

## Department of English &amp; Writing Studies

**English 2401E (002)**  
**American Literature Survey**  
Fall/Winter 2024-25

**Instructor:** Prof. Alyssa MacLean

**Course format:** this is an in-person synchronous course.

**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 1020-1999 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 Puritan poetry to Indigenous life writing to postmodern novels. We will consider the aesthetic and formal properties of each text and consider how writers were shaped by the social conditions, ideological conflicts, economic forces, and political developments of their times, such as the forced removal of Indigenous peoples and the practice of chattel 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 questions about the limits of what we know as “American literature.” 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, Henry James, William Faulkner, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Alice Walker; 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 Anne Bradstreet, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Langston Hughes, and Allan Ginsberg.

**Use of recordings:** Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior permission of the instructor.

### 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 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 an emergent awareness of scholarly approaches to the study of US literature, such as new historicist, feminist, queer, and African American studies
- Navigate the library, use its database systems, and generate bibliographies correctly
- Display academic integrity in all research processes—i.e. demonstrate an awareness of how new knowledge is created in the discipline, cite sources ethically and transparently, acknowledge the ideas that are theirs and not theirs, and make that difference clear to their readers. Students will contribute to the larger research community as they create connections among researchers and themselves, and protect the ideas of others and of ourselves.

### Course Materials

- *Norton Anthology of American Literature*, Eds. Nina Baym et al., Shorter Tenth Edition, 2 volumes.
  - n.b. This 2-volume anthology will be the main course text. The set available at the bookstore includes a code for the digitized version of the 5-volume set, which may be useful. **Keep the code that comes with your textbook!**
- 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.
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, Bantam, 2003.
- Hemingway, Ernest. *In Our Time*, Scribner, 2003.
- Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*, Faber and Faber, 1988.
- Other required readings will be made available on OWL.

Recommended texts:

- Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray. *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2018.
- Modern Language Association. *MLA Handbook*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, Modern Language Association, 2021.
  - n.b. We will be referring briefly to both of these texts, but they are not required texts. They are strongly recommended for English majors who don't yet own a glossary of literary terms or an MLA handbook for consultation purposes.

### Methods of Evaluation

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

Essay #1 (3 pages).....	10%
Library/bibliography assignment.....	5%
Essay #2 (5 pages).....	15%
Essay #3 (5 pages).....	15%
Research paper proposal.....	5%
Research paper (8-10 pages).....	20%
Participation and engagement .....	5%
Quizzes and participation exercises (unannounced, best 9 of 12).....	5%
Final exam (cumulative).....	20%

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>.

### General Information

#### **Land acknowledgement:**

Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Chonnonton peoples, who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region, there are eleven First Nation communities and a growing Indigenous urban population.

Western values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).

#### **OWL Brightspace:**

Students are responsible for checking the course site on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. Students may access the OWL Brightspace Learner Support site for assistance: <https://brightspacehelp.uwo.ca/> For IT related issues, they may contact Western Technology Services Helpdesk directly: <https://wts.uwo.ca/helpdesk/>.

#### **Technical requirements:**

This course requires you to have a reliable high-speed internet connection and a computer that meets the technical requirements for writing online timed assessments. We will also be conducting in-class quizzes on Brightspace, which will require either a laptop or a phone to complete.

#### **Electronic devices in the final exam:**

The only aids permitted in the final exam will be paper translation dictionaries. All other aids (calculators, electronic translation dictionaries, cell phones, smart watches, etc.) are not permitted.

#### **Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence:**

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the unacknowledged use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT and Google Translate, to create content that is submitted as one's own. In this course, the use of AI (automatic translation tools, ChatGPT...) is prohibited. If AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for **research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines**, and other materials used in **preparing assignments**. Students are expected to **retain** these materials until after final grades have been entered. In the unlikely event of

concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, students may be asked to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against them. Assignments should reflect the students' own thoughts and independent written work. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible, ethical learning environment that promotes critical thinking and independent inquiry, and allows them to produce original written contributions.

**Attendance and illness policy:**

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours for a half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend class will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs.

