



Spring 2018

EN 4923/6923:

AMERICAN NOVEL SINCE 1900

Fictions of History

This course will establish the relationship between American literature and history as a framework for studying a representative set of novels from the turn of the twentieth century to the present. Our reading will take us from Gilded Age drawing rooms to Dust Bowl migrant camps as we consider the implications of reading literature as history. Reading novels that depict actual historical figures and events will enable us to think through questions of truth, accuracy, and accountability that surface when history is subject to literary interpretation. We will conclude with works from the genre of alternate history that prompt us to think about what could have been as a way to rethink our present understanding of the past.

Assignments: Reading responses; roundtable discussions; research project (prospectus, essay, and presentation); final exam

Texts: Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*; John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*; E.L. Doctorow, *Billy Bathgate*; Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*; Philip Roth, *The Plot Against America*; Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad*

Dr. Ted Atkinson

TTh 12:30-1:45