

« Lecture autonome / Bibliography »

Book report, bibliography and oral evaluation

The « Lecture autonome/Bibliography » project is part of your first year training as a student of English and American studies.

For this project, you are asked to read and report on 2 texts selected among the following list. Your report will be presented during an oral examination, on which you will be asked to present the work you chose, why you chose it, the themes and qualities that attracted your attention.

→ Guidelines for the Book Report will be sent in a separate document.

1st semester bibliography

The works selected for the 1st semester are pamphlets, plays, short novels or collection of stories, selected for their brevity for most of them (150-160 pages tops). You may, if you wish, select longer works by the same authors. You will then be asked why you preferred the text you reported on to the one in the selection.

= texts available online on Project Gutenberg

♣ = audio recordings available online on Project Gutenberg

Aphra BEHN (GB, 1640-1689), # *Oroonoko*, 1688

A novel about slavery, violence and love in the British isle or Surinam, by one of the first great British female writers.

James BALDWIN (US, 1924-1987), *Giovanni's Room*, 1956

-- *The Fire Next Time*, 1963

An essential mid-century African-American novel, *Giovanni's Room* tells the tragic relationship between two men. *The Fire Next Time* is a seething indictment of segregation, in the shape of two letters. It served as a basis to Raoul Peck's 2016 documentary *I Am Not Your Negro*.

Richard BRAUTIGAN (US, 1935-1984), *Trout Fishing in America*, 1961

A quirky assemblage of narratives, liberated from the requests of plot and story, *Trout Fishing* is an invitation to get lost in text, language, and fish out the slippery bits of fun there produced by Brautigan.

William Wells BROWN (US, 1815-1884), # *A Narrative of William Wells Brown, A Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself*, 1847

One of the many slave narratives to have circulated in the 19th century, and one of the most successful, by a former slave who became a fierce advocate of abolitionism. Brown also wrote fictional narratives to promote the cause, such as *Clotel, or The President's Daughter*, 1853.

James CAIN (US, 1892-1977), *Double Indemnity*, 1934

- *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, 1934

Classic thrillers both, complete with *femme fatale*, male sucker and the husband they need to get rid of. Both were adapted into films noirs in the 1940s (Billy Wilder, 1944; Tay Garnett, 1946 – Bob Raffleson 1980, with Jessica Lange and Jack Nicholson)

Truman CAPOTE (US, 1924-1984), *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, 1958

The bitter-sweet portrait of a fun-loving socialite in 1950s New York, drowning her broken dreams in champagne. Audrey Hepburn starred in the movie adaptation of the novel (Blake Edwards, 1961)

Raymond CARVER (US, 1938-1988), *Short Cuts* (stories), 1993

A chronicle of America in the late 20th century among the marginalized, small-town rejects of the American success story, told in sparse, deceptively simple language.

Kate CHOPIN (US, 1850-1904), # *Bayou Folk*, 1894

-- # ♣ *The Awakening*, 1899

Known for her tale of the Bayou, and her exotic descriptions of the Creole and Cajun community of and around New Orleans, (*Bayou Folk*), Chopin became literary persona non grata when she published *The Awakening*, a daring story of female liberation, one of the first novels with a feminist streak.

Agatha CHRISTIE (GB, 1890-1976), *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, 1920

- *A Crime on the Orient Express*, 1934

Two classic British whodunits, by the undisputed queen of the genre.

Sandra CISNEROS (US, 1954--), *The House on Mango Street*, 1984

A modern classic, about the coming of age of a young Latina girl growing up in the Chicano neighborhood of Chicago.

Sir Arthur CONAN DOYLE (GB, 1859-1930), # ◀ « A Study in Scarlet », 1887

-- # ◀ « The Sign of Four », 1889

-- # ◀ *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, 1901

The basics, if you're at all interested in Sherlock Holmes, and Great Britain at the turn of the century

Joseph CONRAD (Poland-GB, 1857-1924), # ◀ *Heart of Darkness*, 1899

The horrors of imperialism and colonization brought to light in a wrenching tale of exploring the heart of the Belgian Congo, in search of an enigmatic British agent.

