

**ENGLISH 327-1**  
**Contemporary American Lit**  
2:30-3:45 T/Th  
Room PL 320  
Spring Semester, 2016

**Instructor:** Gayle Brandeis  
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**Office hours:** by appointment  
**Office:** TBA

**Course description:** This course will explore not just contemporary, but contemporaneous literature—literature of the moment, and authors who are currently changing the conversation about what American literature means today.

**Required Texts:**

**(Note: You are also required to follow the authors who are active on Twitter)**

*Shadowshaper* by Daniel Jose Older (@djolder)  
*Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates (@tanehisicoates)  
*Bluets* by Maggie Nelson  
*The Small Backs of Children* by Lidia Yuknavitch (@LidiaYuknavitch)  
*Citizen* by Claudia Rankine

I'd also like you to follow:  
Saeed Jones (@theferocity)  
Porochista Khapour (@PKhappour)  
Ashley C. Ford (@iSmashFizzlle)

**Student Outcomes:**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to analyze form and content of contemporary American literature, write works inspired by our readings, articulate the relationship between the American experience and American literature and how this changes over time, and develop an individual literary manifesto, outlining a personal perspective on the force of literature.

**Grades:**

Your grade will be determined by:

—Reading journals (for every reading assignment, you will upload a reading journal entry on Moodle that covers your thoughts and feelings about the work, and offers at least two questions for class discussion.)

—Six papers inspired by our readings

—An in-class presentation

—The final

—Your portfolio, which will contain all papers from the class, plus two revisions and your three favorite in class writings.

--Your participation in class (including discussions, peer critiques and in-class writing exercises)

The final grade is based on completion of all assignments. Assignments that are turned in past the due date will be lowered by 10 percent per class period. Assignments turned in more than two weeks late will not be accepted, no exceptions. When you graduate and (hopefully) get a job, your boss won't take too kindly to excuses about why your work is late; now is a chance to practice a good work ethic.

**General guidelines:**

--Come to class on time and prepared, and be sure to turn off all cell phones, iPods, etc. Laptops are okay for in-class writing, but you may not go online.

--Type all assignments in 12pt Times New Roman (or a comparable standard font) in black ink, double spaced, 1-inch margins, 8 ½ x11" paper, page numbers clearly marked, using proper MLA formatting and citations.

--Be willing to explore, to push your own boundaries, to dig deep and take creative risks.

—Be attentive in class, listen when others are speaking, be respectful and contribute meaningfully to the class discussions; this will create a supportive classroom community (and will be reflected in your participation grade.) More than two absences will negatively affect your grade. You have the freedom to make choices about your academic experience, but you must graciously accept the consequences if you choose to put your attention elsewhere.

## Course Calendar

Note: This calendar may change to accommodate class projects as well as individual interests. Therefore, the calendar should be seen as advisory – intended to give you a rough idea of the assignments in our class. I reserve the right to make any changes to the calendar as I see fit, and, if possible, with your collaboration. Any changes to the calendar will be announced during class.

Date	Reading Due	Assignments Due
<b>Tuesday, January 19</b>	Intro to the class and each other	
<b>Thursday, January 21</b>	Read “28 Authors on the Book that Changed Their Lives” <a href="http://www.vulture.com/2016/01/28-authors-on-the-books-that-changed-their-lives.html">http://www.vulture.com/2016/01/28-authors-on-the-books-that-changed-their-lives.html</a> and excerpt from “Literature Saved My Life” by David Shields <a href="http://www.salon.com/2013/02/09/david_shields_literature_saved_my_life/">http://www.salon.com/2013/02/09/david_shields_literature_saved_my_life/</a>	2-3 page essay on the three books that have been most meaningful to your life and why.
<b>Tuesday, January 26</b>	Read “On Pandering” by Claire Vaye Watkins <a href="http://www.tinhouse.com/blog/41314/on-pandering.html">http://www.tinhouse.com/blog/41314/on-pandering.html</a> and “Diversity is Not Enough: Race, Power, Publishing” by Daniel Jose Older <a href="http://www.buzzfeed.com/danieljoseolder/diversity-is-not-enough#.waJdxo2Ozy">http://www.buzzfeed.com/danieljoseolder/diversity-is-not-enough#.waJdxo2Ozy</a>	Reading Journal

