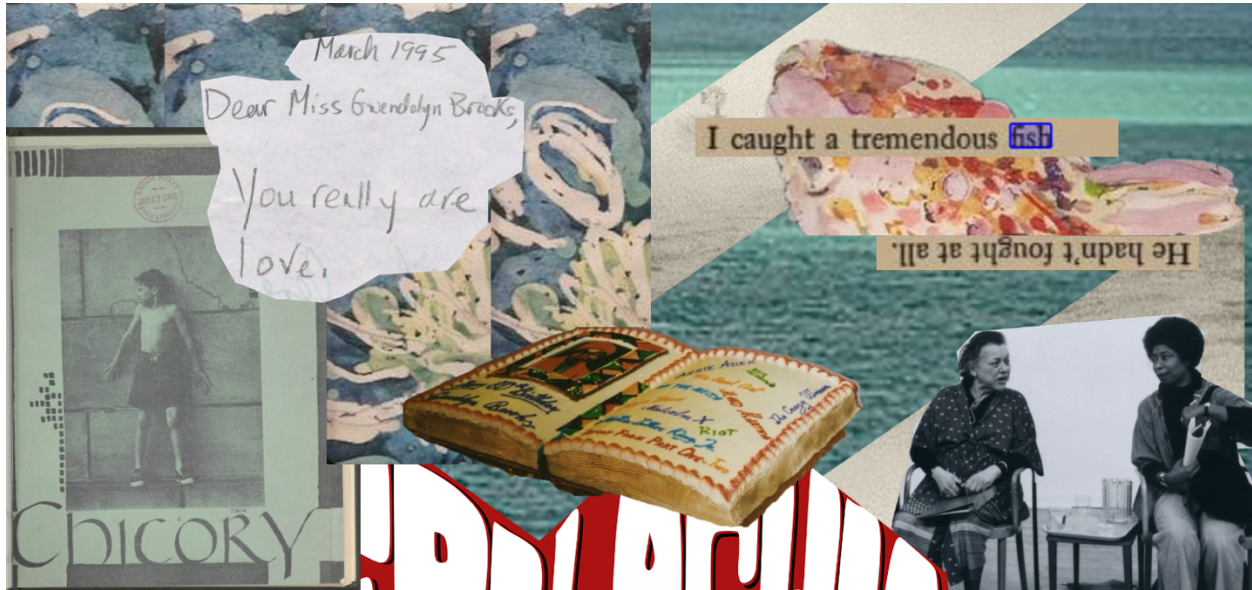


## Twentieth Century American Literature and the Archive



Junior Tutorial Spring 2026  
Instructor: Celine Shanosky

This course plunges into places beyond New York City that have shaped American literature in the twentieth century. We focus on places of varying scales—like Chicago, Appalachia, the Great Plains, Key West, and San Francisco—that have been affiliated with major works of literature, literary movements, and communities of authors. We explore the advantages and limitations of using place as a way of understanding a literary text, while also learning to navigate the archives that have brought these texts to us. Archival theory and the examination of archival sources, along with a thematic rootedness in place, are the guiding pillars of our course.

### Through this tutorial, you will be able to:

- Design a research question for literary study, and write a critical research paper (20-25 pages) answering that question that draws on both primary and secondary texts
- Pursue further research in twentieth century and contemporary American literature, bolstered by a baseline understanding of some major texts in the field
- Develop core skills in archival research as a tool for literary criticism

### Required texts

Brooks, Gwendolyn, *The Bean Eaters* (1960).  
Erdrich, Louise, *Love Medicine* (1984).  
McCullers, Carson, *The Member of the Wedding* (1946).

## Assignments

[10%] Short paper, due **Week 5 at midnight**: 4-5 page double spaced close reading of a text from our syllabus, which also cites to at least one secondary source from our syllabus.

[10%] Prospectus and annotated bibliography due **Week 7 at midnight**: 2-3 page double spaced proposal for your project, and an annotated bibliography including your primary sources, 8-10 secondary sources, and 1-3 sentences describing why each secondary source is helpful to your project.