Charles DICKENS (GB, 1812-1870), # ◀ *A Christmas Carol*, 1843

A classic story of Christmas magic, reputed to have participated in the revival of Christmas in Victorian England.

Frederic DOUGLAS (US, c. 1817-1895), *Narrative of the Life of Frederic Douglass, An American Slave*, 1845

One of the first, and most influential of the American slave narratives that served the abolitionist cause, by a former slave, who later went on to become an active advocate of liberty and political activist.

Carol Ann DUFFY (Scotland, 1955--), *The World's Wife*, 2017

A collection of joyful poems about women left out from traditional myths and history books, bringing to life overlooked, unheard voices. "Funny, naughty, interesting, » in the words of one reader.

Olaudah EQUIANO (Nigeria/GB, 1745-1797), # ◀ *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or, Gustavus Vassa, the African*, 1789

Another early slave narrative, the autobiography of Olaudah Equiano, abducted from Nigeria at age 11, to become a slave for ten years, then work as sailor and barber in London. Equiano later became instrumental in the struggle for the abolition of the slave trade, and of slavery. One of the rare testimonies of the "Middle Passage," across the Atlantic, on a slave ship.

George ETHEREGE (GB, c. 1636-c.1692), *A Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter*, 1676

A Restoration play, following the reopening of theaters after the restoration of the monarchy with Charles II's defeat of Cromwell's troops, satirizing the manners of the time. The play was a highly popular "comedy of manners."

William FAULKNER (US, 1897-1962), « Dry September », « A Rose for Emily », « That Evening Sun », 1930

Three stories of violence, frustration, racism, in the segregated South of the early 20th century.

Robert FILMER (GB, 1558-1653), *Patriarcha, or the Natural Power of Kings*, 1680

A political essay defending the supremacy of monarchy as a system of government, grounded in divine rule. A *testimony* to the political and religious debates of the time.

Francis Scott FITZGERALD (US, 1896-1940), *Bernice Bobs her Hair* (stories), 1920

-- *The Diamond as Big as the Ritz* (stories), 1922

-- *The Great Gatsby*, 1925

-- *The Last Tycoon*, 1941

Two collections of stories chronicling the folly, aspirations and changes of the Jazz Age. *The Last Tycoon* is Fitzgerald's posthumous, unfinished portrait of a producer and the Hollywood dream-factory.

Flappers and Philosophers, Fitzgerald's 1st collection of stories, including "Bernice Bobs her Hair", is available on Project Gutenberg.

Charlotte Perkins GILMAN (US, 1860-1935) – # "The Yellow Wallpaper", 1892

-- # *Herland*, 1915

The author of the celebrated narrative "The Yellow Wallpaper", Gilman was a reformist, and utopian feminist, a believer in the necessity to free women of the social expectations constraining their bodies and spirits. *Herland* is the product of her beliefs, a feminist utopia.

Graham GREENE (GB, 1904-1991), *The Third Man*, 1950

A story of betrayal and broken illusions in post WWII Vienna, Greene's novelized version of the classic noir film directed by Carol Reed (1949, starring Orson Welles).

William HARRISON (GB, 1534-1593), #*Description of Elizabethan England* (from Holinshed's Chronicles), 1577. (2 or 3 chapters, such as Chapter IX "Of Provision Made For the Poor", Chapter XI "Of the Navy of England", Chapter VII "Of Our Apparel and Attire")

The title is fairly self-explanatory. Harrison sets to describe different aspects of Elizabethan England, from the perspective of a contemporary writer.

Ernest HEMINGWAY (US, 1899-1961), *Fiesta/The Sun Also Rises*, 1926

-- *Men Without Women* (stories), 1927

-- *The Old Man and the Sea*, 1952

Classic novellas by the celebrated American writer, the inventor of a new masculinity exhibiting « grace under pressure ».