Date	Reading Due	Assignments Due
<b>Thursday, January 28</b>	Read pp 1-54 of Shadowshaper by Daniel Jose Older and “Writing Begins with Forgiveness” <a href="http://sevenscribes.com/writing-begins-with-forgiveness-why-one-of-the-most-common-pieces-of-writing-advice-is-wrong/">http://sevenscribes.com/writing-begins-with-forgiveness-why-one-of-the-most-common-pieces-of-writing-advice-is-wrong/</a>	Reading Journal
<b>Tuesday, February 2</b>	Read pp 55-104 of Shadowshaper	Reading Journal
<b>Thursday, February 4</b>	Read pp 104-158 of Shadowshaper and “12 Fundamentals of Writing the Other (and the Self)” <a href="http://www.buzzfeed.com/danieljoseolder/fundamentals-of-writing-the-other#.jf5PpG7y8Q">http://www.buzzfeed.com/danieljoseolder/fundamentals-of-writing-the-other#.jf5PpG7y8Q</a>	Reading Journal
<b>Tuesday, February 9</b>	Read pp 158-211 of Shadowshaper and “Context as Crisis: The Street is a Book” <a href="https://modelviewculture.com/pieces/context-as-crisis-the-street-is-a-book">https://modelviewculture.com/pieces/context-as-crisis-the-street-is-a-book</a>	Reading Journal

Date	Reading Due	Assignments Due
<b>Thursday, February 11</b>	Read “Cross” <a href="http://www.michiganquarterlyreview.com/2012/08/cross/">http://www.michiganquarterlyreview.com/2012/08/cross/</a> and “Other Types of Poison” <a href="http://www.thenevousbreakdown.com/dschneiderman/2013/06/one-generation-beyond-good-and-evil-a-conversation-with-rebecca-makkai/#more-109852">http://www.thenevousbreakdown.com/dschneiderman/2013/06/one-generation-beyond-good-and-evil-a-conversation-with-rebecca-makkai/#more-109852</a> by Rebecca Makkai, plus related interview <a href="http://www.thenevousbreakdown.com/dschneiderman/2013/06/one-generation-beyond-good-and-evil-a-conversation-with-rebecca-makkai/#more-109852">http://www.thenevousbreakdown.com/dschneiderman/2013/06/one-generation-beyond-good-and-evil-a-conversation-with-rebecca-makkai/#more-109852</a>	Reading Journal
<b>Friday, February 12-Saturday, February 13</b>	<b>WRITERS IN THE WOODS with Rebecca Makkai</b>	<b>Extra Credit to attend reading 2/12 and/or workshop 2/13</b>
<b>Tuesday, February 16</b>	Read pp 212-297 of Shadowshaper	Reading Journal and flash fiction piece in voice of the “Other” (plus analysis—more info to come)
<b>Thursday, February 18</b>	Read pp 1-32 of Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates and “Hope and the Historian” <a href="http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/12/hope-and-the-historian/419961/">http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/12/hope-and-the-historian/419961/</a> Read pp 73-132 of Between the World and Me	Reading Journal

Date	Reading Due	Assignments Due
<b>Tuesday, February 23</b>	Read pp 32-break on p. 64 of Between the World and Me	Reading Journal
<b>Thursday, February 25</b>	Read from break on p. 64-break on p. 108 of Between the World and Me and "The Case for Reparations" <a href="http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/">http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/</a>	Reading Journal
<b>Tuesday, March 1</b>	Read from break on p. 108-p. 152	Reading Journal and epistolary essay on a social issue of personal importance to you (which also addresses the book)

Date	Reading Due	Assignments Due
<b>Thursday, March 3</b>	Read "Subtext" <a href="http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?cc=mqr;c=mqr;c=mqrarchive;idno=ac-t2080.0052.115;rgn=main;view=text;xc=1;g=mqrg">http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?cc=mqr;c=mqr;c=mqrarchive;idno=ac-t2080.0052.115;rgn=main;view=text;xc=1;g=mqrg</a> and "Growth Rings" <a href="http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?cc=mqr;c=mqr;c=mqrarchive;idno=ac-t2080.0048.409;rgn=main;view=text;xc=1;g=mqrg">http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?cc=mqr;c=mqr;c=mqrarchive;idno=ac-t2080.0048.409;rgn=main;view=text;xc=1;g=mqrg</a> by Benjamin Busch, as well as this interview: <a href="http://thephoenix.com/boston/arts/136841-interview-benjamin-busch-remembers/">http://thephoenix.com/boston/arts/136841-interview-benjamin-busch-remembers/</a>	Reading Journal
<b>Friday, March 4-Saturday, March 5</b>	<b>WRITERS IN THE WOODS with Benjamin Busch</b>	<b>Extra Credit to attend reading on 3/4 and/or workshop on 3/5</b>
<b>Tuesday, March 8</b>	Read Bluets by Maggie Nelson, pp 1-47	Reading Journal
<b>Thursday, March 10</b>	Read Bluets, pp 48-95	Fragmentary/collage essay in numbered sections about a color of your choice