[20%] Junior essay draft, due **Week 9 at midnight**: A draft of the final essay of at least 12 pages double spaced. Full credit includes a short individual meeting with me to discuss your plan for revisions and participation in our in-class workshop.

[40%] Junior essay final draft, due **[reading period]**: 20-25 page double spaced paper incorporating at least 8-10 secondary sources.

[20%] Participation: Participation for this course is made up of several elements:

- [10%] Archive study: 500-word Canvas post (due at midnight before class) and an in-class presentation on the archival material featured in that week's reading. The post should include (1) a brief history of the archive and its digitization, (2) options for accessing the archive, (3) a summary of a piece of literary scholarship that draws from that archive, and (4) a description of an object in the archive that intrigued you.
- [10%] Attendance: Class attendance is expected, although you may miss one class over the course of the semester with no penalty. Regular lateness or violation of the classroom technology policy may affect your attendance grade. In addition to class, your attendance grade includes events hosted by the Junior Tutorial program. These are:
  - General meetings
  - Workshop with the departmental Writing Fellow
  - Individual meeting with the departmental Writing Fellow
  - Junior Tutorial conference

## Late assignment policy

- Junior essay final draft: Extensions for the junior essay final deadline must be approved in advance by the Director of Junior Tutorials, Alan Niles, and will only be granted in the case of an unanticipated personal or medical emergency. Otherwise, handing in a junior essay late will result in an automatic letter reduction in the final course grade.
- Other assignments: Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and must be approved in advance by your tutor.

## Classroom technology policy

In class, we'll use physical copies of our texts and take notes on paper, with any screens (e.g., laptops, phones, tablets) closed unless we're using them together to view digital archival

materials. Students are responsible for the required texts, but all other readings will be provided in a course reader distributed at the start of the semester.

Screens can be a critical way that some students in need of accommodation to participate in class. This policy is not meant to apply in those cases, and if you are need of an accommodation, please contact me directly.

### **Generative AI and academic integrity**

The policy adopted by the Junior Tutorial program is as follows: It is expected that all work students submit for this course will be their own. We specifically forbid the use of ChatGPT or any other generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools at all stages of the work process, including preliminary ones. Violations of this policy will be considered academic misconduct. We draw your attention to the fact that different classes at Harvard could implement different AI policies, and it is the student's responsibility to conform to expectations for each course.

### **Accommodations statement**

Harvard University values inclusive excellence and providing equal educational opportunities for all students. Our goal is to remove barriers for disabled students related to inaccessible elements of instruction or design in this course. If reasonable accommodations are necessary to provide access, please contact the Disability Access Office (DAO). Accommodations do not alter fundamental requirements of the course and are not retroactive. Students should request accommodations as early as possible, since they may take time to implement. Students should notify DAO at any time during the semester if adjustments to their communicated accommodation plan are needed.

### **Reading schedule**

#### Week 1: American South: Introduction via Jean Toomer

Primary:

Jean Toomer, "Karintha" through "Blood-Burning Moon" in *Cane* (1923)  
Selection from digital [Jean Toomer Papers at Yale](#)

Secondary:

"Introduction" and "New Findings on Nathan Toomer and His First Wife, Harriet Haslam" from *Cane* (2025)  
Marlene Manoff, "Theories of the Archive from Across Disciplines" (2004)

#### Week 2: Theories of the Archive

Primary:

N/A

Secondary:

Jacques Derrida trans. Eric Prenowitz, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression" (1995)

Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts" (2008)

Selection from Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995)

### Week 3: American South: Carson McCullers and Queer Archive

Primary:

Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* (1946)

Secondary:

Selection from Jenn Shapland, *My Autobiography of Carson McCullers* (2020)

Ann Cvetkovich, "Introduction" in *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (2003)

### Week 4: Chicago

Primary:

Gwendolyn Brooks, *The Bean Eaters* (1960)