Christopher ISHERWOOD (GB-GB, 1904-1986), "Sally Bowles" (in *Goodbye to Berlin*, 1939)

-- *A Single Man*, 1964

A novella about a perky cabaret performer in the decadent Berlin of the Weimar Republic, later turned into a musical, and adapted to the screen by Bob Fosse, as *Cabaret* (1972). A novel of introspection, homosexuality, ageing, and resilience, adapted to the screen by Tom Ford in 2009.

Shirley JACKSON (US, 1916-1965), *We Have Always Lived in the House*, 1962

A classic of the horror genre, and modern Gothic literature.

Harriet JACOBS (US, 1813-1897), # *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 1861

Born and raised a slave, Harriet Jacobs escaped to the North as a young woman, after hiding for years on her master's property. She went on to become an advocate of abolition, which she witnessed during her lifetime. One of the most famous slave narratives of the 19th century.

Henry JAMES (US-GB, 1843-1916), # *Daisy Miller*, 1879

-- # *The Aspern Papers*, 1888

-- # ◀ *The Turn of the Screw*, 1898

Classic novellas by the great master of style and the intricacies of psychology. *The Turn of the Screw* is a haunting narrative of eerie ghostly presences, and growing madness.

Sarah Orne JEWETT (US, 1849-1909), # ◀ *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, 1896

A chronicle of life in an isolated village of Maine in the late 10th century, by one of the great female American writers of the day.

James JOYCE (Ireland, 1882-1941), # ◀ « The Dead », 1914

A masterpiece of Irish literature, "The Dead" is the last story in *Dubliners*, Joyce's collection of bittersweet portraits of Dubliners in the early 20th century, sarcastic and profoundly moving at the same time.

Jamaica KINCAID (Antigua, 1949--), *Annie John*, 1985

A story of growing up in Antigua, in the Caribbean, involving racism, lesbianism, poverty, education, and the desire to make a place in the world.

Rudyard KIPLING (GB, 1865-1910), # *The Man Who Would Be King*, 1888

A story of adventure, hubris and madness in the British Empire.

Jerzy KOSINSKI (Poland-US, 1933-1991), *Being There*, 1970

A parable on the folly of our over-mediatised times, even before the Internet, Facebook, and the social networks took over.

Jhumpa LAHIRI (US/India, 1967--), *Interpreter of Maladies* (stories), 2000

A writer of Indian descent, Jhumpa Lahiri explores in her stories issues of diversity and the complexity of growing between two cultures, as an immigrant, or a descendant of immigrants.

Nella LARSEN (US, 1891-1964), *Passing*, 1929

A story of race, and negotiating the privilege of a lighter-toned skin (passing) in New York.

Doris LESSING (GB-Rhodesia, 1919-2013), *The Fifth Child*, 1988

A horror story of maternity and the nightmare of social collapse, by the great Rhodesian writer

