

ENG 142
Early American Literature

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Time: W/F 1:10-2:30pm
Room: Pettengill 162
Office Hours: W 3:00-4:00pm,
or by appointment

Course Description:

This course offers a survey of significant works and voices from the diverse traditions that contributed to the creation of a U.S. national literature in the early history of the Republic. Over the course of the semester, we will explore:

- fifteenth- and sixteenth-century European accounts of “New World” exploration
- creation and origin tales from Native American oral literary traditions
- poetry and prose attesting to the diversity of cultures among European settlers
- the role of slavery in shaping the literature and culture of the colonies and young nation
- the development of distinctive African American and women’s cultures as traced in such modes of writing as the slave narrative and in Puritan women’s poetry
- revolutionary discourse and narratives of national identity
- the rise of a distinctive tradition of the American novel and its various genres

Throughout the course, we will investigate evolving constructions of “American identity” using concepts of religion, race and gender as touchstones in our discussion. We will also investigate the relationships among the evolution of American identities, the evolution of America as a nation, and the evolution of an American or national literature. We will also consider how calls for a distinctive “American literature”—that is, a tradition that might stand on its own apart from European traditions and influence—played a part in the broader political movements of the Revolutionary Era and its aftermath. In examining diverse and even conflicting accounts of this American literature, we will also look closely at the figure of the author—how lodged within these earlier accounts are broader questions about who can even be considered an American writer, which voices and subjects fall outside of that consideration, and what it even means to be “American” for readers and writers of this era.

Course Goals:

By the end of the semester students should have an understanding of the major themes and forms of early American literature. Students should be able to situate texts in relation to social, historical, cultural, and literary events and movements. Students should be able to discuss how aesthetic forms contribute to the content of works and to compare the form and content of various works with one another. Students should be able to write clear, thesis driven responses to course readings, supporting their claims with evidence from the texts. Students should also be able to present clear, well-supported arguments in oral form.

Course Requirements:

1) Class Participation:

The main requirement for the class is an intense engagement with the readings, not only in writing but in class discussion as well. Because class discussion is an opportunity to practice the

critical skills that we will be developing in the course, attendance and active participation at every class session are expected. Active participation entails doing the reading and being able to refer to the reading in class, as well as both listening and responding to myself and to one another. In grading your participation over the course of the semester, I will be looking for signs of initiative, involvement, collaboration, intellectual growth, and impact on the class. If you do not speak of your own volition **at least once a week**, you can expect to be called on. If **any** member of the class demonstrates that he or she has not done the reading, **pop quizzes** will be instituted and will form a significant portion of **every** class member's grade. If you cannot attend a particular class, you must let me know in advance and make arrangements for another student to take notes and collect handouts on your behalf. Missing or being late to more than two classes will negatively affect your participation grade. Finally, because you must be able to support the claims they make about the texts with evidence from those texts, you must bring the reading to class every day **in printed form**—this means **printing the articles** on Lyceum and **buying the books** on the syllabus. No laptops or cell phones in class, please.

2) Weekly Writing and Discussion Questions:

By midnight each Tuesday (starting in **Week 3**), you must post a one-to-three paragraph informal response on the lyceum forum for that week. There will be ten opportunities to submit forum posts throughout the quarter, but you are only **required to submit eight**. The key guideline for these posts is that they make a significant and contestable argumentative claim about the text that is supported by evidence from the text. You will receive written feedback on all of your posts, so they are an excellent opportunity to practice the skills required for longer writing assignments. All posts that engage thoughtfully with the reading will receive a check (the equivalent of a "B"), but check-pluses (the equivalent of an "A") will be given to posts that also demonstrate proficiency in the above criteria. Check-minuses (the equivalent of a "C") will be given to underdeveloped posts. Late postings will not be accepted.

In preparation for class on Friday (starting in **Week 2**), you are also required to prepare one discussion question based on the day's reading. Each question should refer to, and demand responses that refer to, specific moments in the texts (citing page numbers!). You should post your question on the lyceum discussion question forum for that week **by midnight each Thursday night. By 8am on Friday**, you must also select one question from among those posted that you would like to talk about in class that day. Do this by replying to the post of your choice and briefly explaining your reasons for wanting to discuss it in class. Part of our time on Fridays will be spent in small groups or as a whole discussing one another's questions.

