

# ENG 391 American Novel I

SPRING 2014      CRN 34686  
MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m.      204 Chapman Hall

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**Office Hours: MWF 2:00-3:00 p.m., and by appointment**

## Course Description

American Novel I is the first in a two-part chronological survey of the development of American novel from its beginnings in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The course focuses primarily on novels of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it challenges students to situate the works studied in their historical, social and political contexts. Particular attention will be given to forms, conventions, characters and themes that have contributed to our understanding what is recognizably American in fiction. In addition, emphasis will be placed on authors' methods of creating realistic fiction.

## Required Textbooks:

James Fenimore Cooper      The Last of the Mohicans (1826)  
Herman Melville      Typee (1846)  
Harriet Beecher Stowe      Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852)  
Solomon Northrup      Twelve Years a Slave (1853)  
Mark Twain      Life on the Mississippi (1883)

## Optional Textbooks (choose 1):

Henry James      The Bostonians (1886)  
Kate Chopin      The Awakening (1899)

## Additional Readings Available Online or Handouts

Mary Rowlandson      "A Narrative of the Captivity and  
Restoration . . ."  
Samuel Clemens      "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses"  
William Dean Howells "Novel-Writing and Novel-Reading"  
Henry James      "The Art of Fiction"

**All textbooks are available at the U of O Bookstore.**

### Schedule of Assignments

Readings must be completed on the *first day* they appear on the schedule, and all students must bring their texts to class.

Even though this is a fairly large class, students will be expected to participate in discussions, both asking and answering questions. The only "dumb" question is the one you were too timid to ask.

<b>March 31</b>	Introduction: What is "American"?
<b>April 2</b>	Background lecture on the novel
<b>April 4</b>	<u>The Last of the Mohicans</u> 1-10
<b>April 7</b>	<u>The Last of the Mohicans</u> 11-25
<b>April 9</b>	<u>The Last of the Mohicans</u> 26-33 QUIZ
<b>April 11</b>	<b>Writing workshop</b>
<b>April 14</b> (handout)	"Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses"
<b>April 16</b>	"A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration
<b>April 18</b>	<u>Typee</u> 1-10
<b>April 21</b>	<u>Typee</u> 11-20
<b>April 23</b>	<u>Typee</u> 21-34 QUIZ
<b>April 25</b>	"The Story of Toby"
<b>April 28</b>	<u>Uncle Tom's Cabin</u> 1-15
<b>April 30</b>	<u>Uncle Tom's Cabin</u> 16-30
<b>May 2</b>	<u>Uncle Tom's Cabin</u> 31-45 QUIZ
<b>May 5</b>	<b>Group organizational meetings</b>
<b>May 7</b>	ESSAY #1 DUE/Editing session
<b>May 9</b>	"What Is an African American Classic" and
Introduction	To <u>Twelve Years a Slave</u>
<b>May 12</b>	<u>Twelve Years a Slave</u> 1-7
<b>May 14</b>	<u>Twelve Years a Slave</u> 8-15
<b>May 16</b>	<u>Twelve Years a Slave</u> 16-22 plus Appendix
QUIZ	
<b>May 19</b>	<u>Life on the Mississippi</u> 1-15
<b>May 21</b>	<u>Life on the Mississippi</u> 16-30

**May 23**                    Life on the Mississippi 31-40 and Appendices  
QUIZ

**May 26**                    **MEMORIAL DAY OBSERVED—NO CLASS MEETING**

**May 28**                    Group meetings

**May 30**                    Group meetings

**June 2**                    Group            meetings

**June 4**                    The Bostonians presentation

**June 6**                    The Awakening presentation

**FINAL EXAM PERIOD**                    **Friday, June 13 10:15 a.m.-12:15**  
**p.m.**

ESSAY #2 DUE

### **Writing Assignments**

#### **Reading Quizzes:**

One reading quiz will be given for each of the novels assigned. It is imperative that students keep up with their reading. **Quizzes cannot be made up**, but if a student knows ahead of time that s/he will be missing class the day a quiz is scheduled, arrangements can be made to take it early. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

#### **Two short formal essays:**

Write a short (4-page maximum) essay on each of TWO of the assigned novels. The first essay will be due **May 7**, and the second essay will be due **June 13** (the final exam period). Essays must be organized around an argumentative thesis, and they must demonstrate an understanding of the work as a whole as well as the particular elements on which you choose to focus. Use MLA in-text format to document all direct quotations, paraphrases and ideas which you use from the work under discussion.

More specific directions and prompts will be given during the scheduled writing workshop.

