

English 215
American Literature to 1850
117 Fenton
Winter 2015

Professor Rossi
PLC 363; 541-346-3955
Office Hrs: Tu 4-5:30
and W 1:30-3

Syllabus

This is the first in a two-course sequence that surveys the history of American literature from its beginnings to the present. Because a good deal of early American literature was nonfiction in English 215 we will study several kinds of narrative, including historical, autobiographical, spiritual, and environmental narratives as well as short stories and poetry. With each, we will give equal consideration to literary form and to the themes and issues raised in these works, especially in relation to important historical and cultural events of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries.

Required Text

Nina Baym, et al., *The Shorter Norton Anthology of American Literature*, Eighth edition.

When necessary, additional texts will be made available on Blackboard. But 95% of our assigned readings, including headnotes and text annotations, will come from this anthology.

Course Learning Outcomes

In this lower-division English course, students can expect to learn how to do the following

- read 17th, 18th, and nineteenth-century American literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions;
- draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate these texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts;
- perform critical, formal analyses of the works we study; and
- write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose.

Graded Work and Grading

The graded work for the class will consist of occasional quizzes, critical responses, two short analytical papers, a midterm and a final exam (both in-class). Detailed instructions for the responses as well as the papers will be distributed separately. The examination format will be a combination of short answer (definition of terms, characters, etc.) and analysis of particular passages selected from the assigned readings. Graded work for the course will be weighted as follows: exams (20% each); papers (first, 15%; second, 20%); responses (15%); participation (10%).

Course/Department Policies

General: To get the most out of the course, students should always plan to have completed the assigned readings by the day for which they are scheduled; to revisit these works soon thereafter; and to participate, in one way or another, in class discussion. **Please note** that many of the assigned works present special challenges for early twenty-first century readers. The amount of reading assigned will rarely exceed forty pages per class meeting. But because the experiences described by these writers, as well as the diction, rhetoric, and grammatical constructions they use are unfamiliar

to us, their works demand attentive, repeated, and engaged reading. One of my goals is to help you to cultivate an ability to read actively with historical imagination and empathy. But be aware that several of these texts present challenges to this goal. Students are encouraged to meet privately with me during office hours, either individually or in groups.

Attendance: Reading, participation, and attendance are mandatory. Bring the assigned readings to class and be prepared to discuss them. Your participation grade is based on class discussion, in-class writing (including quizzes), and group work. Missing class more than twice in the term will result in reduction of your final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade for each absence beyond the two permitted. There is no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. If do you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes for that day from a classmate and otherwise catch up on any material you have missed.

Deadlines and Late Work: Responses and papers must be submitted to me in hard copy (no electronic submissions unless otherwise indicated) on the date and time specified. Papers will lose one-third of a grade each day they are late; and no assignments can be accepted more than one week after the due date. Quizzes and exams cannot be made up. Make-up exams can be given only in cases of documented emergency. The final exam can neither be made up nor given in advance. Please make your spring break plans accordingly.

*All assignments and exams must be completed in order to pass the class.

Blackboard and Email: You should be familiar with the online “Blackboard” system (<http://blackboard.uoregon.edu>); sign in using your UO email name and password). Please regularly check your UO email account, as I will sometimes use it to send announcements.

Electronics: Even the most dedicated student can be easily distracted by technology. Therefore, as a rule, laptops are not allowed in this class. **If you need to use your laptop to take notes, you must discuss this with me ahead of time, and you must sit in the front row.** Cell phone use is not allowed in any form. Anyone found surfing the internet, listening to music, talking on the phone, texting, etc., will be penalized 5% of the course grade, even if I decide not to interrupt class to draw attention to your activities.

Texts in Class: Because this is a literature class we will always be looking closely at language. Therefore, **you should always bring your Norton anthology to class.** I encourage you to “mark- up” your books– underline important passages, circle key words, write comments in the margins. These are essential practices of active reading that also aid in re-reading. If you do it in pencil, you’ll still be able to resell the book.