- John LOCKE (GB, 1632-1704), *Two Treatises of Government*, 1689 + *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1690
Two highly influential philosophical treatises, laying the foundations of modern conceptions of identity and the self, by the "Father of Liberalism."
- Jack LONDON (US, 1876-1916), # *The Call of the Wild*, 1903
-- # # *White Fangs*, 1906
Early modern classics, telling the epic story of sled dogs exploring the snow-covered territories of the Yukon, during the Klondike Gold Rush of the 1890s.
- Bathsua MAKIN (GB, 1600-1675), *An Essay To Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen, in Religion, Manners, Arts & Tongues*. 1673
One of the first essays examining the status and position of women in England, arguing for the rights of girls and women to have access to education. A proto-feminist text, dating all the way back to the 17th century.
Available online at : <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/makin/education/education.html>
- Katherine MANSFIELD (New-Zealand, 1888-1923), # *The Garden Party and Other Stories*, 1922
An exquisite writer, Mansfield captured the spirit of acceleration characteristic of the early 20th century, and the complexities of the experienced self.
- Horace McCOY (US, 1897-1955), *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*, 1935
A classic of the Great Depression, and the sacrifices it elicited among the young and hungry. A masterpiece of narration, sharp, slowly building to the final verdict. Sydney Pollack adapted the novel in 1969, starring Jane Fonda.
- Carson McCULLERS (US, 1917-1967), *The Ballad of the Sad Café* (stories), 1951
A touching story of misplaced love and the tortuous world of sentiment, in the quirky world of a Southern small town. A masterpiece of Southern Gothic literature.
- Ian McEWAN (GB, 1948--), *On Chesil Beach*, 2007
A drama of love, sex, class, and misunderstanding in 1960s England, by one of the great writers of the day.
- Herman MELVILLE (US, 1819-1891), # *Bartleby, the Scrivener*, 1853
-- *Billy Budd*, 1924
Novelas by one of the most important American writers of all times. *Billy Budd* explores the modern concept of homosexuality, which emerged in the late nineteenth century.
- Arthur MILLER (US, 1915-2005), *The Crucible*, 1953
A modern classic of American theater, *The Crucible* explores the mechanism of collective fanaticism, using the case of the Salem witch trials of 1692 as a metaphor for contemporary McCarthyism.
- Thomas MORE (GB, 1475-1535), *Utopia*, 1516
A description of life on the island of Utopia, a society perfectly organized around clear principles. With this narrative, More invented a genre, mixing political considerations with fiction, to reflect on possible alternative worlds and social organizations.
- Lady Mary Wortley MONTAGU (GB, 1689-1762), *Turkish Embassy Letters*, 1763
As wife to the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Lady Montagu wrote letters offering an insight into the Turkish society and customs, from the perspective of a member of the British elite. Lady Montagu thus witnessed the practice of vaccination against the smallpox virus, which practice she tried to introduce into England upon her return.
- Iris MURDOCH (GB, 1919-1999), *Something Special*, 1957
A narrative of expectations, introspection, and the dire constraints of class, by an important female Irish writer.
- Thomas PAINE (US, 1737-1809), *The Rights of Man*, 1776
A political pamphlet in defense of the principles animating the French Revolution. An important political manifesto.
- Joyce Carol OATES (US, 1938--), *Black Water*, 1992
A dire story of class violence, abuse, and a girl's broken dreams, by one of the great satirists of contemporary American life.
- O. HENRY (US, 1862-1910) – # *Cabbages and Kings*, 1904
-- # *The Gift of the Magi and The Four Million*, 1906
A master of the short-story form, O. Henry perfected the art of surprising the reader with final twists, in humorous, light-hearted narratives.

George ORWELL (GB, 1904-1950), *Animal Farm*, 1945

A great postwar British classic, a masterpiece of political satire examining revolutions and idealism, power and corruption.

Grace PALEY (US, 1922-2007), *The Little Disturbances of Man* (stories), 1985

From her experience of living in a populous mid-century New-York, Paley drew vivid tales of lives lived one dollar at a time, and portraits of resourceful, witty women overcoming the "little disturbances of man", to quote a title from one of her collections.

Edgar Allan POE (US, 1809-1849) – #*Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, 1908 (posthumous ed.)

The father of the detective story, with "Murder in the Rue Morgue", and the master of the tale of horror, Poe precipitated the American imagination into a world of nightmares and darkness.

Annie PROULX (US, 1935--), *Brokeback Mountain*, 1997

A modern classic about homosexuality, rejuvenating narratives of the American West.

Thomas PYNCHON (US, 1937--), *The Crying of Lot 49*, 1965

A postmodern classic, in the form of a goofy story of detection, and possible conspiracy. If you don't understand a thing, don't worry: you're not supposed to.

Jean RHYS (Dominica, 1890-1979), *Wide Sargasso Sea*, 1966

Drawing from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Rhys imagines the life of Rochester's first wife, a Creole from Jamaica, whose confrontation with the British culture and constraints embodied by her husband slowly precipitate into madness.

SAKI (GB, 1870-1916), # *The Chronicles of Clovis*, 1906

-- # *The Unbearable Bassington*, 1912

-- # *Beasts and Super Beasts*, 1914

A master of dark humor, animated with a hatred for Victorian prudishness, Saki throws beasts, outspoken girls and fawny boys at the dismal world of uptight adults. A master of the final twist, his tales are gems of irreverence.