You are **never to consult the internet or other secondary sources** for ideas in devising your weekly writing responses and discussion questions. I am interested in seeing your ideas, not someone else's. Presenting someone else's ideas as if they are your own constitutes **plagiarism**.

3) Group Presentation

In the next few weeks, groups of two or three will be assigned to a particular day during the second half of the semester. These groups will be asked to present a 5-10 minute presentation on the texts that are part of that day's reading, and to lead class discussion on that reading for a further 10-15 minutes. Much like your most polished weekly writing assignments, these presentations should advance a contestable and significant argument about the text that is

supported by evidence from the text. However, they should also push further by opening up questions or problems for whole class discussion, questions that follow from their initial claim. To support your questions, it is essential that you have relevant places in the text ready to help direct class discussion. Each group must prepare a clear and visually appealing **handout or PowerPoint** to go along with their oral presentation (more on this later), and **must email this to me** as an attachment by **9pm** the night before their presentation.

4) Formal Paper Assignments:

There are two formal paper assignments: a midterm (3-5 pages) and a final paper (3-5 pages). Although prompts for both papers will be provided, you are welcome to use ideas developed in weekly writing assignments as the basis for these papers provided that those ideas help you address the prompt. All papers must be posted on lyceum. Late papers will be penalized by up to 1/3 of a letter grade for each day they are late.

5) Academic Honesty:

Intellectual honesty is fundamental to scholarship. Accordingly, the College views plagiarism or cheating of any kind in academic work as among the most serious offenses that a student can commit. Plagiarism occurs when one presents work—ideas and/or specific language—which is taken from another person who is not given due credit. If you are uncertain in any specific situation as to whether plagiarism may be involved, you should discuss the matter with me. **All students are responsible** for reading the College's statement on plagiarism, found here:

<http://abacus.bates.edu/pubs/Plagiarism/plagiarism.html#0>

For all members of the academic community, citing sources not only protects them and their ideas, but it helps them to know when they do have a new idea, or whether they have achieved a meaningful synthesis of other people's ideas. It also helps their readers, by providing means whereby he or she can verify their account, seek further knowledge on their topic, and understand how they arrived at their conclusions. To cite sources in your own work, please **follow carefully the MLA guidelines**, found here:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

6) Email:

You are required to check your Bates email regularly, as I will be emailing the class with information, updates, and reminders throughout the semester. In the event of an emergency class cancellation, I will also notify students via email.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

- 20% Attendance & participation
- 20% Weekly writing & discussion questions
- 10% Group presentation
- 20% Midterm paper (3-5 pages)
- 30% Final paper (3-5 pages)

Course Readings:

Required Texts (available in campus bookstore):

The Heath Anthology of American Literature (Sixth Edition), Paul Lauter, General Ed. (Volume A: Beginnings to 1800)

Charlotte Temple, Susanna Rowson (Norton Critical Edition, 2011)

The Coquette, Hannah Webster Foster [packaged with *The Power of Sympathy*, William Hill Brown] (Penguin, 1996)

Wieland, Charles Brockden Brown (Norton Critical Edition, 2011)

Additional readings posted to Lyceum, as indicated

Reading Schedule:

Reading must be completed by the date specified. Individual selections are from the Heath *Anthology* unless otherwise indicated; **you are required to read the introductory notes on each author** that precede the primary texts in the Heath *Anthology*.

Week 1

9/7 Course introduction

9/9 Cluster: America in the European Imagination, *Heath* 127-130
Christopher Columbus, from “Journal of the First Voyage to America” and “Narrative of the Third Voyage,” 137-149

Week 2

9/14 N. Scott Momaday, “The Becoming of the Native: Man in America before Columbus” (Lyceum)
Native American Oral Literatures and Creation/Emergence Accounts, 18-23
Native American Creation Stories:

“Talk Concerning the First Beginning” (Zuni), 24-37

“The Origin of Stories” (Seneca), 55-57

“Man’s Dependence on Animals” (Ashinaabe-Ojibway), 62-65

“Origin of Disease and Medicine” (Cherokee), 65-67

“Creation of the Whites” (Yuchi), 73

“The Arrival of the Whites” (Lenape-Delaware), 74-79

9/15 **First discussion question due by midnight on Thursday**

9/16 Cluster: Aesthetics and Criticism—Paradigms of Cultural Encounters, 150-156
Gaspar Pérez de Villagrà, from *The History of New Mexico*, 177-195
John Smith, from *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England...*, 273-281