If there is a reason why you're not attending our class, please 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.

**Please do not come to in-person class if you're feeling ill or can't pass a COVID-19 screening guideline.** I will be giving students **4 classes' worth of grace days for attendance and participation per semester**, to accommodate illness. Equally, assignment deadlines will have an automatic 2-day grace period built into the syllabus (see the timetable below and a full description under "Essays").

Students who demonstrate a pattern of routinely missing coursework due to self-reported COVID symptoms, and therefore do not demonstrate mastery of the learning outcomes of the course, will not receive credit for the course.

**Intellectual Property/Copyright:**

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

### Additional Information

**Contact information:**

I will normally respond to emails within 48 hours. I'm happy to discuss your ideas anytime during office hours. I hold my office hours in my office, with the ability to hold them on Zoom from there. Please sign up for an appointment slot via the link provided on OWL and indicate whether you want to come in-person or via Zoom. If you just want to drop by, please do, but understand that I'll have to attend to scheduled students first. If you can't attend my regularly-scheduled office hours, contact me and we can set up an appointment.

**A note on our class content:**

Our course readings and discussions will often focus on serious, difficult, and potentially challenging topics that may ask you to step out of your normal comfort zone. Almost every work on our syllabus depicts mature, provocative, or even deliberately offensive content of some kind, such as trauma and gender-based violence, racist ideology, racial epithets, suicide, substance abuse, and forms of self-harm.

Readings and discussions might trigger strong feelings. Nonetheless, we are all responsible for creating a space that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful, and I ask all students to come to class and participate in discussions in a spirit of intellectual curiosity, honesty, and empathy. Please be respectful (even when you strongly disagree) and be mindful of the ways that our identities position us in the classroom.

Please consider approaching me ahead of time if you'd like spoilers for certain kinds of content or other information that would help you feel more able to appreciate the readings or class discussion. If you think a particular reading or topic might be especially challenging or unsettling, I encourage you to reach out to campus counselling services; if need be, your counsellor can contact us to discuss the situation.

**Contingency plan for instructor illness:**

In the event that I fall ill and am unable to teach in-person, we may conduct that day's class as a synchronous online class over Zoom. The grading scheme will not change. In the event that online learning is required, a stable internet connection with working microphone and webcam will be required. If any changes in delivery format are necessary, I will communicate with you via Announcements on OWL to explain the new format for the class.

### Overview Of Course Requirements and Assignments

**Academic Integrity Tutorial on OWL:**

All students are required to have completed the Centre for Teaching and Learning's Academic Integrity Tutorial. Any students who have not completed the tutorial from a previous 1000-level course must complete it by Friday Sept. 20.

**Participation and engagement:**

This class depends upon regular and active engagement and participation from all students: this involves reading the course texts carefully before class, preparing questions for class discussion, listening actively, responding thoughtfully to other students, and coming to office hours. You must bring your assigned text to class so that you can participate fully in our discussions. Readings should be completed in their entirety before our first class on them, even if we're covering them over multiple days.

Your participation mark, which is determined each semester, is designed to measure your attendance, participation, engagement with other students, and evidence of consistent preparation and active learning. Short in-class writing assignments may be given during the semester to ensure that all students are contributing to the conversation. Failure to come to class prepared enough to ask a question, complete an in-class assignment, or participate in a discussion will negatively affect your participation grade.

**Quizzes and engagement activities:**

Over the course of the year, I'll be giving 12 quizzes and/or short-answer assignments that are meant to test your comprehension of past class discussions and key concepts and monitor the class's comprehension of the assigned reading. For the most part, these quizzes will take place on OWL at the beginning of class. The lowest 3 quiz grades, including missed quizzes, will be dropped from consideration when calculating your final overall grade for quizzes (your best 9 out of 12 will be counted). As such, requests for academic consideration for these quizzes will be denied.

**Library/Bibliography assignment:**

In this short assignment, you'll be given a handout to complete during a trip to the library. Part I of the assignment will involve a treasure hunt where you will be asked to find specific information or items in the library collection. Part II of the assignment will ask you to write and correct in-text citations and a Works Cited page in MLA 9 format. More details will be provided later in the course.

