History of American Literature

ENGL 3340.003 Spring 2015 Syllabus
Tues.-Thurs. 11:00 a.m. - 12:20 p.m. Preston 210
Prof. Neill Matheson
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office hours: Tues.-Thurs. 2:00-3:30 p.m., and by appointment
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Course Description:

In this course, we will explore a range of authors and works, both canonical and less well-known, illustrating the diversity of perspectives and kinds of writing produced in what is now the United States. Because a one-semester survey of at least four centuries of American writing must be selective, we will focus more closely on some representative literary problems and important historical contexts, while keeping in view the broader movements of American literary history. We will read the works of mainstream American writers alongside those who represent more marginalized perspectives, exploring shifting ideas of cultural identity and national belonging. One central framework will involve considering "America" as a contact zone, a geographical, social, and political space, and ultimately an idea, that has been continually renegotiated, as a result of the interrelations of its diverse inhabitants, and their cultures and languages. We will also discuss the evolution of different literary forms, as well as changing definitions of the literary itself. We will treat the category of "American Literature" as an open question: both a tenuous historical achievement and a lingering critical problem, its defining characteristics and boundaries remain contested.

Course texts:

Belasco and Johnson, eds., *The Bedford Anthology of American Literature Shorter Edition*
Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (Bedford)

Course Requirements:

1. Two papers (4-6 and 8-12 pages). If you submit a paper outside of class (including by email, with permission), it is your responsibility to confirm that I received it.

2. Midterm.

3. Final exam.

4. Reading quizzes. Because these quizzes are part of the daily work of the course, a measure of your preparation and participation, make-ups will not be offered if you miss class on the day a quiz is given.

5. Participation in class discussion.

Note: All major assignments (i.e., both papers, midterm, and final) must be completed in order to pass the course.

Course Grade:

First paper	20%
Second paper	25%
Midterm	20%
Final	25%
Participation (incl. quizzes)	10%

Attendance, Participation, Preparation:

Student participation is an extremely important part of this course. The course will primarily be organized around discussion of the readings, rather than lectures; student interests will play a major role in shaping our discussions. I expect you to come to class having carefully read the texts for each day's meeting, prepared with questions, ideas, enthusiasms, or objections.

Because this course depends on your full involvement, regular attendance is also essential for its success. More than three absences will have a significant impact on your grade for the course. More than eight absences may result in failure for the course. Late arrivals (and early departures) are disruptive, and a pattern of tardiness will also affect your grade.

Policy on Electronic Devices:

Please turn off and put away all cell phones, laptops, iPads, Kindles, and other electronic devices at the start of each class. Such digital devices are of course essential academic tools, but their potential to be distracting can outweigh their value in the classroom. Follow this link for an account of one influential recent study of "media multitasking" and distraction: http://news.stanford.edu/news/2009/august24/multitask-research-study-082409.html

UTA Drop Policy:

Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. Contact the Financial Aid Office for more information.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Students should be able to demonstrate critical understanding of the specific authors and texts covered in the course.
2. Students should be able to identify connections synthetically between these texts, comparing and contrasting them, and locating them within larger narratives of American literary history.
3. Students should be able to demonstrate knowledge of major themes, issues, and movements in the history of American literature.
4. Students should be able to recognize and identify the characteristics of various literary genres important to American literary history.

5. Students should be able to demonstrate a complex understanding of the relationship between American literature and larger historical and cultural contexts, including analyzing the relevance of important historical events to specific literary works.
6. Students should be able to explain and make use of analytical and theoretical concepts and literary critical terminology covered in the course.
7. Students should be able to express ideas and perform analysis in clear, concise, logical, and persuasive writing.
8. Students should be able to express ideas clearly through relevant oral contributions to class discussion, and to respond substantially to the ideas of other students.

Academic Integrity:

It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University. "Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts" (*Regents Rules and Regulations*).

The policy for this course is that any assignment found to involve plagiarism or other significant academic dishonesty will receive a zero. No rewrites are allowed for plagiarized papers. All incidents of academic dishonesty will be reported to the UTA Office of Student Conduct.

Americans with Disabilities Act:

The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

Let me know if you have a disability, and we can work together to ensure that you are able to participate fully in the course.

Student Support Services Available:

The University of Texas at Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. These resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals to resources for any reason, students may contact the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107 or visit www.uta.edu/resources for more information.

Electronic Communication Policy:

The University of Texas at Arlington has adopted the University "MavMail" address as the sole official means of communication with students. MavMail is used to remind students of important deadlines, advertise events and activities, and permit the University to conduct official transactions exclusively by electronic means. For example, important information concerning registration, financial aid, payment of bills, and graduation are now sent to students through the MavMail system. All students are assigned a MavMail account. *Students are responsible for checking their MavMail regularly.* Information about activating and using MavMail is available at http://www.uta.edu/oit/email/. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, and it remains active even after they graduate from UT Arlington.

To obtain your NetID or for logon assistance, visit https://webapps.uta.edu/oit/selfservice/. If you are unable to resolve your issue from the Self-Service website, contact the Helpdesk at helpdesk@uta.edu.

I will use your UTA email address for course handouts and announcements, as well as to contact you individually if necessary. So be sure to check your MavMail account frequently.

Course Schedule:

Except for occasional handouts, all readings are in the *Bedford Anthology*, with page numbers in parenthesis. This schedule is provisional: I may make substitutions in readings or changes in the dates of assignments if necessary.

