

Department of English & Writing Studies

What is an American? Early American Literature
English 3440G (001)
Winter 2019**Instructor:** Alyssa MacLeanalyssa.maclean@uwo.ca

(519) 661-2111 ext. 87416 | UC 4429

Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30-3:30 and by appointment**Course Location:** UC 1105**Course Date/Time:** Mondays 11:30am-12:30pm, Wednesdays 11:30am-1:30pm**Prerequisites:** At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020E or English 1022E or English 1024E or English 1035E or English 1036E or English 1042E or both of English 1027F/G and English 1028F/G, or permission of the Department.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Description

This course will examine the development of American nationalism through an examination of early American print culture. Defined broadly, print culture refers to printed and written forms of visual and textual expressive culture. This would include familiar literary genres (ex. novels, poetry) as well as journalism, posters, manuscripts, manifestoes, political treatises, and even photography. Print culture was instrumental in the successful governance and expansion of the American colonies; it also facilitated (and was itself shaped by) the development of American nationalism.

Over the course of the term, we will study how different forms of print culture gave rise to competing understandings of “America” from the contact period until the end of the Civil War. Many of these works self-consciously attempt to understand the role of text in creating a myth of America. How do definitions of—and conflicts about—the nation play out in adventure novels, captivity narratives, sentimental poetry, broadsides, advertisements, political screeds, and letters? What interpretive strategies or reading practices do these texts demand of their readers? How did marginalized authors use different kinds of texts to advocate for their own inclusion in the U.S.? Texts will include Mary Rowlandson’s *Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, the Declaration of Independence, Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), Herman Melville’s novella *Benito Cereno*, Edgar Allan Poe’s *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, and poetry by authors such as Lydia Sigourney, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Emily Dickinson. Students will be asked to write two essays and complete a group podcast assignment focusing on abolitionist print culture.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Identify different genres of print culture in the US and identify their key characteristics, their historical period, their intellectual tradition, and their role in US nation-formation;
- Analyze key texts in early American literature, explain their significance, and appreciate their literary qualities;
- Generate original, incisive readings of literary works in oral and written assignments;
- Read and understand theoretical and critical works about early American literature; summarize and cite literary scholarship responsibly; use discussions of secondary sources to generate new interpretations of texts;
- Express ideas clearly using appropriate textual evidence, literary terms, scholarly criticism, theoretical concepts, historical contexts, and insights from class discussions;
- Design and execute individual and group research projects: formulate a research question, identify research gaps, analyze and summarize scholarship, and offer original readings of texts;
- Use specialized research methods such as library databases to conduct research.

Course Materials

Norton Anthology of American Literature, Shorter Ninth Edition, Volume 1. Eds. Robert Levine et al. Norton, 2018. ISBN: 9780393264524 N.B. only Volume 1 is needed!

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Ed. Elizabeth Ammons. Norton Critical Ed. (3rd ed.) Norton, 2017. ISBN: 978-0393283785.

Poe, Edgar Allan. *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*. New York: Penguin, 1999. ISBN: 0-14-043748-7.

Methods of Evaluation

The final mark for the course will be calculated as follows:

Position paper (2-3 pages)	10%
Group podcast assignment	25%
Research paper proposal	5%
Research paper (8-10 pages)	25%
Class participation	10%
Final exam (cumulative)	25%

Please note: The department of English & Writing Studies does not release final grades. All undergraduate grade reports will be available online from the Office of the Registrar.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

Contact Information:

I try to respond to emails within 48 hours. I'm happy to discuss your ideas anytime during office hours; if you can't come in person, I am available by phone (my number is at the top of the syllabus). If you can't attend my regular office hours, please contact me and we can set up an appointment.

Overview of Course Requirements and Assignments

Attendance:

Attendance matters in this class, and if you want to do well, you need to come to class regularly. If there is a reason why you are not attending class, please come and speak to me about it. The process for requesting academic accommodation on medical or other grounds is described in the "Accommodations" section near the end of this syllabus. I will be taking attendance when class starts. Students who miss more than two weeks of class (6 hours of class over the school year) may default their entire grade for class participation.

