Course Description: Setting is an important—if little understood—narrative element that is found in almost every literary text. In this course, however, we will concentrate our attention on American fiction from the 20th and 21st centuries. Two closely related questions will guide our investigations:

1) How is setting constructed in fiction, and how does it relate to other elements like plot and character?
2) How have American history and politics influenced the dynamic, innovative strategies that authors use to conjure cities, regions, nations, and worlds on the printed page (and the screen)?

Throughout the quarter, we will use narrative theory to examine setting across a range of genres, including the modernist novel, fantasy, film, and the contemporary transnational novel. We will also consider the peculiar partnership between writer and reader that generates literary setting.

Required Texts


Major Assignments

1) Short paper (3 to 5 pages) on one aspect of setting in *Absalom, Absalom!*. Topics might include the influence of point-of-view on setting, Faulkner’s poetics of description, how race and gender affect the construction of setting, and the contrasts Faulkner creates between Mississippi and Massachusetts.

2) In-class presentation (15-20 minutes) on a theoretical or critical text. You will summarize a secondary reading—drawn from the list above or from your own research—for your classmates. What does this critic teach us about literary setting? How would you go about applying this theoretical approach to one or more of the primary texts that we have read? These presentations will be staggered throughout the quarter; you will sign up for a date to present.

3) Final research paper on one or more primary texts of your choosing. Topics will be selected in consultation with the instructor, and with input from others in the class. There will be ample opportunity to workshop your writing, as well as a chance to share your original research at the end of the quarter.

Students with Documented Disabilities

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as
possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae).

Honor Code
The Honor Code is the University's statement on academic integrity written by students in 1921. It articulates University expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work:
The Honor Code is an undertaking of the students, individually and collectively:
1. that they will not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading;
2. that they will do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code.
2. The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid, as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the Honor Code.
3. While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work.

Schedule of Readings and Activities
Week 1
Texts: Welty, “Place in Fiction”
       Bulson, “Introduction” from Novels, Maps, Modernity: The Spatial Imagination, 1850-2000
       Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom!, Chapter 1

Activities: What is setting, and how is it different from place? How does Faulkner construct setting in Absalom, and how do readers make sense of fictional locations?

Week 2
Texts: Faulkner, Absalom, Chapters 2-5
       Ryan, “Space” from The Living Handbook of Narratology

Activities: Close readings of setting in Faulkner, begin short paper on Absalom, discuss the relation of setting to other narrative and thematic elements in the novel (plot, character, race, nation, memory, time, etc.)

Week 3
Texts: Faulkner, Absalom, Chapters 6-9
Activities: Discussion of narrative middles and ends and their relationship to the place/setting dichotomy, presentation of short papers on *Absalom*

**Week 4**

Texts: Martin, “Prologue,” “Bran I” from *A Game of Thrones*
Moretti, selections from *Atlas of the European Novel*

Activities: Discuss the particularities of producing space in a fantasy novel. What spatial strategies does Martin, as a writer of fantasy, employ that Faulkner does not? Begin second assignment on critical texts (how to find them, how integrate secondary material into discussions of literary texts)

**Week 5**

Texts: Martin, “Daenerys I,” “Tyrion I” from *A Game of Thrones*

Activities: Begin development of research paper, discuss strategies for identifying a topic, in-class presentations on critical readings

**Week 6**


Activities: Continue development of research paper, discussions of research and outlining methods, discussion of setting as a world literary concern, what changes in narrative space happen in the 21st century global novel?

**Week 7**

Phelan and Rabinowitz, “Narrative Worlds: Space, Setting, Perspective” from *Narrative Theory: Core Concepts and Critical Debates*

Activities: Writing workshops, how to assemble an argument in a research paper, how to adopt theoretical models for your work

**Week 8**

Texts: Iñarritu, *Babel*
*True Blood*, “Strange Love” (television episode)
*The Wire*, “The Target” (television episode)

Activities: Writing workshops continued, discussion of setting on the screen

**Week 9**

Texts: Polanski, *Chinatown*
Activities: Discussion of historical setting in the novel and on film, peer revisions of research papers, discussions of narrative space at different scales (city, region, nation, world)

Week 10
Activities: Presentations of student research, wrap-up