



COURSE DESCRIPTION

## 2016 Winter Session (2016-2017 Academic Year)

ENGL 223-001: Contemporary U.S. Novel - Jeffrey Severs

### Literature in the United States

#### Term 1

TTh, 11:00 A.M. - 12:00 p.m.

This course surveys some of the great innovators in the U.S. novel over the past 40 to 50 years, ranging across the stalwarts of realism, postmodernism, and the proliferation of important multicultural voices in the American canon. Questions we will address include: What have been the major innovations in fictional form in the U.S. in the past sixty years, and what forces seem to have driven them? What structures have writers developed in this era to demonstrate new layers of guilt, innocence, and moral complexity? Does the novel, as informational and imaginative medium, have authority in this era? If so, what sort of authority is it? What difference has the explosion in prominent ethnic writers within U.S. literature made for definitions of "American culture"? Students will write three essays: a close-reading paper (about 500 words) and two longer papers (1500 and 2000 words), as well as a final exam. Texts are likely to include Philip Roth's *The Ghost Writer*, Joan Didion's *Play It As It Lays*, Don DeLillo's *White Noise*, Toni Morrison's *Jazz*, Chang-rae Lee's *A Gesture Life*, and Jennifer Egan's *A Visit From the Goon Squad*.