Date	Reading Due	Assignments Due
<b>SPRING BREAK March 14-18</b>	Enjoy your break!	
<b>Tuesday, March 22</b>	Read The Small Backs of Children by Lidia Yuknavitch, pp 1-41 and “Woven” <a href="https://www.guernicamag.com/features/woven/">https://www.guernicamag.com/features/woven/</a>	Reading Journal
<b>Thursday, March 24</b>	Read The Small Backs of Children pp. 45-90	Reading Journal
<b>Tuesday, March 29</b>	Read The Small Backs of Children, pp. 91-121 and “Explicit Violence” <a href="http://therumpus.net/2012/08/explicit-violence/">http://therumpus.net/2012/08/explicit-violence/</a>	Reading Journal
<b>Thursday, March 31</b>	<b>NO CLASS—AWP</b>	



Date	Reading Due	Assignments Due
<b>Tuesday, April 5</b>	Read The Small Backs of Children, pp. 125-160	Reading Journal
<b>Thursday, April 7</b>	Read “A Few Theories on Starlings and Dandelions” and “Gathering Her Ashes” <a href="http://composejournal.com/articles/lindsay-wilson-theories-starlings-dandelions-gathering-ashes/">http://composejournal.com/articles/lindsay-wilson-theories-starlings-dandelions-gathering-ashes/</a> and “Wasp in a Trap” <a href="http://www.versedaily.org/2010/waspinatrap.shtml">http://www.versedaily.org/2010/waspinatrap.shtml</a> by Lindsay Wilson	Reading Journal
<b>Friday, April 8-Saturday, April 9</b>	<b>WRITERS IN THE WOODS with Lindsay Wilson</b>	<b>Extra Credit to attend reading 4/8 and/or workshop 4/9</b>

Date	Reading Due	Assignments Due
<b>Tuesday, April 12</b>	Read The Small Backs of Children, pp. 161-189 and “Suffer the Children” <a href="http://www.powells.com/post/original-essays/suffer-the-children">http://www.powells.com/post/original-essays/suffer-the-children</a>	Reading Journal
<b>Thursday, April 14</b>	Read The Small Backs of Children, pp. 193-224	Reading Journal and essay (or creative work) on violence in literature.
<b>Tuesday, April 19</b>	Read Citizen by Claudia Rankine, pp 1-36	Reading Journal
<b>Thursday, April 21</b>	Read Citizen, pp. 41-79	Reading Journal
<b>Tuesday, April 26</b>	Read Citizen, pp. 82-118	Reading Journal
<b>Thursday, April 28</b>		Find a slam poem to share, either via video or on page
<b>Friday, April 29</b>	<b>ANNUAL TAHOE SLAM COMPETITION</b>	<b>Extra credit to attend; even more extra credit to participate</b>
<b>Tuesday, May 3</b>	Read Citizen, pp 120-161	Reading Journal and multimedia/collage essay or response to the book.
<b>Thursday, May 5</b>	No class—Finals prep	
<b>Friday, May 6-Wednesday, May 11</b>	<b>FINALS</b>	

## SCHOOL POLICIES

**Sierra Nevada College Mission Statement:** Sierra Nevada College graduates will be educated to be scholars of and contributors to a sustainable world. Sierra Nevada College combines the liberal arts and professional preparedness through an interdisciplinary curriculum that emphasizes entrepreneurial thinking and environmental, social, economic and educational sustainability.

**Core Themes:** Liberal Arts, Professional Preparedness, Entrepreneurial Thinking, Sustainability

**Learning Differences:** In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, students with a documented disability are eligible for support services and accommodations. If a student wishes to request an accommodation, please contact the Director of Academic Support Services, Henry Conover, at (775) 831-1314 x7534, [hconover@sierranevada.edu](mailto:hconover@sierranevada.edu).

