



ENGL 3005W-001

Survey of American Literatures and Cultures I

M/W 4:40-6:35, Lind Hall 325

Instructor: Dr. John Pistelli

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Office Hours: W 2:30-4:30, Lind Hall 254

There is then creative reading as well as creative writing. When the mind is braced by labor and invention, the page of whatever book we read becomes luminous with manifold allusion. Every sentence is doubly significant, and the sense of our author is as broad as the world.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The American Scholar” (1837)

This course will survey American literature from the arrival of English settlers to the Civil War. Course topics will include the Puritan theology that cast such a long shadow over the American cultural imagination; the literary construction in the Revolutionary era of a national identity under the influence of such Enlightenment ideals as reason, cosmopolitanism, civility, and sympathy; the rise in the mid-nineteenth century of a radical intellectual and social movement in Transcendentalism; the antebellum ideological struggles over slavery, class conflict, industrialism, women’s rights, and Native American rights; and the self-conscious cultivation of a national literary aesthetic in the Romantic fiction and poetry of the period later critics would come (controversially) to call “the American Renaissance.”

Required Text

Nina Baym et al., eds. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 8th edition, vols. A-B.



Thomas Cole, *The Course of Empire* (1833-36)

EngL 3005W satisfies the Literature Core and General Core requirements. The general objective of EngL 3005W is to increase students' familiarity with literary art and expression through extensive readings in various forms (fiction, poetry, drama, non-fiction prose) and to sharpen students' ability to perform close, critical analysis of important American literature from the 16th to 19th centuries. Another important objective is to foster students' interest and excitement about literature and to give them tools for understanding the imaginative literature they will read for the rest of their lives. Lectures and discussion introduce students to topics such as the creation and publication of written work, literary techniques, and the historical and social contexts of writers and readers (including the students). The course also discusses literary conventions and taste, how these change over time, and how traditions are built upon and undermined through innovation and experiment.

EngL 3005W satisfies the Diversity and Social Justice Theme. EngL 3005W explores issues of power and American identity throughout the semester. The readings for the period up to 1800 include several accounts of contact between European explorers and settlers and Native Americans and a few texts written by African Americans. Between 1800 and the Civil War, writing in America addresses issues of race and gender more directly through increased writing by Native Americans, the publication of slave narratives, and the appearance of more women authors in American letters. The wide range of genres and topics in this survey allows students to envision the United States from different perspectives. The early readings in the course are predominantly didactic or polemic, while later, imaginative literature (poetry and fiction) gives an even wider range for students to consider diversity and social justice.

EngL 3005W fulfills Student Learning Outcomes. This course is designed to make students conversant with the modes and the language of literary studies at the university level and to hone critical reading skills through theory and praxis. As a writing intensive course, a significant amount of energy will be expended on the good work of conceiving, organizing, executing, proofreading, and “workshopping” effective writing. This particular 3000-level writing-intensive course attempts to survey American Literatures and Cultures before the Civil War. The texts collected here are not random but nonetheless idiosyncratic choices and their presence, of course, marks the exclusion of countless other viable options. To “survey” is to “sample,” but also to “examine” and “appraise.” Perhaps our first step should be to interrogate the terms we are given—to formulate our own definition of “American Literature” and think about how and why these texts meet or defy our expectations of what American Literature might be. To this end, the course fulfills the Student Learning Outcome of teaching students to identify, define, and solve problems.

EngL 3005W is a Writing Intensive course. This course meets the Council on Liberal Education guidelines for a Writing Intensive course. This means that the course integrates writing into course content, through writing assignments that work toward specific course objectives and writing activities that take place throughout the semester; provides explicit instruction in writing; requires a cumulative minimum of 2,500 words of formal writing apart from any informal writing activities and assignments; includes at least one formal assignment that requires students to revise and resubmit drafts after receiving feedback from the course instructor; requires that at least one-third of each student's final course grade must be tied to the written work done in the course and that a student cannot pass the course and fail the writing component

Grading Policy. A (90-100): Outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements. B (80-90): Significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements. C (70-80): Meets the course requirements in every respect. D (60-70): Worthy of credit, even though it fails to meet course requirements fully. F (0-60): Work was not completed.

