Theater 2-7 pm	
October 10	No class	
October 12	Agee, 54-107	
October 14	Fall break	
October 17	Lamar lectures	
October 19	Agee, 108-196	
October 21	No class	
October 24	Agee, 197-306	
October 26	Agee, 307-366	
October 28	Agee, 367-399	
October 31	Cormac McCarthy, <i>Suttree</i> , 1-86	
November 2	McCarthy, 87-179	
November 4	No class	
November 7	McCarthy, 180-252	
November 9	McCarthy, 253-363	
November 11	McCarthy, 364-415	
November 14	McCarthy, 416-471	
November 16	Dorothy Allison, <i>Bastard Out of Carolina</i> , ch. 1-5	
November 18	Allison, ch. 6-10	
November 21	Allison, ch. 11-15	abstract due
November 23	Thanksgiving break	
November 25	Allison, ch. 16-22	
November 28	<i>Searching for the Wrong-Eyed Jesus</i>	
November 30	Larry Brown, <i>Joe</i> , 1-82	outline and bibliography due
December 2	Brown, 83-176	
December 5	Brown, 177-263	
December 7	Brown, 264-345	
December 9	Writing workshop	draft due

Course Assignments

Presentations

Twice this semester you will give an eight-minute presentation on an assigned topic related to the day's class discussion. You will sign up for presentations at the beginning of the semester, and you will give one before midterm and one after midterm.

After class on the day of your presentation, I will give you a brief critique on the four key criteria of a presentation: structure, content, delivery, and interest. A good presentation has a clear structure with a discernible beginning, middle, and end, and it demonstrates a significant depth of research far beyond a mere Wikipedia entry. You should deliver your presentation effectively with a clear voice, direct eye contact, and confident body language. Most importantly, your presentation should be interesting, since your classmates have to listen to it—whether they want to or not.

Book Reviews

Seven days after each of your presentations, you will submit an eight hundred word review of your book for *The Library of Southern Literature and Culture*. Your review should demonstrate significant research, it should cite sources in MLA style, and it should include a list of about five sources for related information. Keep in mind for the review that you are an expert writing for a general audience. Exemplary reviews will be published online.

Interpretive Research Essay

The theme for this year's Society for the Study of Southern Literature meeting in Nashville is "southern poverty," and they are looking for essays that examine how writers have portrayed poverty in the South.

They request 500 word abstracts by December 6, and 3,000 to 3,500 word papers are due on the day of our final exam. They seek essays that argue a unique and provocative thesis, engage a vibrant scholarly conversation, use sources responsibly and accurately, and aggressively interpret one or more texts.