

ENGLISH 2401E -- AMERICAN LITERATURE -- ONLINE

DESCRIPTION:

This course offers a survey of important texts and authors from the Puritan and Revolutionary periods to the present. It addresses not only the major movements and styles of American literature associated with such authors as Poe, Dickinson, Twain, Hemingway, and Morrison, but also the innovative work of Indigenous and minoritized authors, situating their writings within the contexts of race, gender, and sexuality.

Antirequisite(s): English 2341E, 2342F/G, 2343F/G, 2344E, 2345F/G, 2346F/G, and 3664E.

Prerequisite(s): At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020E or 1022E or 1024E or 1035E or 1036E or both English 1027F/G and 1028F/G, or permission of the Department.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Nina Baym et al., *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, shorter 9th edition.

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*. Plume.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*. New York: Bantam, 2003.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Think critically about American literature and culture and understand the historical and literary contexts of works.
- Distinguish between periods, movements, and styles and discuss the differences between colonial, nineteenth century, modern, and contemporary American literature.
- Develop further the ability to analyze texts critically, and to formulate and produce essays which have a clear, well-articulated intent, and a logical argument supported by adequate evidence from the text(s) under discussion.
- Research critical commentary on literary texts and evaluate the relevance, reliability, and usefulness of research sources, especially those obtained through the internet.
- Write a research essay using secondary sources documented using the Modern Language Association (MLA) method.

EVALUATION:

Study question =	5% (500 words)
Essay # 1 =	10% (1000 words) Due May 25 th .
Essay # 2 =	15% (1200 words) Due June 15 th .
Annotated Bibliography	5% (500 words) Due July 6 th .
Essay # 3 =	25% (2000 words) -- research paper due July 20 th .
Final Exam =	40%

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Students are required to complete **ONE** of the study questions. Responses should be 500 words (typed using 12-point font and double-spaced). Study questions are due within one week after the author was presented in the lectures. Please submit your response to the assignments folder.

1. Trace the imagery of nurturance and provision in Anne Bradstreet's lyrics (do not use the poems on the reading list) and examine with particular attention the maternal and paternal imagery and references.
2. Crèvecoeur was one of the first writers to see America as a place where dogmatic disputes and sectarian violence could be permanently overcome--not by other idea systems but by the landscape and life within it. Discuss the significance of this argument.
3. Melville considered Hawthorne's work to be marked by a "blackness," an ambiguity and darkness that was difficult to clearly determine. How is this "blackness" represented in *The Scarlet Letter*?
4. Discuss the contradictions implied in Dr. Flint's promise to Linda in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* that if she moves into the house he built for her, he will "make her a lady."
5. Choose one of the following quotations from *Song of Myself* and discuss it by explaining how it relates to what Whitman is attempting in the poem overall: (1) "I know I am solid and sound, / To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow, / All are written to me, and I must get what the writing means;" and (2) "I am the acme of things accomplished, and I am an encloser of things to be."
6. Explore the relationship in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* between the possible symbolic importance of the river and the design and structure of the novel.
7. Examine the image of loss of Paradise, or the Fall, in Robert Frost's "Fire and Ice."
8. Wallace Stevens' "The Idea of Order at Key West" contains two poems or singers: the woman who sings and the poem's speaker. Describe the relationship between them.
9. Respond to the following evaluation of Sylvia Plath's poetry: "She seizes a mythic power, and her poems transmute the domestic and the ordinary into the hallucinatory, the utterly strange."
10. Consider the effect of Allen Ginsberg's use of long lines in "Howl."

ESSAY # 1:

(10%--1000)

Due: Friday, May 25th.

The first essay requires students to respond to one of the following topics:

It can be argued that it is possible to sort major writers from the Puritan period to the late nineteenth century into two groups: those who advance particular doctrines and systems of thought, and those who question or critique those doctrines or who suspect any systematic or totalizing view of the world. Discuss this conflict between those who advance systems of thought and those who question totalizing views of the world.

In the writings of William Bradford, John Winthrop, etc. (pick ONE of the authors from the colonial era) discuss how religious beliefs inform depictions of native peoples.

Compare any two writers working in similar themes or genres. Be sure to **focus your analysis on one or two particular points of comparison**, such as values, beliefs, rhetorical strategies, or reliability.

ESSAY # 2: The essay questions will be posted on the course web site. Due June 22nd.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY: You must submit a 500-word annotated bibliography (2-3 peer-reviewed academic articles) for your final research paper. Each annotation should be a couple of sentences summarizing the main points of the article and how it may be useful for your argument. Due July 6th.

ESSAY # 3: The essay questions will be posted on the course website. Due July 20th.

