

# BOSTON COLLEGE

## S U M M E R S E S S I O N

**ENGL 108001 Literature Core: Marginal In America (3 Credits)**  
**Boston College Summer Session 2019 [Session 1: May 14-June 21]**  
**Tuesday/Thursday, 9:00 am-12:15 pm, Stokes 209 S**

**Instructor: James Smith**  
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**Office: Stokes 489S**  
**Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 12:15-1:30**

### **Literature and the Core Curriculum:**

“Marginal in America” is one of a number of possible course options that satisfy the one-semester literature requirement in the BC core curriculum. It is *not* the introductory course for English majors. It is a course for students from all schools of the university representing a variety of majors. In this class, literature will be studied as a vital and challenging dimension of a liberal arts education.

### **“Marginal in America”:**

In this course we will examine a range of texts for their depiction of life on the margins or the peripheries of American society. One emphasis in our reading will be to distinguish between the many stages and states of marginality, i.e., between visible and invisible marginality, permanent and transitory, voluntary and involuntary. Therefore, the marginal experiences we will encounter include that of the Native American, the urban working-class, the African American, the first-generation European immigrant, the regionalist voice, the “New” woman, the social anarchist, among others. Marginality, in other words, will be encountered in terms of class, race, gender, ethnicity and geography, and, in many cases, these conditions will overlap.

### **Course Learning Goals:**

- Identify basic literary forms and techniques in fiction, poetry, creative non-fiction and memoir; understand the ways in which the formal and thematic dimensions of literary and cultural representation function to create meaning in a text.
- Demonstrate appreciation for diverse cultural settings, and consider the impact of gender, race and ethnicity in cultural representations of marginalized identities, and evaluate the way(s) in which they complicate, resist, or revise assumptions about social, cultural and political power.
- Consider ethical responses to the literary representations of marginalized identities in the past and our obligation(s) to effect change in society today informed by our reading and discussion.
- Write clear, well-organized, and textually-supported, critical essays that highlight literary analysis skills, demonstrate the ability to construct a logical and coherent argument, and engage intelligently with literary and historical research.

### **Textbooks (Required)**

Abraham Cahan, *Yekl and The Imported Bridegroom*  
Willa Cather, *My Ántonia*  
Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*

Ta-Nahisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*  
 Stephen Crane, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*  
 Colm Tóibín, *Brooklyn*

**Materials Provided Via Canvas:**

Booker T. Washington, chapter from *Up From Slavery*  
 Frederick Douglas, chapter from *Narrative of the Life...*  
 Langston Hughes, “Let America Be America Again”  
 Walt Whitman, selections from *Leaves of Grass*  
 W.E.B DuBois, chapter from *Souls of Black Folk*

**CLASS SCHEDULE & ASSIGNMENTS:**

<b>May 14</b>	Introductions. Review syllabus. Profile. Class Workshop, Langston Hughes, “Let America be America Again.” And, Whitman’s “One’s Self I Sing” and “I Hear America Singing.” Suggested Reading: “The Literature of an Expanding Nation 1865-1912,” Canvas Course Site (CANV).
<b>May 16</b>	Selections from Whitman’s “Song of Myself” (CANV).
<b>May 21</b>	Selections from Frederick Douglas “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas” (CANV), Booker T. Washington “Up From Slavery” (CANV), Du Bois “The Souls of Black Folk” (CANV)
<b>May 23</b>	Stephen Crane, <i>Maggie: A Girl of the Streets</i>
<b>May 28 &amp; 30</b>	Kate Chopin <i>The Awakening</i>
<b>June 4</b>	Abraham Cahan, “ <i>The Imported Bridegroom</i> ”
<b>June 6 &amp; 11</b>	Willa Cather, <i>My Antonia</i>
<b>June 13 &amp; 18</b>	Colm Tóibín, <i>Brooklyn</i> and John Crowley’s <i>Brooklyn</i> (2015)  Kevin Kenny, “The Irish Diaspora,” <a href="https://aeon.co/essays/the-irish-experience-and-the-meaning-of-modern-diaspora">https://aeon.co/essays/the-irish-experience-and-the-meaning-of-modern-diaspora</a>
<b>June 20</b>	Ta-Nahisi Coates, <i>Between the World and Me</i>

**Course Policies:**

- I) Classes will generally be a mixture of informal lecture, group work, and discussion. For that reason, attendance is essential. More than two unexplained absences will result in an automatic grade reduction in the next assignment due. Each absence beyond the first two will lower your final course grade by one letter grade. I will take attendance.
- II) Class begins at 9:00 a.m. Please arrive on time. Coffee/Tea/Water is fine. There will be a short break at 10:30 a.m.
- III) The grade for this class will be determined as follows:
  - i) reading assigned texts before class, presentation, and regular (active) participation, including posts to the Canvas (CANV) Discussion Board before each class [20%].
  - ii) three short papers (3-4 pages) due **May 21, June 4, and June 13** [20 % each].

