

## Department of English &amp; Writing Studies

**American Literature Survey****English 2401E (002)**

Fall/Winter 2020-21

**Instructor:** Alyssa MacLean  
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University College 4429 (but I will primarily be  
working from home in 2020-21)

Office Hours: TBA

**Teaching Assistant:** TBA

**Delivery Type:** synchronous online class held on  
Zoom

**Course Day/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*, and Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar*; short fiction by Herman Melville, William Faulkner, and Henry James; personal narratives such as Harriet Jacobs’ *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Zitkala-Sa’s *Impressions of an Indian Childhood* and Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*; and poetry by Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Anne Bradstreet, T.S. Eliot, Langston Hughes, Allan Ginsberg, and Sherman Alexie.

### Course delivery

**As of June 2020, this course is being designed to be held as a synchronous online course, possibly with some asynchronous elements.** The Monday and Wednesday classes will be held during class time on Zoom and may be offered as recorded asynchronous sessions for those who **occasionally** miss a class. However, this is not designed to be a completely asynchronous class, so please ensure you can attend our class times. Attendance will be monitored and makeup participation homework may be assigned for those who occasionally cannot attend our live class. If you have questions about the course delivery format, please contact me and I will do my best to address your concerns.

**On potential changes in plans:** I want to thank all prospective students in advance for your patience as my ideas for course delivery evolve in response to new information that we acquire over the summer. I will do my best to limit any changes in the plans above, and I'll only make them when I feel they are necessary for safety reasons or that they will make a significant improvement to the learning environment of the course.

### **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

Recommended text:

Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray. *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*. 4<sup>th</sup> 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 (4-5 pages).....	10%
Scholarship analysis (group project).....	10%
Essay #2 (5-6 pages).....	15%
Research paper proposal.....	5%
Research paper (8-10 pages).....	20%
Class participation.....	5%
Quizzes (best 8 of 12).....	10%
Final take-home exam (cumulative).....	25%

### Academic Consideration for Missed Work

Students who are temporarily unable to meet academic requirements (e.g. attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) may submit a self-reported absence form online (available on your Student Center) provided that the absence is 48 hours or less and the other conditions specified in the Senate policy are met. Students can self-report only two absences per academic year. See policy here:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/Academic\\_Consideration\\_for\\_absences.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Consideration_for_absences.pdf).

Students whose absences are expected to last longer than 48 hours, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds) to Academic Counselling. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. The Student Medical Certificate is available online at [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf).

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation.

### 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](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.