Selection from [Gwendolyn Brooks Digital Collection](#)

Secondary:

Selection from *The Whiskey of our Discontent: Gwendolyn Brooks as Conscience and Change Agent* (2017)

Lisa Stead, "Introduction" in *The Boundaries of the Literary Archive* (2017)

### Week 5: Appalachia

Primary:

Selections from Muriel Rukeyser, James Wright, Charles Wright, Frank X Walker, bell hooks  
Selection from [Muriel Rukeyser at Penn Sound](#) and [The Muriel Rukeyser Collection](#) at the Muriel Rukeyser Living Archive

Secondary:

Theresa Lloyd and Katherine Ledford, "Introduction" in *Writing Appalachia: An Anthology* (2020)

Michael Dowdy, "Appalachian Poetics in Four Acts" (2022)

"Preface" and "Introduction" in *Black Bone: 25 Years of the Affrilachian Poets* (2018)

Short paper due.

### Week 6: Great Plains (part 1)

Primary:

Louise Erdrich, *Love Medicine* (1984), first third

"Plains and Mountains" in *When the Light of the World Was Subdued, Our Songs Came*

*Through: A Norton Anthology of Native Nations Poetry* (2020)  
Selections from Library of Congress, [Living Nations Living Worlds](#)

Secondary:

Heid E. Erdrich, “Placed with Our Power” in *When the Light of the World Was Subdued, Our Songs Came Through: A Norton Anthology of Native Nations Poetry* (2020)

Krista McCracken and Skylee-Storm Hogan-Stacey, “Indigenous Archival Futures” in *Decolonial Archival Futures* (2023)

Week 7: Great Plains (part 2)

Primary:

Louise Erdrich, *Love Medicine* (1984), rest of novel

Secondary:

Selection from *Critical Insights: Louise Erdrich* (2012)

Prospectus and annotated bibliography due.

Week 8: Key West

Primary:

Selection from Elizabeth Bishop’s *North & South* (1946) and Wallace Stevens’s *Ideas of Order* (1935)

Selections from the Woodberry Poetry Room Literary Recordings and The PennSound/Woodberry Poetry Room Wallace Stevens Audio Project

Secondary:

Bethany Hickok, “Introduction” in *Elizabeth Bishop and the Literary Archive* (2020)

M. Nardone, “Poetics in a Networked Digital Milieu” (2020)

Week 9: San Francisco

Primary:

Selection from Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee* (1982)

Secondary:

Spencer Lee-Lenfield, “Assemblage, Sourcework, and Ritual in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*” (2023)

Timothy Yu, “Inventing a Culture: Asian American Poetry in the 1970s” in *Race and the Avant-Garde: Experimental and Asian American Poetry Since 1965* (2009)

Junior essay draft due.

Week 10: Paper Workshop

Primary:

Your peers’ junior essay drafts.

Secondary:  
N/A

Week 11: Building the Archive: Case Study on Baltimore's *Chicory*

Primary:  
Issue of *Chicory* as featured in [Digital Maryland – Chicory Project](#)

Secondary:  
“Melvin E. Brown and Afaa Michael Weaver: Interview” in *The Hopkins Review* (2020)

One hour in class-writing time.

Week 12: Is the Internet a Place and Time? The Born-Digital Archive (part 1)

Primary:  
Selection from the [Electronic Literature Collection](#)

Secondary:  
Stephanie Strickland, “Born Digital” (2009)  
Matthew Kirschenbaum, “The .txtual Condition: Digital Humanities, Born-Digital Archives, and the Future Literary” (2013)

One hour in-class writing time.

Week 13: Is the Internet a Place and Time? The Born-Digital Archive (part 2)

Primary:  
Selection from Lillian-Yvonne Bertram's *Negative Money* (2023)

Secondary:  
Kyle Booten, “Unbreathed words: A Conversation with Lillian-Yvonne Bertram” (2022)

One hour workshop of conference presentations.