Papers must be formatted in accordance with *MLA* guidelines.

iv) a take home final examination (**June 20**) [20 %]

If necessary, short quizzes and/or in-class writing exercises may be given at any time. Except for written medical excuses, there are no extensions on papers. Similarly, there are no make-up exams. Communication is key — speak to me **BEFORE** a due date if you anticipate a problem. The undergraduate grading system for Summer Session is as follows: A (4.00), A- (3.67), B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.67), C+ (2.33), C (2.00), C- (1.67)

- IV) Please bring this syllabus to every class. It is your guide to where we are at any given time during the semester and I will refer to it frequently. There may be changes to the schedule along the way, and I will announce these in class and/or via email.

### Course Expectations:

- I) **Course Readings:** Please come to class having read the assigned material for the day carefully and with your questions and ideas linked to moments in the text (page number references assist your peers finding the relevant passage). It is important that you come to class with a **hard copy of the text** and/or with a printed copy of assigned material from the Canvas site.
- II) **Electronics:** All phones and other electronic devices should be turned off during class time. You may use a laptop to take notes, but please ensure you do not have a web-browser open in the background.
- III) **Accommodation and Accessibility**

Boston College is committed to providing accommodations to students, faculty, staff and visitors with disabilities. Specific documentation from the appropriate office is required for students seeking accommodation in Summer Session courses. Advanced notice and formal registration with the appropriate office is required to facilitate this process. There are two separate offices at BC that coordinate services for students with disabilities:

[The Connors Family Learning Center \(CFLC\)](#) coordinates services for students with LD and ADHD.

[The Disabilities Services Office \(DSO\)](#) coordinates services for all other disabilities.

Find out more about BC's commitment to accessibility at [www.bc.edu/sites/accessibility](http://www.bc.edu/sites/accessibility).

- IV) **Scholarship and Academic Integrity**  
Students in Summer Session courses must produce original work and cite references appropriately. Failure to cite references is plagiarism. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, cheating on exams or assignments, or submitting the same material or substantially similar material to meet the requirements of more than one course without seeking permission of all instructors concerned. Scholastic misconduct may also involve, but is not necessarily limited to, acts that violate the rights of other students, such as depriving another student of course materials or interfering with another student's work. Please see the [Boston College policy on academic integrity](#) for more information.
- VI) **Office Hours:** My office is located in Stokes Hall South, room 489. Office hours this session will be Tuesday and Thursday 12:15-1:30 pm. I strongly encourage students to come and speak to me concerning any aspect of the course during these times. My office phone number is 617-552-1596 and my home phone is 617-333-9898 (before 10:00 p.m.). I welcome students communicating with me by email, and my address is <james.smith.2@bc.edu>

### Guidelines for Canvas Discussion Board Posts

You will write a series of Canvas discussion board posts this semester. Posts are due by 8 p.m. the day **before** class to give us all time to read and think about them. You do not have to respond online to anyone's posts, but of course you may do so if you wish.

The purpose of these short, written assignments is to allow you to communicate what you are most interested in discussing in class, and to give you practice articulating your ideas clearly in writing. I may call on you to discuss your post in class, and thus you may be responsible for leading discussion, informally, for a small portion of class time.

Requirements:

- 350 words approximately
- Tell us that you find interesting about the assigned reading. A few questions to think about: What issues does the text raise? Are there passages that you find difficult, or passages in which the author's presentation of a particular issue strikes you? Are there interesting comparisons to be made between the current text and previous readings or discussions?
- You could point us to specific moments/passages in the text to illuminate your ideas-remember to provide short close-reading/analysis.
- You should pose 2-3 questions that cannot be answered simply—your goal is to get a discussion going.
- Informal tone is fine, but please proofread and avoid overly colloquial language.