Incompletes. A grade of incomplete (“I”) is given only in a genuine and documented emergency, and *only* for work which is due during the last two weeks of the course. You must make arrangements with the instructor for an incomplete before the last day of class.

Student Conduct. To avoid disruptions, please observe the following policies: 1. Turn phones off and put them away before coming to class. 2. During class, your attention should be directed toward whomever is speaking or to your assigned task. 3. I strongly discourage use of laptops and other devices during class time (unless appropriate) as they tend to isolate the user and distract others; if you have a pressing need to use one, please come and talk to me about it. Note: this is an upper-level class in the humanities, which means that serious, controversial, and sometimes painful human problems will be discussed—and, in literary works, disturbing things will be depicted. I hope we can approach these topics with an open mind and our conversations with respect for each other.

Access. Any student with a documented disability condition who needs to arrange accommodations should contact the instructor and Disability Services (612-626-1333) at the beginning of the semester.

Scholastic Dishonesty. Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. If it is determined that a student has cheated, he or she may be given an “F” or an “N” for the course, and may face additional sanctions from the University.

Student Writing Support. Students can get one-to-one-consultations on any course paper or writing project at Student Writing Support. Student Writing Support has several campus locations, including the main location in 15 Nicholson Hall. See <<http://writing.umn.edu/>> for details about locations, appointments, and online consultations.

Other Policies. For information about UMN policy regarding the above topics and others—Student Conduct Code; Use of Personal Electronic Devices in the Class Room; Scholastic Dishonesty; Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences; Appropriate Student Use of Class Notes and Course Materials; Grading and Transcripts; Sexual Harassment; Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action; Disability Accommodations; Mental Health and Stress Management; and Academic Freedom—I encourage you to visit: http://www.policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/SYLLABUSREQUIREMENTS_APPA.html

Offensive Materials. In this course, students may be required to read words or view images that they may consider offensive. The ideas expressed in any given text do not necessarily reflect the views of the instructor, the English Department, or the University of Minnesota. Course materials have been selected for their literary, cultural, and/or historical value, in order to achieve specific learning objectives and course goals. These materials are meant to be examined in the context of intellectual inquiry and critical analysis, as appropriate for a university-level course. If you are easily shocked and/or offended, please contact the instructor to discuss whether this course is suitable for you.

Assignments

Grade breakdown.

Participation	10%
Essay 1	20%
Essay 2	30%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%

Participation. It is your responsibility to be here. I do not directly give an attendance grade but I do take attendance. Be advised that there will be in-class exercises, assignments, and activities in this course that you will miss if you are absent. If you miss class for any reason, please ask a classmate rather than the instructor for notes or a summary. If illness or other problems require you to miss more than a normal amount of class (two or three meetings), please let me know. If you miss more than two meetings without a documented reason, your overall course grade may be affected. If you miss more than four meetings, you may be danger of failing the course. Finally, be on time to class—lateness is highly disruptive and it will affect your participation grade. As for participation itself, it includes speaking up in class at least once a week, contributing to in-class activities, and/or attending my office hours or otherwise getting in touch with me.

Essays. You will write two essays for the course. The first will be a 3-4 pp. argumentative essay on a thematic topic that will require you to address a text or several texts from the first third of the course and devise a thesis about their significance. The second essay will be a 5-6 pp. research paper on a text or texts of your choice from the last two-thirds of the course. You will be required to incorporate not only evidence from the texts you discuss but also from relevant literary criticism as found in scholarly books and journals to support your thesis. For the first essay, you will participate in an in-class peer review. For the final essay, you will submit a prospectus/outline and annotated bibliography before submitting the final draft. I will provide more detail as the due dates approach.