#### **Group Presentations:**

Students will be divided into two groups, one reading Henry James' The Bostonians and one reading Kate Chopin's The Awakening. Group members will meet together to discuss their reading and to plan how to "teach" the novel to the other half of the class. Students will earn both a group grade and an individual grade based on the quality of the presentation and the completion of a group evaluation form.

## **Desired Learning Outcomes**

All assignments in this class give students opportunities to practice skills that the English Department has designated as "desired learning outcomes" for the undergraduate major. These outcomes are:

1. to read literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions;
2. to draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts;
3. to perform critical, formal analyses of literary, cinematic, and other cultural texts;
4. to write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatically correct prose;
5. to employ logic, creativity and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments;
6. to employ primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay's thesis.

## **Policy on Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty**

All work submitted in this course must be your own and must be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, and paraphrases) must be properly documented. Refer to the summary of the Code of Student Conduct in the *Schedule of Classes*. In cases where plagiarism has been clearly established, the award of an F for the final course grade is my standard practice. It is simple to discover if a paper has been "borrowed" from the internet, so don't underestimate my ability to spot plagiarism. Please talk to me if you have any questions about your use of sources *before* you turn in something that might be questionable.

## **Policy on Late Assignments and "Incompletes"**

If exigent circumstances cause problems with the due date for the essays, students must discuss this with the instructor **BEFORE** the deadline so that arrangements can be

made. **Late work which is not cleared with the instructor prior to the due date will not be accepted. Exceptions will not be made for assignments which specify that they must be submitted in class on the due date.**

A final grade of "incomplete" can only be granted if a student has turned in at least 50% of the required work when he/she requests this option. Students requesting an "incomplete" must come to the instructor with a written proposal detailing when and how they intend to complete all required work for the course—including a plan for fulfilling the class participation component of the course.

### **Policy on Disabilities:**

Students with physical or learning disabilities should consult the instructor as soon as possible so accommodations can be made.

### **Grades**

Each of the following requirements has weight in determining your grade:

- ✓ Essays (40%)
- ✓ Quizzes (20%)
- ✓ Group Presentation (20%)
- ✓ Attendance and Participation (20%)

*Questions regarding grades should be addressed during office hours, NOT through email. Expressing concerns as a desire to learn rather than to obtain what you "deserved" or "expected" will set a productive tone for such discussions. Please understand that an instructor cannot assign grades based on how hard a student thinks he/she has worked on an assignment—only on the written results of that effort. However, writing multiple drafts of essays and **careful** revising of those drafts should lead to more polished work that makes a positive impression on the reader.*

### **Attendance and Participation**

Students are expected to be in class, on time, having read the materials assigned for that day and having done any required writing. Assignments are due when class begins.

Attendance will be taken every day. It is your responsibility to sign in on the attendance sheet *for yourself only*. More than three absences will result in a one-half grade penalty in the final course grade. Attending

class is a choice you have to make on your own, and that means you have to accept the consequences of that choice.

I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, except in two cases:

1. Illness so severe and prolonged that a doctor officially excuses you.
2. You are involved in a university-sanctioned activity.

Written proof of these excuses is required, but there is no need to explain your reasons for other absences. Emailing me that you are going to miss does not excuse you from class.

If you know you are going to miss a class, make advance arrangements with me to turn in any work that is due and/or to pick up handouts. Ask a classmate to catch you up on discussion that you will miss.

If you have an unplanned absence, see me *as soon as you return* to pick up missed handouts, and ask a classmate for any missed notes. If you have questions about material discussed while you were gone, come to my office hours. We will have carried on in your absence, so please don't be arrogant enough to ask *if* you missed anything. Of course, you did.

STUDENTS MUST ALWAYS BRING TEXTS TO CLASS WHEN THEY ARE BEING DISCUSSED. WHEN ESSAYS ARE ASSIGNED TO BE READ ALOUD, STUDENTS MUST BRING THEM TO CLASS. IT SHOULD GO WITHOUT SAYING THAT WRITING IMPLEMENTS ARE ALSO REQUIRED.

**Students are expected to contribute significantly to discussion, and to do so in a way that shows respect for classmates. Listening carefully is as important as speaking thoughtfully, so please do not interrupt or wave your hand insistently while someone else is speaking. All ideas are welcome in this class, but they should be backed up by evidence from the texts.**

To be fully present in the class, you must be focused on the reading and the discussion at hand. THEREFORE, please **turn off and put away all electronic devices before class begins.** PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE THE ROOM DURING CLASS UNLESS YOU HAVE AN EMERGENCY.