J.D. SALINGER (US, 1919-2010), *Franny and Zooey*, 1961

The celebrated author of *The Catcher in the Rye* was also a master story teller, producing stories of melancholy despair typical of the post WWII angst.

Ignatius SANCHO (GB, c.1729-1780), *The Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, An African*, 1782

Born on a slave ship during the Middle Passage, Sancho was raised in England, where he became a butler, later a musician, actor and writer, and a voice in the debate against slavery and slave trade.

William SHAKESPEARE (GB, 1564-1616), # *The Merchant of Venice*, c. 1596

-- # *Romeo and Juliet*, 1597

-- # *Henry VIII*

-- # *Richard II*

No need to introduce the great Will. Yet a great read he sure is, with such stories: comedic love and trickery, against a background of homoerotic attraction, and anti-semitism, in Venice, doomed love and family feud in Italian Verona, or history plays telling of the tragic reign of Richard II, or triumphant reign of Henry VIII. Just go with the flow, even though you might occasionally trip on a word or two.

Alan SILLITOE (GB, 1926-2010), *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (stories), 1959

A classic of British mid 20th century literature, the stories capture the spirit of frustration and rage characteristic of the late 60s, typical of the « angry young men » of British art.

Muriel SPARK (GB, 1918-2006), *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, 1960

A tale of education, coming of age, and betrayal, in the conservative British society of the mid century, involving a free-spirited teacher and her handful of female students.

John STEINBECK (US, 1902-1968), *Of Mice and Men*, 1937

A classic of the American Great Depression, following the steps of a migrant worker and his mentally retarded friend, and the tragedy that unfolds as they find work at a fruit farm.

Robert Louis STEVENSON (GB, 1850-1894), # *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, 1886

One of the first horror thrillers, set in Victorian England. A story of a man torn between his aspiration to propriety and moral rectitude, and his baser instincts.

Mark TWAIN (US, 1835-1910), # ◀ *The Tragedy of Pudd'n'head Wilson*, 1894

-- # *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County and Other Sketches*, 1867

A story of two boys exchanged in childhood, one white, one born a slave, with a white passing. An searing analysis of privilege, and the ravages of the condition of slavery. The sketches are stories of the American West and its rowdy humour, tall-tales, and shrewdness. "The Jumping Frog", and other stories, are available on the Gutenberg Project, in the *Sketches New and Old*.

Horace WALPOLE (GB, 1717-1797), # *The Castle of Otranto*, 1764

The first gothic novel, a tale of lust, rotten bloodlines, and terror in 18th century Italy, the novel originated a whole new genre, still going strong today.

Edith WHARTON (US, 1862-1937), # *Ethan Frome*, 1911

-- # *Summer*, 1917

Two beautiful stories by one of the great writers of the early 20th century. *Ethan Frome* is a tale of impossible love and tragedy in a community encased in frost, and a masterpiece of narrative construction. *Summer* is its luminous (though still melodramatic) counterpart.

H.G. WELLS (GB, 1866-1946), # ◀ *The Invisible Man*, 1897

A classic of sci-fi, and the follies of human experimentation.

Eudora WELTY (US, 1909-2001), *A Curtain of Green*, 1941 (available in *Eudora Welty's Collected Stories*)

A Southern writer and photographer, Welty produced beautiful stories of life in the South, filled with quirky characters examined in tenderness and humor.

Nathanael WEST, (US, 1903-1940), *Miss Lonelyhearts*, 1941

A masterpiece of dark humor, sarcasm, and heart-wrenching humanity, around the figure of a writer for the "Miss Lonelyhearts" column of a popular magazine.

Oscar WILDE (Ireland, 1864-1900), # *The Importance of Being Earnest*, 1895

Petulant, sparkling, totally goofy, Wilde's play toys with conventions, questions of identity, social class, seething with queer undertones.

Mary WOLLSTONECRAFT (GB, 1759-1797), # *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1792

With Olympe de Gouges in France, Wollstonecraft was instrumental in protesting the condition of women in Western societies and demanding equal rights. One of the earliest examples of a feminist text.