

English 461 - American Literature to 1800
Early American Literature through Film

Winter term 2016
11:00 - 11:50 am MWF in 140 Allen Hall
4 credits ~ CRN 27017

Prof. Gordon Sayre
Office: 472 PLC
Office Hours: 10-11 Mondays; 1-3 Wednesdays

gsayre@uoregon.edu
Phone: 346-1313

Description:

English 461 is an introduction to the literature of colonial America and the Early Republic. It satisfies the 1500-1789 area requirement for the English major. The course does not emphasize familiar genres of novel, poetry, or short story. Instead, we will be reading missionary relations, spiritual autobiographies, scientific tracts, and personal narratives of exploration and captivity, as well as two stage dramas. The course is designed around five feature films that demonstrate how the literature and history of colonial America resonate in the popular culture of the United States, Canada, and Mexico: *Cabeza de Vaca*, *Black Robe*, *Pocahontas*, *Amazing Grace*, and *Jefferson in Paris*. Our goal is to understand how the stories generated out of the history of colonial America and the Atlantic world continue to inform today's culture and politics.

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance is required in this course. Completing all the reading assignments, viewing the films, attending class, taking notes, and participating in discussion are all vital to your success. You can expect four in-class quizzes, which will be unannounced.

You are permitted to miss three classes for whatever reason, but your grade will be reduced for each absence beyond three. I will distribute an attendance list at the beginning of each class period. If you need to leave early, please discuss it with me ahead of time.

Writing Assignments:

There are three papers required, and a final exam. One of the three papers should be an analysis of the films we are screening, and the other two focus on the readings. See the list of paper topics on canvas.

Grades:

20 points for each of the three essays, due Jan. 29th, Feb. 22nd, and March 16th

20 points for the final exam

20 points based on participation and in-class quizzes

for a total of 100 points. The final letter grades will be set on a curve based upon point totals.

Academic Honesty:

The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. For example, students should not give or receive unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. For explanations of plagiarism and proper citation of sources, see the UO library's research guide at [researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism]. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the student's obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Please contact me with any questions you have about academic conduct.

Accessibility:

Please notify me at the beginning of the term if this course will create disability-related barriers to your participation, and if you have a documented disability and an accessibility plan designed through the Accessible Education Center. If you need assistance contact the center in 164 Oregon Hall for a consultation : aec.uoregon.edu

Retaining Copies of Coursework :

Please retain copies of the papers, quizzes, and exams you have completed after they are graded and returned to you. If a question arises concerning the points earned on an assignment, it is your responsibility to provide these copies as documentation.

Deadlines, Extensions, Incompletes :

Papers and other assignments are due on or before the dates specified in this syllabus. Extensions or incompletes will be given only in the event of documented emergencies. You must notify me as soon as possible if you have an emergency that prevents completing an assignment on time.

Electronic Equipment :

Please turn off your cellphones when you enter the classroom. Reading assignments should not be read on a smartphone, but you may consult copies on a laptop or tablet. I encourage note-taking, and it is difficult to take notes on the same device where you are reading the course assignments.

Books at University of Oregon bookstore:

Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* ed. Frank Shuffleton. Penguin Classics.

Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Castaways: The Narrative of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca*, trans. Rolena Adorno and Patrick Charles Pautz. University of Nebraska Press

Allan Greer, ed. *The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-Century North America* Bedford/St. Martins

Gordon Sayre, ed. *American Captivity Narratives* Riverside/Houghton Mifflin

Films (and Knight library call numbers):

Jefferson in Paris (1995; 139 minutes) library dvd 1636

Cabeza de Vaca (1993; 110 minutes) library vhs 2596

Black Robe (1991, 101 minutes) library dvd 165

Pocahontas (1995; 81 minutes) library dvd 3301

Amazing Grace (2006; 111 minutes) library dvd 3302

e-texts (pdfs and links) posted on the Canvas course site:Unit 1

Ralph Bauer, from chapter about Cabeza de Vaca in *The Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures: Empire, Travel, Modernity* (Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp. 30-63 [pdf]

