

English 309 Survey of Contemporary American Literature
Fall 2022
MW 11:30-12:45
Prof. Joel Berkowitz

This course offers a survey of American literature from 1965 to the present, focusing primarily on fiction and drama. Most of our readings will be works of short fiction, which will give us the opportunity to sample a wide variety of authors, texts, and themes. We will also read a handful of longer works of fiction and drama. Our texts will be organized around major themes and issues in American society over the past half century, including campaigns for civil rights and human rights; demographic shifts (e.g. from cities to suburbs); changing gender roles, norms of gender relations, and family structures; immigration, adaptation, and linguistic and cultural differences; and war, terrorism, and empire. Authors will include Sherman Alexie, James Baldwin, John Cheever, Sayed Kashua, Jhumpa Lahiri, Toni Morrison, Grace Paley, Philip Roth, David Sedaris, Kurt Vonnegut, and August Wilson. Grades will be based on class participation, frequent short writing assignments, and a longer final project.