Students anticipating an absence for a major religious holiday are responsible for notifying the instructor in writing of anticipated absences due to their observance of such holidays as soon as possible, and no later than one week before a test or two weeks before a major exam. Information regarding dates of major religious holidays may be obtained through departmental, Deans' and Faculty advising Offices.

Participation:

This class depends upon regular and active participation from all students: this involves reading the course texts carefully before class, **bringing texts to class**, listening actively, and responding thoughtfully to other students. Your participation mark is designed to measure your engagement, preparation and active learning. You must bring your assigned text to class (please print out documents distributed via OWL).

Respectful, civil behavior is expected from all students at all times. In this class we will often be discussing difficult or sensitive topics. Please be collegial and understanding towards your peers.

Quizzes and other reading assignments:

Unannounced participation assignments will be given over the course of the year; they will count as part of your participation grade. They will vary in format (including in-class pop quizzes, group work questions, and online discussion board posts). Many will require brief responses to questions about the assigned reading. In-class assignments and quizzes cannot be made up.

Essays:

There are 2 essays due for this class: one position paper (2-3 pages) and a research paper (8-10 pages) which will require a proposal. **Please note that you may not write on the same primary text for any of your papers or your podcast.** Papers in English should be written in MLA format. Further details of these papers will be announced later in the course. I encourage you to discuss your papers with me in office hours as you work on them. On the day the essay is due, please submit a hard copy of your essay in class and upload a copy of it to Turnitin.com via OWL.

Podcast assignment:

In this assignment, you will be asked to form groups of 5, and compose a 20-minute podcast that will focus on a work on our syllabus. This podcast will be targeting an audience that is well-read, academically inclined, and may have a working knowledge of the work in question (for example they may have read a novel in high school, or know one of the author's other works); however, they may not be familiar with any debates about this work or they may need help understanding the work's importance.

The podcast must define a *research problem* associated with reading or interpreting this text and explore different ways of thinking about that problem. Along the way, your podcast will need to summarize the purpose, historical context, and intellectual contribution of the work in question, in order to explain the research problem. Your group may choose to define the problem, assign roles, and navigate through the discussion in any way it sees fit, but your podcast must summarize and discuss the scholarship of at least 3 critics or theorists who could offer ways of thinking about the problem. The group will be required to submit the finished podcast, along with a transcript, for evaluation.

A full assignment description with sample podcasts, suggested topics, and ideas for secondary sources will follow, and we will be covering the details of using Audacity (open-source audio editing and recording software) in class. To help you imagine what to expect, here are some examples of possible research problems a podcast could focus on: What are the problems of black masculine self-representation posed by Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of Frederick Douglass*? Is Melville's *Benito Cereno* a pro- or anti-slavery document? What are the problems raised by *Uncle Tom's Cabin*'s representation of Uncle Tom?

Early in the semester, I will ask each group to fill out a group contract that establishes roles for each group member, due dates for the completion of different components of the podcast, and ground rules (including how many meetings can be missed before dismissal from a group). At the end of the semester, I will ask the individual members of each group to submit a report assessing the success of the podcast project, including the contributions of individual group members. I will assign a standard group grade for each podcast. However, if the reports offer very strong evidence that a student has not fulfilled their obligations—or that an individual has made an outstanding contribution to that podcast's success—I reserve the right to adjust that individual's grade upwards or downwards accordingly.

Late policy for assignments:

The penalty for late assignments will be 2% per day. Extensions may be granted in the case of a documented personal or medical emergency; I do not give extensions for computer/email or printer problems.

If you are submitting an assignment late, you must upload it to OWL (which functions as the official timestamp) and put an identical copy in the essay drop box slot, which is located in the mailbox on the wall with faculty mailboxes (across from UC 2431). Both copies must arrive on the same day. Late penalties will be applied for each day of the week, including weekends and holidays.

Exam:

This course will have a cumulative final exam.

Electronics in the classroom:

Please be respectful by turning off your cellphone (unless you're responsible for a dependent or you're dealing with a family emergency; if this is so, alert me before class begins). The use of laptops and other electronics in class is very strongly discouraged, and I ask that you contact me if you want to use laptops in class. Any use of electronics for non-course-related purposes will result in one warning and, should a second incidence arise, removal from the class.

Intellectual property:

The sale or distribution of class notes, handouts, slides, rubrics, and other material to individuals or groups who are not registered in the class (including commercial websites) is prohibited.

Accommodation

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC):

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Support Services

If you need help:

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Other services:

Wellness Centre: www.wec.uwo.ca

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Office of the Ombudsperson: www.westernu.ca/ombuds

Timetable

You are expected to have completed the assigned reading prior to the first class in which a work is being discussed. Please bring hard copies of assigned readings to class.

N.B.: we may discover that we want to spend more time on certain readings and less time on others. I'll consider changing the schedule if such a change would benefit most students' learning in this course. If readings are modified, they will not vary significantly in page length.

Mon Jan. 7:	Introductions
Wed Jan 9:	Mary Rowlandson, <i>A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson</i> Please don't read the excerpts in the Norton! Read the header in the Norton, but read these sections of her narrative in this document: https://www.csus.edu/hum/Program%20Syllabi/Fall%202011%20Syllabi/Rowlandson.pdf preface Read the Preface and the following Removes: 1-6, 12, 19, and 20. Note that the Preface was written by a different person!
Mon Jan. 14:	Mary Rowlandson, <i>Narrative</i> Benedict Anderson, from <i>Imagined Communities</i> (pdf on OWL)
Wed Jan 16:	Tracey Isaacs visit to discuss internships in English Crevecoeur, excerpt from <i>Letters from an American Farmer</i> (Norton) Washington Irving, "Rip Van Winkle" (Norton)
Mon Jan 21:	Preamble to the Constitution (link on OWL) Declaration of Independence (in Norton) Michael Warner, from <i>Letters of the Republic</i> (pdf on OWL)
Wed. Jan. 23:	Thomas R. Gray and Nat Turner, "The Confessions of Nat Turner" (link on OWL) Levine, "Circulating the Nation: David Walker, the Missouri Compromise, and the Rise of the Black Press." (pdf on OWL) Walker, From "David Walker's Appeal in Four Articles" (in Norton)
Mon. Jan. 28:	Visit from Tegan Moore to explain Audacity Podcast group work
Wed. Jan 30:	Frederick Douglass, <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave</i> (in Norton)
Mon. Feb. 4:	Douglass, <i>Narrative</i>
Wed. Feb. 6:	SHORT PAPER DUE Melville, <i>Benito Cereno</i> (in Norton)
Mon. Feb. 11:	<i>Benito Cereno</i>
Wed. Feb. 13:	Harriet Beecher Stowe, <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> (Part 1)
Mon. Feb. 18:	READING WEEK
Wed. Feb. 20:	READING WEEK
Mon. Feb. 25:	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> (Part 2)

Wed. Feb. 27:	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> con't Jane Tompkins, "Sentimental Designs" (in our edition of UTC) Benito Cereno, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass and Nat Turner podcasts due
Mon. Mar. 4:	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> and Tomitudes—browse through the advertising and print culture on the website provided on OWL Sophia Cantave, "Who Gets to Create the Lasting Images?" (in our edition of UTC)
Wed. Mar. 6:	Habermas, Jürgen. "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964)" (pdf on OWL) Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy" (pdf on OWL) Selections from <i>The Liberator</i> and <i>The North Star</i> TBA in OWL (access via library website)
Mon. Mar. 11:	Uncle Tom's Cabin podcasts due Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience" (in Norton)
Wed. Mar. 13:	Poe, <i>Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket</i> Research paper proposal due
Mon. Mar. 18:	<i>Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket</i>
Wed. Mar. 20:	Melville, "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" (in <i>Norton</i>)
Mon. Mar. 25:	Longfellow, "Evangeline" (links provided on OWL) Critical reading on sentimental literature TBA
Wed. Mar. 27:	Longfellow, "Evangeline" con't Longfellow, "The Arsenal at Springfield", "Paul Revere's Ride" (links provided on OWL) Lydia Sigourney, "The Sutte" (links provided on OWL)
Mon. Apr. 1:	Readings TBA
Wed. Apr. 3:	Emily Dickinson—poems TBA Critical reading on Dickinson TBA
Mon. Apr. 8:	Dickinson—poems TBA Research paper due
Wed. Apr. 10:	Dickinson con't Review
	Final Exam (cumulative): Time and Date TBA