Juan Bruce-Novoa, "Shipwrecked in the Seas of Signification: Cabeza de Vaca's *La Relación* and Chicano Literature." in *Reconstructing a Chicano Literary Heritage*, ed. Maria Herrera-Sobek (1993) 3-23 [pdf]

Unit 2

- “The tradition of the Nottowegui or Five Nations” aka “Tawiskaron” from *The Journal of Major John Norton* [c. 1810], ed. Carl F. Klinck and James J. Talman (Toronto, Champlain Society, 1970) pp. 88-97 [pdf]
- James Dean, from *The Oneida Creation Story* ed. Elm and Antone, pp157-162 [pdf]
- Jean de Brébeuf, Relation of 1635, in the *Jesuit Relations* vol. 8, pp. 67-152 [link]
http://puffin.creighton.edu/jesuit/rerelations/rerelations_08.html
- Ward Churchill, “And they did it like dogs in the dirt: An Indigenist Analysis of *Black Robe*” in *From a Native Son: Selected Essays on Indigenism, 1985-1995* (1999) pp. 423-437 [pdf]
- Pierre-Esprit Radisson, the First Voyage, from *Pierre-Esprit Radisson: The Collected Writings*. Ed. Germaine Warkentin. (Toronto: Champlain Society and McGill-Queens UP, 2012) pp. 115-164 [pdf]

Unit 3

- John Rolfe’s letter to Thomas Dale about his marriage to Pocahontas, from *Remarkable Providences: Readings on Early American History* Ed. John Demos. 2nd ed. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991) pp. 318-322 [pdf]
- Drew Lopenzina, “The Wedding of Pocahontas and John Rolfe: How to Keep the Thrill Alive after Four Hundred Years of Marriage.” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 26:4 (2014) 59-77 [pdf]
- Leslie Fiedler, “The Myth of Love in the Woods” from *The Return of the Vanishing American* (1968) pp. 63-83 [pdf]
- John Smith, excerpts from *The Generall Historie of Virginia...* (1624) in *The Complete Writings of Captain John Smith*. Ed. Philip Barbour (Williamsburg and Chapel Hill: Institute of Early American History and Culture and UNC Press, 1986) [pdf]
- James Nelson Barker, *The Indian Princess* (1808) [gutenberg.org/ebooks/29230]
- Sayre, “Communion in Captivity: Torture, Martyrdom, and Gender in New France and New England” from *Finding Colonial Americas: Essays Honoring J. A. Leo Lemay*, ed. Carla Mulford and David S. Shields. (U of Delaware P, 2001) pp. 50-63 [pdf]
- John Augustus Stone, *Metamora, or, The Last of the Wampanoags* (1828) in *Staging the Nation: Plays from the American Theater, 1787-1909*. Ed. Don Wilmeth [pdf]

Unit 4

- Gronniosaw, James. “A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, An African Prince, as Related by Himself, link:
<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/15042>
- Gates, Henry Louis. "James Gronniosaw and the trope of the talking book" *African American Autobiography: A Collection of Critical Essays* ed. William L. Andrews (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993) pp. 8-25 [pdf]
- Dane, John. John Dane's spiritual autobiography
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6214/>
- Anne Bradstreet “To My Dear Children” link to Early Americas Digital Archive
- Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*, chapters 7 and 8
<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/equiano2/equiano2.html>
- Vincent Carretta, “Questioning the Identity of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African” from Felicity Nussbaum, ed., *The Global Eighteenth Century* (2003) pp. 226-235 [pdf]

Unit 5

- Adam Hochschild, review of *Amazing Grace* in *New York Review of Books* June 14, 2007, pp. 73-75 [pdf]

David Waldstreicher, from Introduction to *Notes on the State of Virginia and Related Documents by Thomas Jefferson*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2002; pp. 16-38 [pdf]
 Memoirs of Madison Hemings and Israel Jefferson, from Pike Co. Ohio *Republican*, 1873, in Annette Gordon-Reed, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia Press, 1997) pp. 245-253 [pdf]
 Jill Lepore, "President Tom's Cabin" a review of Annette Gordon-Reed's *The Hemingses of Monticello* in *The New Yorker* September 22, 2008. Link:
http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/2008/09/22/080922crbo_books_lepore