**Essays:**

There are 4 essays due for this class: one short paper, (3 pages), 2 medium essays (5 pages), and a final research paper (8-10 pages) which will require a proposal.

Papers in English should be written in MLA format; this method of documentation is described in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed, which is available as a digital download on the university's library website at [https://ocul-uwo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL\\_UWO/r0c2m8/alma991045045545305163](https://ocul-uwo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_UWO/r0c2m8/alma991045045545305163). It's also available for purchase at the bookstore. The OWL at Purdue website also has an abbreviated guide to MLA guidelines at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>.

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 an essay is due, please upload a copy of it under "Assignments" on OWL.

**Late policy:**

In this course, your written assignments have a no-questions-asked 2-day grace period. As the attached schedule of readings and assignments shows, each paper has an official deadline and a "flex deadline" allowing for an automatic 48-hour extension. As a result, the standard Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs, which allows students to apply for automatic extensions without documentation, i.e. [https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/academic\\_consideration\\_Sep24.pdf](https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf), will not be applicable to the paper deadlines in this course. Students who are submitting their work after the original deadline but before the flex deadline do not need to notify me in advance.

Students who need an extension beyond the flex deadline may still seek out academic consideration, but they will be required to go through academic counselling to have their extension request approved.

After the flex deadline passes, the penalty for late papers and assignments will be 2% per day. Late penalties will be applied for each day of the week, including weekends and holidays. Assignments that are submitted late may receive fewer comments.

**Exam:** This course will have a closed-book, 3-hour in-person final exam that will cover all of the material of the course. Further details will be provided later in the course.

If you miss the Final Exam, please contact the Academic Advising office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam). The Special Examination will be held in the first weeks of May.

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/exam/definitions.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/definitions.pdf)

### Academic Integrity and Course Policies

**Statement on Academic Integrity:** We (i.e. students in this course, Professor MacLean, the Department of English and Writing Studies, Western University, and the scholarly community at large) share an understanding of the ethical ways that we use to produce knowledge. A core practice of this shared value of academic integrity is that we acknowledge the contributions of others to our own work. However, it also means we produce our own contributions that add to the scholarly conversation: we don't buy or copy papers or exams, or have someone else edit them, or rely on AI to create them. We also don't falsify data or sources, or hand in the same work in more than one course.

One of the learning outcomes of this course is to cultivate a clear sense of what academic integrity is: what academic integrity means for this discipline, why it matters, and how to practice it in our research. Please come and see me any time you have questions about how or why we engage in the practices of attribution and citation. See "[Tips for Avoiding Plagiarism](#)" from UBC's Chapman Learning Commons, and use the MLA handbook to learn how to use MLA citation style.

**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.

**AI Use:**

The use of AI software such as ChatGPT to draft or write assignments is strictly prohibited in this course. Any assignments that have been produced with the assistance of artificial intelligence will be considered instances of plagiarism.

For all assignments completed in this class, I may require you to attend an in-person interview to discuss your work before the mark is finalized. The purpose of such an interview is to confirm that the work you have submitted is your own. If you are unable to speak meaningfully and coherently about your written work, I may judge the work in question to be plagiarized.

Accommodation Policies

**Religious Accommodation:**

Western's Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be found here:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_religious.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf).

In the case of mid-term tests, notification is to be "given in writing to the instructor as early as possible, but not later than **one week** prior to the writing of the test".

**Academic Accommodation and Accessible Education:**

Academic Accommodation is "a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program."

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation\\_disabilities.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf). Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with **Accessible Education** at the earliest opportunity. Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students.

[http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible\\_education/index.html](http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html)

Support Services

**Academic Advising:**

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here:

[https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty\\_academic\\_counselling.html](https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html)

**Mental Health Support:**

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

**Gender-based and Sexual Violence:**

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either



recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

[https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html). To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).

**Learning Development and Success:**

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> are ready

to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

**USC:**

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/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.