Jan. 20 Introduction: What is "American Literature"?
Jan. 22 Iroquois Confederacy and the Seneca "Origin of Folk Stories" (33-37); Momaday, "The Becoming of the Native: Man in America Before Columbus" (50-57); Columbus, "Letter" (65-72); recommended reading: "Explorations and Early Encounters" (59-64)

Jan. 27 Cabeza de Vaca, from *The Narrative* (73-83); Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone" (e-text)
Jan. 29 Bradford, from *Of Plimoth Plantation* (116-19, 124-35); Bradstreet, poems and letter (150-65); recommended reading: "Colonial Settlements" (91-103)

Feb. 3 Rowlandson, "Introduction" (1-7, 21-35); *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (63-91)
Feb. 5 Rowlandson (92-112); Angela Carter, "Our Lady of the Massacre" (e-text)

Feb. 10 Franklin, from *The Autobiography* (290-321)
Feb. 12 Equiano, from *The Interesting Narrative* (359-71); Crevecoeur, "What is an American," from *Letters from an American Farmer* (374-78); Abigail and John Adams, Letters (383-87); Jefferson, "Draft of the Declaration of Independence" (387-93); recommended reading: "Introduction: American Literature, 1750-1830" (260-78)

Feb. 17 Wheatley, headnote (427-29), "On Being Brought from Africa to America" (430), "To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth" (431-32), "Letter to Samson Occom" (435-36); Irving, "Rip Van Winkle" (441-53); **first paper due**

Feb. 19 Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention, "Declaration of Sentiments" [drafted by Elizabeth Cady Stanton] (527-30); Sojourner Truth, "Speech to a Women's Rights Convention" (531-32); Fanny Fern, entire selection (866-76); recommended reading: "The Era of Reform" (503-11); "The Rhetoric of Antebellum Reform" (512-13)

Feb. 24 Harriet Jacobs, from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (619-20, 623-47)
Feb. 26 Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government" (648-65)

Mar. 3 Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher" (827-42), "To Helen," "The Raven," "Annabel Lee" (862-66)
Mar. 5 Midterm

Mar. 9 – 14 Spring Vacation!

Mar. 17 Hawthorne, "Rappaccini's Daughter" (779-81, 805-27)
Mar. 19 Melville, "Bartleby" (876-905)

Mar. 24 Whitman, "Song of Myself" sections 1-24, 51-52 (968-72, 973-92, 1018-19); Modern Lens: Hughes, "Old Walt"; Ginsberg, "A Supermarket in California" (1040-42)
Mar. 26 Whitman, "Once I Pass'd Through a Populous City," "As Adam Early in the Morning," "In Paths Untrodden," "City of Orgies," "I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing," "Here the Frailest Leaves of Me" (1019-21); Sigourney, "Indian Names," "To a Shred of Linen" (944-49)

Mar. 31 Dickinson, headnote (1043-46), "I'm 'wife' — I've finished that —" (1047), "I like a look of Agony" (1049), "There's a certain Slant of light" (1050), "The Soul selects her own Society—" (1051-52), "What Soft—Cherubic Creatures—" (1053), "Much Madness is divinest Sense" (1054), "This is my letter to the World" (1054), "I heard a Fly buzz—when I died—" (1056), "I'm ceded—I've stopped being Theirs—" (1057), "The Brain—is wider than the Sky" (1058-59), "Publication—is the Auction" (1059-60), "Title divine—is mine!" (1063), "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant—" (1064), "Rearrange a 'Wife's' affection!" (1065-66), letters to Susan Gilbert Dickinson and Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1066-69)
Apr. 2 Jewett, "A White Heron" (1254-62); Chopin, "At the 'Cadian Ball" (1263-72); Gilman, "The Yellow Wall-Paper" (1296-1311)

Apr. 3 Last day to drop classes

Apr. 7 Zitkala-Sa, "The School Days of an Indian Girl" (1407-19); Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," from *The Souls of Black Folk* (1431-40)
Apr. 9 Pound, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagist" (1523-26), headnote (1597-99), "A Pact" (1600-01), "In a Station of the Metro" (1601-02); Williams, headnote (1586-89), "The Young Housewife" (1590), "Danse Russe" (1590-91), "Portrait of a Lady" (1591), "To Elsie" (1594-95), "The Red Wheelbarrow" (1596), "This Is Just to Say" (1596), "A Sort of a Song" (1596-97); Moore, "Poetry" (1611-15); Stevens, "Of Modern Poetry" (1581); recommended reading: "Modernisms in American Poetry" (1511-19)

Apr. 14 Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1623-30); Cummings, entire selection (1668-76)
Apr. 16 McKay, "The Harlem Dancer," "If We Must Die," "The Lynching," "America" (1658-62); Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" (1536-40), entire selection of poetry (1690-99); Cullen, entire selection (1699-1705)

Apr. 21 Anderson, “Hands” (1767-74); Faulkner, “Barn-Burning” (1840-42, 1855-68); Hemingway, “Big Two-Hearted River” (1871-86)
Apr. 23 Hurston, “The Gilded Six-Bits” (1788-99); Toomer, from *Cane* (1809-18)

Apr. 28 Ginsberg, “Howl” (2115-26)
Apr. 30 Barthelme, “The School” (2147-51); DeLillo, “Videotape” (2205-11); Carver, “Are These Actual Miles?” (2216-24)

May 5 Morrison, “Recitatif” (2151-67); Anzaldua, “El Sonavabitche” (2224-31); Cisneros, “Mericans” (2288-92); **final paper due**
May 7 Silko, “Yellow Woman” (2270-79); Alexie, “What You Pawn I Will Redeem” (2296-2314)

Final exam: Tuesday May 12 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. (in our usual classroom)