Schedule of Assignments

- Unit 1: *Cabeza de Vaca***
 themes: Mexican vs. U.S. legacy; tracing the route; hagiography, miracles and healing.
- Jan. 4th Introduction to course, watch first part of *Cabeza de Vaca*
- Jan. 6th assignment: first half of Cabeza de Vaca's *Narrative*, pp. 44-109
- Jan. 8th screening of remainder of *Cabeza de Vaca*
 assignment: second half of *Narrative* pp. 110-176
- Jan. 11th Film Analysis of Cabeza de Vaca
 assignment: Ralph Bauer, "Mythos and epos: Cabeza de Vaca's empire of peace"; Juan Bruce-Novoa, "Shipwrecked in the Seas of Signification: Cabeza de Vaca's *La Relación* and Chicano Literature" [pdfs]
- Unit 2: *Black Robe and the Jesuit Relations***
 themes: cosmogonies; baptism and contamination; mimicry; martyrdom; mutual misrecognition
- Jan. 13th Iroquoian Creation Stories
 assignment: "The tradition of the Nottowegui or Five Nations" from *The Journal of Major John Norton, 1816* ed. Carl F. Klinck and James J. Talman (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1970) [pdf]; Judge James Dean, "Oneida Creation Story" [pdf]; Greer, ed. *The Jesuit Relations* pp. 41-48.
- Jan. 15th The Captivity and Martyrdom of Isaac Jogues
 assignment: Greer, ed. *The Jesuit Relations* pp. 155-171; *American Captivity Narratives* pp. 95-126
- Jan. 18th No class: Martin Luther King Jr. holiday
 Assignment: watch *Black Robe*
- Jan. 20th Jean de Brébeuf, missionary, ethnographer, martyr
 assignment: Brébeuf, "Relation of 1635," *Jesuit Relations* vol. 8: 69-153 odd [on the Creighton University Jesuit Relations website]
- Jan. 22nd film analysis of *Black Robe*
 assignment: baptism and contagion in Greer, ed., *The Jesuit Relations*, pp. 72-93; Ward Churchill "And they did it like dogs in the dirt" [pdf]

Jan. 25th The Huron Feast of the Dead
assignment: Greer, ed., *The Jesuit Relations* pp. 60-70; or *Jesuit Relations* 10: 263-315 odd at Creighton website

Jan. 27th Pierre-Esprit Radisson
assignment: Radisson's First Voyage [pdf]

Unit 3: Captivity Narratives and American Identities

themes: protestant conversion narratives; captivity, communion, and contamination; the romance of conquest; the Disney-fication of history

Jan. 29th John Smith's narrative of captivity
assignment: *American Captivity Narratives* 1-17, 83-90;

Feb. 1st Film analysis of *Pocahontas*
assignment: watch *Pocahontas*; read Rolfe letter; excerpts from Smith's *General Historie* [pdfs]

Feb. 3rd James Nelson Barker, *The Indian Princess* (1808)
assignment: the text is on gutenberg.org

Feb. 5th The Romance of Conquest
assignment: Leslie Fiedler, *The Return of the Vanishing American* pp 63-83 [pdf]; Drew Lopenzina, "The Marriage of Pocahontas and John Rolfe" [pdf]

Feb. 8th Juan Ortiz and the Enchanted Muslim Princess tale
assignment: *American Captivity Narratives* pp. 65-82

Feb. 10th Rowlandson's Captivity Narrative 1
assignment: *American Captivity Narratives* pp. 127-176

Feb. 12th Rowlandson's Captivity Narrative 2
assignment: Sayre, "Communion in Captivity" [pdf]

Feb. 15th American Historical Typology
assignment: John Augustus Stone, *Metamora, or, The Last of the Wampanoags* [pdf]

Unit 4: Olaudah Equiano and Black Atlantic Spiritual autobiography

themes: the talking book; the Black Atlantic; African-American literary traditions; conversion and emancipation

Feb. 17th Gronniosaw and Gates' "Talking Book"
assignment: Gronniosaw [link] and Gates [pdf]

Feb. 19th John Marrant
assignment: *American Captivity Narratives* pp.198-224

Feb. 22nd The Protestant conversion narrative
assignment: Anne Bradstreet and John Dane [pdfs]