FIRST TERM

PART I – CONTACT AND COLONIAL PERIOD

WEEK 1: Iroquois creation story; John Smith, "A Description of New England," John Winthrop, William Bradford, "A Model of Christian Charity," and Roger Williams, "The Bloody Tenet of Persecution."

Anne Bradstreet poetry selections ("To y Dear and Loving Husband," "Contemplations," and "The Flesh and the Spirit.")

WEEK 2: J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (read the selections from Letters III and IX) and Benjamin Franklin, "The Way to Wealth" and *The Autobiography* (Part I).

Mary Rowlandson, *A Narrative of Captivity* (First, Second, Third, Twelfth, Nineteenth, and Twentieth Remove); Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America," "To the Right Honorable William, Earl of Dartmouth"; Thomas Jefferson "The Declaration of Independence."

PART II -- NINETEENTH CENTURY LITERATURE

WEEK 3:

First short essay due May 25th, by 11: 55pm. (1000 words)

Nathaniel Hawthorne, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," and *The Scarlet Letter* ("The Custom-House and *The Scarlet Letter*.)

Edgar Allen Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher" and
Herman Melville, "Bartleby, The Scrivener;" "Billy Budd"
Henry David Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government"
Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance," "Nature" Ch. 1-5 (Norton)

Go on the MLA database, search for, and download the following essay:

Eric Wilson, "'Terrible simplicity': Emerson's metaleptic style." *Style* 31.1 (Spring 1997): 58-80.

WEEK 4: Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (selections from chapter I, VII, X, XIV, XXI, and XLI); Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself.* Abraham Lincoln, "Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865"

Whitsitt, "Reading Between the Lines: The Black Cultural Tradition of Masking in Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*"

WEEK 5: William Apess "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man"

Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" and *Song of Myself*, and Emily Dickinson, poetry selections (see lectures for assigned poems--note, some of the poems in the lectures are not in the new Anthology, but you can find these poems in the library or on the web).

WEEK 6: Samuel Clemens, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July."

SECOND TERM

PART III -- MODERN LITERATURE

WEEK 7: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wall-Paper" and Henry James, *Daisy Miller: A Study.* Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour;" Sui Sin Far, "Mrs. Spring Fragrance." Zitkala-Sa, "Impressions of an Indian Childhood."

WEEK 8:

Modernist Manifestos, by Marinetti, Loy, Williams, and Hughes

T.S. Eliot, "The Waste Land;"

H.D., "Leda" and "Helen"

Robert Frost poetry ("Mending Wall," "After Apple-Picking," "The Road Not Taken," "Birches," "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," "Desert Places," and "Design.")

William Carlos Williams poetry ("The Red Wheelbarrow," "Portrait of a Lady," "Spring and All") and Wallace Stevens poetry ("Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," "Anecdote of a Jar," "The Snow Man," "The Emperor of Ice Cream," and "Sunday Morning.")

Langston Hughes, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers;" "I, Too," and "Let America Be America Again" (available here: <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/let-america-be-america-again>)

WEEK 9: W. E. B. DuBois, from *The Souls of Black Folk*, ch. 1, 3 (Norton)
Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*;
Gwendolyn Brooks, “The Last Quatrain of the Ballad of Emmett Till.”

PART IV -- CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

WEEK 10: Sylvia Plath poetry ("Daddy," "Lady Lazarus," and "Ariel."), and Allen Ginsberg, "Howl." Maxine Hong Kingston, “No Name Woman” (from *The Woman Warrior*); Gloria Anzaldua, “How To Tame a Wild Tongue.”

WEEK 11: Leslie Marmon Silko, “Lullaby;” Toni Morrison, *Beloved*.

WEEK 12: *Beloved*, continued. Jhumpa Lahiri, “Sexy,” and Junot Diaz, “Drown.”

NOTE: EXCEPT FOR THE FOLLOWING TEXTS—THE SCARLET LETTER, INVISIBLE MAN, AND BELOVED --ALL READINGS ARE IN THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE. AS THE ANTHOLOGY IS FREQUENTLY REVISED, READINGS MAY CHANGE (FOR EXAMPLE, THE SELECTION OF POEMS FOR EMILY DICKINSON).

Reading and working with these specific editions is preferred, especially for essays. If you already have some or all of the texts in different editions, then inform me what edition you will be using on your essays. The UWO Bookstore will have these texts in stock, and you can order them on-line from the Bookstore. You may also find the books at a local bookseller. During the course, you are expected to read the online lectures in combination with the texts.

COURSE WORK AND EXAM

STUDENTS MUST PASS THE COURSE WORK AND THE EXAM TO PASS THE COURSE.

SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS

Submit your essays via the associated ASSIGNMENT folder for the course, or if you have difficulties email your paper to my UWO address or the course assignment folder.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Essays submitted late will receive a penalty of 1% per day, including weekends.

