BUSINESS IN LITERATURE

Objectives
The genre of writing that English-speakers refer to as “the novel” came into being in the same historical period as the modern economy, as new economic realities and societal shifts in Europe provoked philosophical questions regarding human nature, individual and collective development, the organization and legitimation of power, and the existence of time. The novel form served in the seventeenth century and has continued to serve as an artistic response to the always-new realities of urban life, waged work, modern bureaucracy, technology, imperialism and colonialism. For this reason, it is possible to say that all novels are about business, and business is the framework of all of “American literature”.

In this course, we will read several novels, as well as one play and one ethnographic text, in order to develop an understanding of the relationship between business and literary expression. We will read chronologically through US history, from the origins of Wall Street, through the rise of US industry, the economic expansion of the mid-twentieth century, and the development of post-industrial business. We will consider throughout the theme of the American Dream, questions of leadership and power, and moralistic representations of businesspeople and workers as either “heroes” or “villains”. Our overarching question will be: How do the literary texts that we read in the course express, acclaim or challenge the relationship between business and daily life in the modern world?

Readings
Please obtain copies of the following books:
The Jungle, Upton Sinclair [also available online]
Martin Dressler: The Tale of an American Dreamer, Steven Millhauser
The Love of the Last Tycoon, F. Scott Fitzgerald [the version edited by Bruccoli]
Radio Golf, August Wilson
Fight Club, Chuck Palahniuk

I will make the additional, shorter readings available on Sakai.

Writing
There will be a midterm paper (approximately 6 pages, double spaced, 12 pt. font, standard margins), a final paper (10 pages), and 4 short response papers (1-2 pages). I will go over in class what is expected for each paper, and will provide paper prompts. There will be no in-class tests or quizzes unless I suspect that people are not reading, in which case I might give short surprise pop quizzes of two or three questions about the reading.

Grades
Grades will be determined as follows:
Paper I 25%
Paper II 25%
Response papers 25%
Class participation 25%

Policy Statements
Attendance: Please inform me if you will be absent and keep up to date with assignments regardless of absence. Two absences are permitted; additional absences will lower your grade by one fractional letter grade per absence.

Collaboration and Plagiarism: Talking to other students, especially those in the course, about your ideas is
encouraged. Taking other people's words or ideas without attribution is plagiarism and will result in an F for the course etc. See the Duke library's plagiarism Web site (http://www.lib.duke.edu/libguide/plagiarism.htm).

Disabilities: Students with documented disabilities who need accommodations or have questions should contact Dr. Emma Swain (eswain@duke.edu), Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (http://aaswebsv.aas.duke.edu/skills/OSSDwebsite).

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

WEEK 1: The Origins of US Industry and Wall Street
1/13: Read “Bartleby the Scrivener”

WEEKS 2-6: The Industrial Age
1/20: MLK DAY, No class
Read first ½ of The Jungle

1/27: Finish The Jungle

2/3: Atlas Shrugged, excerpt (available on Sakai)
FIRST RESPONSE PAPER DUE ON SAKAI PREVIOUS TO CLASS, 2/2

2/10: ¼ of Martin Dressler: The Tale of an American Dreamer
SECOND RESPONSE PAPER DUE ON SAKAI PREVIOUS TO CLASS, 2/9

2/17: ½ of Martin Dressler

WEEKS 7-10: Hollywood and the American Dream
2/24: Finish Martin Dressler

3/3: MIDTERM PAPER DUE IN CLASS

3/10: SPRING BREAK, No class
½ of The Love of the Last Tycoon

WEEK 10
3/17: Finish The Love of the Last Tycoon
THIRD RESPONSE PAPER DUE ON SAKAI PREVIOUS TO CLASS, 3/16

WEEKS 11-14: Post-Industrial Business: Information, Real Estate, Finance
3/24: Liquidated, excerpt (available on Sakai)

3/31: Radio Golf
FOURTH RESPONSE PAPER DUE ON SAKAI PREVIOUS TO CLASS, 3/30

4/7: ½ of Fight Club

4/14: Finish Fight Club

4/21: FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS