

Department of English & Writing Studies

American Literature Survey
English 2401E (002)
Fall/Winter 2019-20

Instructor: Alyssa MacLean
alyssa.maclean@uwo.ca
(519) 661-2111 ext. 87416
UC 4429

Course Location: University College 3220

Course Date/Time: Mondays 3:30-5:30pm,
Wednesdays 3:30-4:30pm

Antirequisites: English 2341E, 2342F/G, 2343F/G, 2344E, 2345F/G, 2346F/G and 3664E, or the former English 2308E.

Prerequisites: At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020E or 1022E or 1024E or 1035E or 1036E or 1042E or both of English 1027F/G and 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

A survey of American literature from the period of imperial exploration and contact in North America to the postmodern era. In this class, we will read some of the most fascinating literary works of the United States in a variety of modes and genres—from novels to sentimental poetry to slave narratives to postmodern drama. We will consider the aesthetic and formal properties of each text and consider how writers were inspired by the social conditions, ideological conflicts, economic forces, and political developments of their times, such as Indian Removal and slavery. As we study the evolution of major artistic movements and periods, we will also trace the development of important assumptions, myths, and fundamental beliefs about the United States that still influence American discourse today.

In this survey, we will also pay close attention to the voices that are heard—and not heard—in different moments of US history. The pressure of attempting to read 400 years of literary history will force us to pose some difficult questions about the limits of the American literary canon. Why do we read what we read, and who benefits from that? How have ideas of what constitutes “literature” (or “America,” for that matter) changed over time? What could lesser-known writers contribute to our understanding of the US nation and its literature? And is it possible to read so-called canonical writers in a way that produces new kinds of knowledge?

Readings will include novels such as Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, Ernest Hemingway’s *In Our Time*, Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar*, and Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*; short fiction by Herman Melville and Henry James; personal narratives such as Harriet Jacobs’ *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*; and poetry by Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Anne Bradstreet, T.S. Eliot, Langston Hughes, and Allan Ginsberg.

Learning Objectives:

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

- Identify different literary traditions in the US and explain their development, noting their key literary characteristics, their historical period, their intellectual tradition, and their relation to each other
- Generate original, incisive arguments about literature that pay attention to the structure, rhetoric, genre, and historical context of literary works
- Express ideas clearly in oral and written form, using appropriate textual evidence, literary terms, scholarly criticism, theoretical concepts, historical contexts, and insights from class discussions
- Formulate a research question, offer and receive peer review, and revise written work based on feedback
- Summarize and cite secondary sources responsibly, develop basic critiques of them, and discuss them productively to generate new interpretations of texts
- Demonstrate a basic awareness of scholarly approaches to the study of US literature, such as new historicist, feminist, queer, and African American studies; use specialized research methods such as library databases

Course Materials

Norton Anthology of American Literature, Shorter Ninth Edition, 2 volumes. Eds. Nina Baym et al. ISBN: 978-0-393-66633-5

Douglass, Frederick, and Harriet Jacobs. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Modern Library, 2004. ISBN 0-345-47823-1

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*. Bantam, 2003. 9780553210095

Hemingway, Ernest. *In Our Time*. Scribner, 2003. ISBN 9780684822761

Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*. Faber and Faber, 1988. ISBN 9780571200337

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*. New York: Vintage, 1987. ISBN 9781400033416

Recommended text:

Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray. *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*. 4th Edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2018. ISBN 978-1-319-03539-6

Methods of Evaluation

The final mark for the course will be arrived at as follows:

Essay #1 (2-3 pages).....	5%
Essay #2 (5-6 pages).....	15%
Midterm.....	10%
Essay #3 (4-5 pages).....	10%
Research paper proposal.....	pass/fail
Research paper (8-10 pages).....	20%
Class attendance and participation.....	5%
Quizzes (best 8 of 12).....	5%
Final exam (cumulative).....	30%

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>.

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

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/>

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.

Timetable

TBA