PLAGIARISM

There is **ZERO** tolerance for plagiarism in this course.

Plagiarism: The penalties regarding **PLAGIARISM** (the unacknowledged use of another person’s work) are severe and will be enforced. You are responsible for being aware of the

nature of plagiarism as it is detailed in the University calendar and in the Department of English's "Instructions for Students" sheet.

“Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by quotation marks and in footnotes. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar or refer to Scholastic Discipline under the Senate Policy on Academic Rights and Responsibilities at <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/>).

Plagiarism checking: The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.”

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION:

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counseling 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 Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found at

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medicalform.pdf>.

WEBSITES

There are many **websites** dedicated to literature and American literature. Unfortunately, the majority of websites associated with American literature can be general, misleading, or inaccurate. Though the biographical information is generally accurate, most do not move beyond plot summary. Hence, you need to be careful when using a website. First, if you consult a website you need to document it correctly. Second, most criticism on websites tends to be naïve and lacking in analysis.

ESSAY FORMAT AND CITATION

Your essays must follow MLA (Modern Language Association) format, as detailed in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. I strongly suggest consulting a copy of the *MLA Handbook* while writing your essays, as it contains important information regarding essay format and the citation of sources (you can also consult a style guide like *The Little Brown Handbook* that includes the MLA model).

Regarding citations and avoiding plagiarism, the basic rule to follow is that you must indicate the source of any idea and any words that are not your own—whether you are quoting directly or paraphrasing. As well, your Works Cited list should include all sources that you cite in and consulted for your essay, including footnotes/endnotes, dictionaries, and internet material (for citing sources, you will need to look at the *MLA Handbook* or a style guide like *The Little Brown Handbook* that includes the MLA model).

ESSAY WRITING

As an Honor's English literature course, you will be evaluated based on your ability to write clear, well-argued essays. Elements such as grammar, organization, argumentation, citation, and editing are all important and will affect your grade.

While planning and writing your essays, as always, feel free to get in touch with me for any questions you might have. I recommend the following handbook that has sections devoted to MLA essay and citation format.

* *The Little Brown College Handbook*: (most recent edition). Canadian Edition (Fowler et al. Pearson).

Below are directions for writing effective essays.

- * Your essay must have a clear **thesis**. A thesis is a statement of what you are trying to prove in the essay—your argument, your point, your stance or position. It should be something with which your reader can potentially agree or disagree; it should not be a statement of fact or general knowledge. In general, your thesis is most effective near the end of your introductory paragraph.
- * Your essay must have a clear **structure**. This means that you need definite introductory and concluding paragraphs. As well, your body paragraphs should follow a logical order of argument, covering specific points and/or ideas that support and work to support your thesis. Make sure that each paragraph has a topic and concluding statement, and that you establish smooth transitions between paragraphs. Attention to good structure helps your reader follow your argument, and helps you keep your thoughts and evidence organized.
- * Always be **specific**. Do not assume that your reader will “get” what you are alluding to (think of a theoretical reader who may be familiar with the topic or the text in question, but needs specific information in order to engage fully with your argument). Quoting from or at least citing the primary text—the novel or short story, for instance—is always a good idea to give your reader a definite context for what you are saying.
- * Take time to **plan and outline**. Before writing the first words of your essay, spend time planning and outlining it. Gather your evidence and look for patterns, similarities,

and differences. Remind yourself what it is that you want to discuss and prove, then think about the best way to organize your essay accordingly. What is your point? What is your argument or position? What evidence will you need to support your thesis? What is the most effective way to structure the essay—what argument should come first and what is your most important evidence? Essentially, when you sit down to write, you should have a firm idea of what you want to do in your essay and how the parts will fit together. Good planning and outlining will save you tension and frustration.

* Write about **what interests and excites you**. When considering a topic, think of what you liked most in the texts on the course—issues, ideas, themes, passages, and so forth. What would you like to explore further? What would you find interesting to write about for six or eight pages? If any of the suggested topics do not appeal to you, you can devise your own topic in consultation with me? If you enjoy what you are writing about, your essay will show it.

* Finally, **reread and edit**. Before submitting your paper, reread it and revise it as necessary, looking for everything from typos to potentially unclear sentences to improper essay format. Having someone else look at a draft is always a good idea, particularly if you trust that person to be honest and helpful. The value of a “clean” essay to a reader cannot be underestimated, for it shows that you care about your writing, which in turn encourages the reader to care about what you are writing.

If you are not familiar with the basic technical vocabulary of English literary studies, you may want to consult a handbook of literary terms when in question. M. H. Abrams *A Glossary of Literary Terms* offers an excellent source book for literary terms. For an overview of recent literary and critical theory consult *The John Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*.