

ENG 378: Individual Authors “Willa Cather”  
Dr. Edith Baker

This special-topic seminar will focus on the writings of Willa Cather, particularly noting her descriptions of landscape, space and the natural world in the early twentieth century. Students will read short stories, criticism, novels, and Cather’s own definition of the novel, which she often created in an impressionistic way. In many ways, she was a modernist, but very different from the writing of Hemingway or F. Scott Fitzgerald. We will also note her depiction of modern life in her oeuvre, as she thought the world “broke in two” about 1922. About that time she won the Pulitzer Prize for *One of Ours*, her version of a war novel.

Cather’s books are part travel narrative, part guide book, full of characters and messages about her belief in the institutions of marriage and other topics on which she turned her gaze. From her female heroines in *My Antonia* and *O Pioneers* to her southwestern priests in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, we will note her development of characters, settings, themes, and plot development. Students will apply different kinds of literary criticism to multiple novels and write several short papers, as well as a seminar paper on an approved topic. Students should purchase course editions selected for the class, since close reading will be the method of reading and the springboard for class discussion.

Midterm and final examinations will be written essays. Seminar paper on approved topic. Other short papers on assigned works of Cather.

Novels: TBA, *My Antonia*, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, *The Professor’s House*, *One of Ours*. Selected short stories.

Method of class structure: Discussion, small group work, and student-led seminars on research topics (end of semester).