

EN 4333/6333

SOUTHERN LITERATURE

Southern Geographies

SPRING 2011 MWF 10:00-10:50 a.m.

Dr. Ted Atkinson



"My, my. A body does get around. Here we aint been coming from Alabama but two months, and now it's already Tennessee."

– Lena Grove

Faulkner, *Light in August*

A “sense of place” is one of the qualities cited most frequently and now scrutinized most thoroughly in attempts to define “the South” as a distinctive region and “southern literature” as a discrete body of work. But what exactly is a “sense of place”? And, as Eudora Welty asked, “What place has place in fiction?” Drawing on scholarship in human and social geography and southern studies, we will survey (pun intended) selected fiction, poetry, drama, and nonfiction from the colonial period to the “postsouthern” present to examine how writers have represented places and spaces, as well as the bodies that inhabit, traverse, and transform them for better or for worse. The thematic focus will enable us to get a lay of the land in southern literature as we explore imagined geographies with roots and routes shaped by local, regional, national, and global influences. In our literary travels, we will encounter the flora and fauna of colonial Virginia, the spatial politics of antebellum plantations, the hustle and humidity of the mid-twentieth century New Orleans French Quarter, the rugged and remote environs of Appalachia, the urban neighborhoods of Atlanta in the early 1980s, and the dazzling despair of Mississippi Delta casinos. Geographically speaking, like Faulkner’s Lena Grove, we will get around.

Texts: Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (excerpts); Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*; William Faulkner, *Go Down, Moses*; James Still, *River of Earth*; Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*; Forkner and Samway, eds., *Stories of the Modern South*; Cynthia Shearer, *The Celestial Jukebox*; Tayari Jones, *Leaving Atlanta*; selected poems by Sidney Lanier, the Fugitives, A.R. Ammons, James Dickey, Nikki Giovanni, Andrew Hudgins, and Natasha Trethewey.