Week 3

9/20 **First weekly writing post due by midnight on Tuesday**

9/21 John Winthrop, from *A Modell of Christian Charity*, 332-342
William Bradford, from *Of Plymouth Plantation*, 348-370
Thomas Morton, from *New English Canaan*, 319-331

- 9/23 Mary White Rowlandson, from *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restauration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, 461-492
Jane Tompkins, "'Indians': Textuality, Morality, and the Problem of History" (Lyceum)

Week 4

- 9/28 Anne Bradstreet, 418-419
"The Prologue [To Her Book]," "In Honour of... Queen Elizabeth," and "The Author to Her Book," 420-426
"Before the Birth of One of Her Children," 430
"Upon the Burning of Our House, July 10th 1666," and "To My Dear Children," 433-437
- 9/30 Samuel Sewall, from *The Diary of Samuel Sewall*, and "The Selling of Joseph," 520-530
Cotton Mather, from *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, 531-538
from *The Negro Christianized*, 551-556

Week 5

- 10/5 Briton Hammon, *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings...*, 1197-1203
Olaudah Equiano, from *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of ...*, 1212-1245
Phillis Wheatley, 1297-1299
Preface to *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (Lyceum)
"On Being Brought from Africa to America," 1306-1307
- 10/7 Samson Occom, *A Short Narrative of My Life*, 1175-1181
"My Poor Kindred," from *A Sermon Preached by Samson Occom*, 1195-1197
Phillis Wheatley, "Letter to Samson Occom," 1088
Handsome Lake, "How America Was Discovered," 825-827
Thomas Jefferson, 1022-1025
from *Indian Addresses: To Brother Handsome Lake,...*, 1057-1058
Benjamin Franklin, 837-840
"Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America," 854-857

Week 6

- 10/12 Benjamin Franklin, from *The Autobiography*, Part One, 861-909
- 10/14 J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, from *Letters from an American Farmer*, 954-989

Week 7

10/17 **Paper #1 due by 5pm**

10/19 & 10/21 **NO CLASS – FALL BREAK**

Week 8

- 10/26 Thomas Paine, from *Common Sense*, and *The American Crisis*, 989-1003
Federalist and Anti-Federalist Contentions, 1059-1073
- 10/28 Thomas Jefferson, from *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 1026-1042

“Declaration of Independence,” 1089-1093
Phillis Wheatley, “To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Darthmouth...,” 1302-1303
“Liberty and Peace,” 1313-1314
Lemuel Haynes, “Liberty Further Extended...” 1317-1326
Ben Franklin, “On the Slave-Trade,” 858-860

Week 9

11/2 Mercy Otis Warren, 923-925
from “An Address to the Inhabitants of the United States of America,” 951-954
Letters between Abigail Adams and John Adams, 1011-1012
Thomas Jefferson, “Letter to Nathaniel Burwell,” 1055-1057
Judith Sargent Murray, 1245-1247
“On the Equality of the Sexes,” 1253-1259

11/4 Royall Tyler, *The Contrast*, 1352-1393
Judith Sargent Murray, “Occasional Epilogue to *The Contrast...*,” 1260-1261

Week 10

11/9 Susanna Haswell Rowson, *Heath* 1414-1415
Charlotte Temple, Preface and Volume 1, pp. 5-48

11/11 Susanna Haswell Rowson, *Charlotte Temple*, Volume II, 50-90

Week 11

11/16 Hannah Webster Foster, *Heath* 1393-1394
The Coquette, Letter I-XL, pp.107-172

11/18 Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette*, Letter XLI-LXXIV, pp. 173-242

Week 12

11/23 & 11/25 **NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING**

Week 13

11/30 Charles Brockden Brown, *Heath* 1427-1429
Wieland, Ch. I-IX, pp. 7-73

12/2 Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland*, Ch.X-XX, pp.73-136

Week 14

12/7 Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland*, Ch. XXI-XXVII, 136-181

12/9 Contemporary films TBD (suggestions welcome)

Week 15

12/14 **Paper #2 due by 5pm**