

## Midterm Essays

English 392: The Great American Novel

Dr. Barrenechea

Due Date: 2/27/20 (in class, by 4:45pm)

Requirements: two double-spaced essays, 12-point font.

### Essay #1: The Canon

You have encountered a wide range of ideas on what makes a literary work great and, ultimately, canonical. Consider the contributions you read from Bloom, Gates, and Casanova. Quoting from at least two critics, answer the following questions: which theory (or combination of theories) do you agree with most? Which theory (or theories) do you find least valid? Explain.

### Essay #2: America

Consider the definitions of “America” and “American” culture as pronounced and implied in the scholarship of Bolton, Matthiessen, and Anzaldúa. Discuss the differences and similarities their ideas have with one another, commenting on what you consider the strengths and weaknesses of each case. Provide your reasoning.

### Extra Credit

On February 20, I will be reading and discussing “The Whiteness of the Whale” (chapter 42) from *Moby-Dick* as part of ELC’s “Thursday Poems and Prose” series (5:00-5:30 pm in Combs 139). To earn extra credit, you must attend the event and write a one page, double-spaced response to some aspect of it. Here are two basic questions you might choose to address: Did you learn anything new about the chapter? What makes it so special? If you hand this response in on time along with the midterm essays, I will grant you a half letter grade bump on your grade.

\*Grading: is on the syllabus under “Grading Criteria.” Good luck!