**The Honor Code:** The faculty of SNC believes students must be held to high standards of integrity in all aspects of college life in order to promote the educational mission of the College and to encourage respect for the rights of others. Each student brings to the SNC community unique skills, talents, values and experiences which, when expressed within the community, contribute to the quality of the educational environment and the growth and development of the individual. Students share with members of the faculty, administration and staff the responsibility for creating and maintaining an environment conducive to learning and personal development, where actions are guided by mutual respect, integrity, responsibility and trust. The faculty and students alike must make diligent efforts to ensure high standards are upheld by their colleagues and peers as well as themselves. Therefore faculty and students accept responsibility for maintaining these standards at Sierra Nevada College and are obligated to comply with its regulations and procedures, which they are expected to read and understand.

**Consequences of Violating the Student Honor Code:** SNC students and faculty share the responsibility for maintaining an environment of academic honesty. Thus, all are responsible for knowing and abiding by the SNC Faculty/Student Honor Code published in the current SNC Catalog. Faculty are responsible for presenting the Honor Code and the consequences of violating it to students at the start of their classes AND for reporting all incidences of academic dishonesty to the Provost. Students are responsible for knowing what constitutes CHEATING, PLAGIARISM and FABRICATION and for refraining from these and other forms of academic dishonesty. Violations of the Honor Code become part of a student's academic record.

1st Offense: Student receives a zero for assignment/exam and counseling with faculty on the honor code, consequences for violating the honor code, and the value of academic honesty in learning.

2nd Offense: Student fails course and receives counseling with faculty on the honor code, consequences for violating the honor code, and the value of academic honesty in learning.

3rd Offense: Student is expelled.

**The SNC Email System:** The SNC email system is the official communication vehicle among students, faculty members and administrative staff and is designed to protect the confidentiality of student information as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 Act (FERPA). Students should check their college email accounts daily during the school year.

Students have a right to forward their SNC e-mail to another e-mail account (for example, @hotmail or @gmail). However, confidentiality of student information protected by FERPA cannot be guaranteed for SNC e-mail forwarded to an outside vendor. Having email redirected does not absolve a student from the responsibilities associated with official communication sent to his or her SNC email account.

## **WRITING RESOURCES**

**The Prim Library** (<http://libguides.sierranevada.edu/library>) which, in addition to its book collection, houses:

**Interlibrary Loan** This service allows you to obtain articles or borrow books from other libraries. Some of the library's databases allow direct requests through the database interface. The online catalog allows holds to be placed using your library barcode number.

**Scarsella-Boleky Tutoring Center** (3rd floor Prim Library) Tutoring is available at no charge, not only to SNC students, but also to members of the Incline Village community. We only provide tutoring when our fall and spring semesters are in session, and only if qualified tutors are available. You can also schedule one-on-one tutoring by filling out the Tutoring Request Form on the SNC website. Please be considerate and cancel by 10 am on the day of your session. Repeated no-shows will be turned away for future appointments.

**Incline Village Public Library** One of the privileges of being a Sierra Nevada College student, staff or faculty member is that you are eligible to be a member of the Washoe County Public Library system at the Incline Village Public Library.

This membership enables students to have easy access to the print, video, and other collections of the Washoe Library system. SNC students are encouraged to enroll and use the Washoe County Public Library system. Washoe County Public Library Cards can be obtained at the Incline Village Public Library, 845 Alder Ave., Incline Village, NV 89451

**The Eagle's Eye Newspaper** The Eagle's Eye is a student-run publication which covers news of interest and importance to the greater Sierra Nevada College community.

**Sierra Nevada Review** The Sierra Nevada Review is an annual literary magazine published in May featuring poetry and short fiction. Editors read manuscripts from September until March. Response time may vary between a month and several months.

The editorial staff changes on a yearly basis with the exception of advisory editor, June Sylvester Saraceno.

**Writers in the Woods Reading Series:** The Creative Writing Department has organized a series of readings and workshops. The Friday night readings remain free and open to all. Workshops are open to the community for a \$50 registration fee, and may be taken for credit or non-credit. The eclectic group of writers offers something for a wide range of interests—from history to science, drama, politics, comedy and, of course, literature.