Exams. A midterm and final exam will be held. This exams will treat all course materials from the beginning to the half and from the half to the end of the course. Both exams will be divided into two parts: a fact-based first section in which you will answer fill-in-the-blank, true/false, or multiple-choice questions, and a second section in which you will have to identify passages from your reading by author, title, and date, and write a brief explanation of their significance. I will provide more detail as the date of the midterm approaches. The exams cannot be made up except in the case of a verifiable/documented emergency or conflict, in which case I expect you to contact me as soon as possible before the exam date.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

All readings are in the *Norton Anthology* and can be located using the table of contents. Though I have not placed them on the schedule, I will expect you to read the author biographies that introduce each selection in the *Norton* as well as the introductions to each of the anthology's primary divisions: "Beginnings to 1700," "American Literature 1700-1820," and "American Literature 1820-1865."

1. From Puritanism to Enlightenment (1600-1820)

January 19

- John Smith, from *The General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles*

January 23

- John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity," from *The Journal of John Winthrop*
- Anne Bradstreet, "The Prologue," "In Honor of That High and Mighty Princess, Queen Elizabeth of Happy Memory," "The Flesh and the Spirit," "The Author to Her Book," "Another [Letter to Her Husband, Absent upon Public Employment]," "In Memory of My Dear Grandchild Elizabeth Bradstreet..." "Here Follow Some Verses upon the Burning of Our House, July 10th, 1666"

January 25

- Mary Rowlandson, *Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration*

January 30

- Jonathan Edwards, "Personal Narrative," "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"
- Thomas Paine, from *The Age of Reason*

February 1

- Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography* parts I and II

February 6

- Thomas Jefferson, all selections
- John Adams and Abigail Adams, from *Letters*

February 8

- Judith Sargent Murray, "On the Equality of the Sexes"
- Phillis Wheatley, all selections

February 13

- Native Americans: Contact and Conflict
- J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, from *Letters from an American Farmer*

February 15

- Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette* letters I-XLII

February 20

- Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette* letters XLIII-LXXVI
- Essay #1 due in class for peer-review workshop; bring two copies

2. Transcendentalism and the Literature of Social Change (1820-1865)

February 22

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The American Scholar,” “Self-Reliance,” “The Poet”
- Essay #1 due to Moodle by 11:59PM on 02/24

February 27

- Henry David Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government,” *Walden* chapters 2, 3, 17

March 1

- Margaret Fuller, *The Great Lawsuit*

March 6

- Native Americans: Removal and Resistance
- William Apess, “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man”
- Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, all selections

March 8

- Midterm exam

March 13, 15

- No class

March 20

- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*

March 22

- Harriet Jacobs, from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*
- Lydia Maria Child, “The Quadroons”

3. The Fiction and Poetry of American Romanticism (1820-1865)

March 27

- Washington Irving, “Rip van Winkle,” “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”

March 29

- Edgar Allan Poe, “Ligeia,” “The Man of the Crowd,” “The Purloined Letter,” “The Raven,” “The Philosophy of Composition”

April 3

- Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* chapters I-XII

April 5

- Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* chapters XIII-XXIV

April 10

- Herman Melville, “Hawthorne and His Mosses,” “Bartleby, the Scrivener”

April 12

- Rebecca Harding Davis, “Life in the Iron Mills”

April 17

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, all selections
- Lydia Howard Huntley Sigourney, all selections

April 19

- Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*

April 24

- Walt Whitman, “Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking,” “Beat! Beat! Drums!” “The Wound Dresser,” “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d,” “Live Oak with Moss”
- Emily Dickinson, poems 124, 194, 202, 207, 225, 236, 260, 269, 320, 339, 373, 409

April 26

- Emily Dickinson, poems 477, 479, 519, 591, 598, 620, 656, 760, 764, 788, 1096, 1263, 1454, 1577, 1668, 1675, 1773

May 1

- Conclusion, final review, and course evaluations
- Essay #2 prospectus/bibliography due to Moodle by 11:59PM

May 3

- Final exam

May 10

- Essay #2 due to Moodle by 11:59PM