

English 630.01
Literature of Labor
Fall 2011
T Th 11 - 12:15
HUM 121
Office Hours: T/Th 10 -11, Th 1:30 to 2:30

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The Literature of Labor

We probably spend more time “at work” than anywhere else in our lives. Yet, “work” is one of the most infrequently fictionalized or poeticized of our experiences. In this class, we’ll put “work” front and center and use the idea of labor to navigate a constellation of related terms and conditions: class, mobility, modernity, leisure, gender, geography, popular culture, and ethnicity.

By the end of this class, you should be able to recognize and explain some recurrent patterns, types, and plots that might signify the “text” of labor. You will also be able to understand and use some basic critical terms in literary study like focalization, characterization, narration, and plot. You will have lots of experience with informal, formal, and new media writing. Finally, you will understand some of the complicated but intellectually fascinating relations between social and cultural contexts and literary form.

Required Texts:

Jack London, Martin Eden
William Attaway, Blood on the Forge
Dagoberto Gilb, The Magic of Blood
Barbara Neely, Blanche on the Lam
Philip Levine, What Work Is
Kurt Vonnegut, Player Piano
Bruce Springsteen, Darkness on the Edge of Town

Course Requirements

You must complete all reading and writing assignments. Your success in this course depends on steady, authentic engagement with the texts we read. You can expect to write something for or in each class.

You must visit my office for office hours at least twice this semester. Your first visit should happen within the first six weeks of class. Your second visit should happen after Fall Recess but before the last week of class. If you can’t make my scheduled office hours, let me know so that we can work something out.

You can’t learn if you don’t attend class. After two absences, your grade will be in jeopardy. If you know in advance that you’ll be absent, discuss this absence with me beforehand. I don’t accept late assignments.

Our course motherblog is located at <http://teaching.lfhanley.net/english630fall11>. (You can also access the motherblog from <http://teaching.lfhanley.net>.) There, you’ll find a copy of the syllabus, information about the texts and authors we read, announcements, assignments, and other important stuff. Check the blog frequently. As we move further along in the class, we’ll also be using our class wiki/digital anthology (<http://democraticvistas.net>).

We will be using twitter in our class as well. (If you don't already have a twitter account, [you should create one](#).) Be sure to follow the class tweeting by searching for #english630. (After we're all up to twitter speed, you'll have a daily twitter assignment.)

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's words or ideas without proper credit. Practicing plagiarism defeats the purpose of the academic enterprise. If you plagiarize an assignment, you will receive a grade of "F" for the assignment. Serial offenders will face more serious consequences. A detailed treatise on plagiarism and its consequences can be found at: <http://www.sfsu.edu/~collhum/plagiarism.html>.

Grading

Your grade will be determined by these factors: attendance; participation, in-class work; out-of-class work. You will write for several minutes at the beginning of class - - usually in response to a question I pose. Eventually, you will be posting discussion questions before every class via Twitter. You will write a two-page, double-spaced essay - - in one form or another - - for the class about every two to three weeks. These will be graded using the patented check/check plus/check minus system. These assignments may include a variety of online or new media class projects. At the end of the course, you will submit a portfolio of work.

Syllabus

August

23	T	Intro
25	Th	Rebecca Harding Davis, Life in the Iron Mills (OL)
30	T	Davis

September

1	Th	Davis
6	T	Charlotte Perkins Gilman, " The Yellow Wallpaper " (OL)
8	Th	Jack London, Martin Eden
13	T	London
15	Th	London
20	T	London
22	Th	Proletarian culture
27	T	William Attaway, Blood on the Forge
29	Th	Attaway

October

4	T	Attaway
6	Th	On the Waterfront
11	T	On the Waterfront

13	Th	Fordism/Post-Fordism
18	T	Dagoberto Gilb, <u>The Magic of Blood</u>
20	Th	Gilb
25	T	Gilb
27	Th	Barbara Neely, <u>Blanche on the Lam</u>

November

1	T	Neely
3	Th	Philip Levine, <u>What Work Is</u>
8	T	Levine
10	Th	Levine
15	T	Kurt Vonnegut, <u>Player Piano</u>
17	Th	Vonnegut
22- 24		Fall Recess - - No Class
29	T	Vonnegut

December

1	Th	Bruce Springsteen. <u>Darkness on the Edge of Town</u>
6	T	Springsteen
8	T	Last Day of Class