Authors & Contents 2nd Semester
Study Block II

- Romanticism (part II)
  - Nathaniel Hawthorne - Feb 19th
  - Herman Melville - Feb 26th
  - Henry Wadsworth Longfellow - Mar 11th
  - Edgar Allan Poe - Mar 4th
  - Frederick Douglass - Apr 1st
  - Harriet Beecher Stowe - Apr 15th
  - Walt Whitman - Mar 18th
  - Emily Dickinson - Mar 25th

- Realism and Naturalism
  - Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens) - Apr 22nd
  - Henry James - Apr 29th
  - Kate Chopin - May 6th
  - Stephen Crane - May 13th

- Review past exams - May 20th
"It means", he answered lightly, "that the child is not white; it means that you are not white"

Kate Chopin (1850 - 1904)

- Biography
- Works by author
- Online resources
- Q&A
Objectives of the Unit

- **Learn** about regionalist or local-color fiction, a post-Civil War genre that was a commercial success and addressed regional differences among Americans.

- **Trace** the complex historical reception of Kate Chopin’s writings (from her early success, followed by a long period of obscurity to being discovered by feminist scholars and her current controversial reception due to her treatment of gender, race, and class).

- **Interpret** Chopin’s Louisiana short stories as illustrative examples of the literary movements of realism and naturalism, considering that the author subversively used the conventions of local-color fiction in order to undermine and dismantle the conservative ideology that this traditional genre nostalgically supported.

- **Focus** on the polemical reception of *The Awakening*, a complex narrative about a woman’s growth from being her husband’s possession to achieving self ownership.

- **Closely** examine *Désirée’s Baby*, a deceptively simple short story which subverts the idyllic images of the Old South offered by plantation novels.
Biography

- Born in Saint Louis (Missouri) in 1850
- Bilingual and bicultural. Now considered the first major American author formed outside the Protestant Anglo-Saxon mainstream
- Her parents were Irish and French. Her birth name Katherine O’Flaherty
- Her father died in a railway accident
- She married Oscar Chopin at the age of 20 and went to live to New Orleans (Louisiana)
- Her husband died in 1882 due to swamp fever (malaria) and forced her to take over the family business while taking care of her six children
- Her literary career took off a few years after returning to her home town
- However she was unable to make a living only through writing
- She earnestly sought literary recognition
Works of Kate Chopin

- Her work had almost been forgotten in the twentieth century until it was rediscovered by Norwegian scholar Per Seyeersted, who edited her complete works in 1969.
- Previous to her revival only a few short stories remained in print. They were mainly considered examples of regionalist or local color fiction.
- Now the scope of her work is more widely appreciated and categorized within realism and naturalism.
- Recurring Themes in Kate Chopin: love, marriage, sex (mostly liberating sex), elitist creole culture, Cajun culture, the French South (Louisiana), personal liberation, race, and class.
- She used local color devices to subvert the genre and dismantle conservative ideas.
- She went beyond capturing a local atmosphere and beyond just representing speech patterns in order to explore the values of southern society.
- She showed no nostalgia for the past and did not represent a South with harmonious gender and race relationships.
The Awakening

- Now Chopin’s most famous work and widely acknowledged masterpiece
- Originally titled *A Solitary Soul*
- Dubbed the *American Madame Bovary*
- Complex narrative. Main character is Edna Pontellier a discontented wife & woman
- One of the first works of fiction to deal with women’s issues without condescension
- Process of self-discovery that makes her yearn for sexual freedom and artistic fulfilment
- There were many hostile reactions to Chopin’s sympathetic treatment of her female protagonist
- Critics disapproved of the author’s handling of the theme of adultery
- Such criticism caused her publishers to cancel the publishing of her third collection of stories, which had less of setting and were in a great deal about sex, love, and marriage.
Online Resources for Kate Chopin

- The Awakening Audiobook
  https://librivox.org/the-awakening-version-2-by-kate-chopin/

- Kate Chopin Audiobooks https://librivox.org/author/433

- Désirée’s Baby Audiobook
  http://www.archive.org/download/short_story_035_0812_librivox/shortstory035_desireesbaby_lm.mp3

- The Cambridge Companion to Kate Chopin

- Kate Chopin on LION (Proquest Literature Online)

- Resources and Links suggested in the Curso Vitual

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Remember to complete Self-Evaluation & Exploratory Questions from the Book
[Online Self Evaluation Quiz]

Questions?

Thank you