Access: The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me Week 1 if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. The Accessible Education Center (formerly Disability Services) offers students a wide range of support including sign language interpreting, computer-based note taking, exam modification, and tutoring. Their offices are located in 164 Oregon Hall
<http://aec.uoregon.edu/>

Academic Dishonesty: All work submitted for this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. **In cases where academic dishonesty has been clearly established, the award of an F for the final course grade is standard practice.** Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources or if you're worried about accidental plagiarism. Although outside sources are not necessary for any of the assigned reading or writing, from time to time you may wish some. Just be sure to document any used. Reference the University Student Conduct Code (available at <http://conduct.uoregon.edu>) for more on academic conduct-related issues.

Inclement Weather: In the event that inclement weather makes travel to the university especially difficult or hazardous, our class may be cancelled. If this happens I will contact students via UO email accounts early in the morning as well as leave a message on my office voice-mail greeting. However, it's extremely unusual that the University closes due to weather.

This syllabus constitutes a formal contract between student and instructor. Receiving this document and remaining in the course signifies that you understand these policies and agree to abide by them. If you have any questions in the future about course procedure, always consult the syllabus first.

Readings Schedule (subject to slight changes)

Note: Biographical headnotes on each author and annotations for each text in the Norton anthology are always included as part of the assigned readings.

Week 1

T (1/6) Course Intro, Syllabus, and Anne Bradstreet's "To My Dear and Loving Husband" and "In Memory of Elizabeth Bradstreet" (poems distributed on handout are also posted on BB)

Th (1/8) Bradstreet, "Verses upon the Burning of Our House," "To My Dear Children" and [on BB] "The Flesh and the Spirit"

Week 2

T (1/13) Norton Anthology period intro, pp. 13-17 plus timeline (18-19); William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Book 1, chapters IX and X; Mary Rowlandson, *Narrative of Captivity and Restoration*, First and Second Removes

Th (1/15) Rowlandson, all remaining Removes

Week 3

T (1/20) Norton Anthology period intro, pp. 157-62 plus timeline (168-9) Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*, Part I

T **RESPONSE # 1 DUE TUESDAY**

Th (1/22) Franklin, *Autobiography* Part II

Week 4

T (1/27) Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (selections tba)

Th (1/29) Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (all selections)

Week 5

TTh (2/3-5) Henry Thoreau, *Walden* (selections tba)
 Th **RESPONSE # 2 DUE**

Week 6

T (2/10) Thoreau, *Walden* (con't)
 Th (2/12) **MIDTERM EXAM**

Week 7

T (2/17) Norton Anthology period intro, pp. 445-50; 454-59 plus 157-62
 timeline (464-6) Washington Irving, "Rip Van Winkle" and "Adventures of
 the German Student," Edgar Allan Poe, "William Wilson. A Tale," and
 Poe's Review of Hawthorne, *Twice-Told Tales* [all but Rip Van Winkle on
 BB]
 W (2/18) **PAPER 1 DUE** by 5pm in 363 PLC
 Th (2/19) Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown," and "The Minister's
 Black Veil"

Week 8

T (2/24) Conflict and Contact (selections by Pontiac, Samuel Ocom, Red Jacket,
 and Tecumseh [pp. 221-33]; William Apess, "An Indian's Looking Glass for
 the White Man" [498-504]; William Cullen Bryant, "The Prairies"
 Th (2/26) Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Roger Malvin's Burial" [on Blackboard]

Week 9

T (3/3) Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses" [BB] and "Bartleby, the
 Scrivener"
 W (3/4) **PROSPECTUS for Paper 2 due electronically to rossiw@uoregon.edu by
 3 pm**
 Th (3/5) No Class: Paper 2 Conferences
 Fr (3/6) Paper 2 Conferences

Week 10

TTh (3/10-12) Walt Whitman, selections from *Song of Myself* (tba); "Crossing
 Brooklyn Ferry," "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer;" "The Dalliance of the
 Eagles" and William Cullen Bryant, "To a Waterfowl"
 F (3/13) **PAPER 2 DUE** by 4pm in 363 PLC

FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, March 17, 8-10am