- Feb. 24th Equiano's slave and conversion narrative 1
assignment: Equiano in *American Captivity Narratives* pp225-257
- Feb. 26th Equiano's slave and conversion narrative 2
assignment: chapters 7 & 8 of Equiano's book [link]
- Feb. 29th film analysis of *Amazing Grace*
assignment: watch *Amazing Grace*; read Vincent Carretta, "Questioning the Identity of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African"; Adam Hochschild's review of the film in the *New York Review of Books* [pdfs]

Unit 5: Thomas Jefferson

themes: American Nature and the Dispute of the New World; the Sally Hemmings controversy

- March 2nd *Notes on the State of Virginia*
assignment: part of Waldstreicher's Introduction [pdf], and Queries IV – VII (pp1-17, 92-135)
- March 4th visit to Knight library special collections, James Merchant papers
assignment: watch *Jefferson in Paris*
- March 7th film analysis of *Jefferson in Paris*
assignment: remainder of introduction, *Notes on the State of Virginia* Query IX, (pp18-38, 67-75, 142-152)
- March 9th Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings
assignment: *Notes on the State of Virginia* Query XIV; memoirs of Madison Hemings and Israel Jefferson (pdf); Jill Lepore, review of Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello* in *The New Yorker*
- March 11th Thomas Jefferson and Slavery; and review for final exam
assignment: Lucia Stanton, "Jefferson's People: Slavery at Monticello" from *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Frank Shuffleton [pdf]
- March 16th Final Exam 10:15 am, and third essay due

English 461 Essay Assignments:

You are required to write three essays, of 5-6 pages each. For each I propose two or three topics, one of which emphasizes the films. Some of you may have experience in writing papers about film for classes in cinema studies or other departments. Many English majors may not have any such background. I do not expect you to use the methodologies or technical language of film studies, but to consider how films about early America contribute to the popular understanding of national and cultural heritages.

Units 1 and 2 due January 29th

In *Black Robe* and *Cabeza de Vaca* the filmmakers made an effort to cast Native actors and use native costumes and architecture. And whereas in *Black Robe* the French colonists and missionaries speak English, both films feature indigenous languages, sometimes subtitled, sometimes not. Analyze how the use of languages and subtitles contribute to the sense of fear and mystery that the colonial protagonists encounter as they journey into indigenous America. If religious faith and mythology is portrayed as a potential basis for compromise and mutual understanding between colonizers and natives, is language equally so?

In discussing baptism, torture, dress, burial practices, and other cultural practices, we examined how both films and texts demonstrated a phenomenon of mutual misrecognition. In other words, Native American and European people both behaved in ways that resembled the other, even if each side believed themselves to be radically different. Discuss how this phenomenon operates and concentrate on one text, or one scene from the films.

Units 2, 3 and 4 on captivity narratives due February 22nd

In *Pocahontas* and *Black Robe* certain scenes carefully balance and juxtapose the behavior of European Colonists and Native Americans. Amid the controversy of the Columbian quincentennial in 1992, how do you find that the filmmakers addressed the morally and politically sensitive topic of imperial conquest and native dispossession?

With reference to Pocahontas myth we discussed the ideology of the Romance of Conquest. How are the violent facts of colonization turned to a comedy or romance in *Pocahontas*, and/or in the two plays based on the colonization of New England and of Virginia?

Scholars studying captivity narratives have offered various interpretations for what may seem to be sensational and implausible acts by the Native Americans. For example, the gruesome tortures or mock executions inflicted on Radisson and John Smith have been explained as hazing rituals which had the effect of cementing the captive's attachment to his captors. Another approach has been to question the truth of these accounts and point out the ways in which the stories resemble European folktales or myths. Using the captivities of Jogues, Radisson, Smith, Rowlandson, and Ortiz, lay out your own position on how much of these stories are true, or how they might be modeled on fictional sources.

Units 4 and 5 due March 16th

The “trope of the talking book” as it appears in the texts by Gronniosaw, Equiano, and others is not necessarily a religious allegory, and Henry Louis Gates Jr. does not present it as one. But given the importance of the Bible and literacy to Protestantism since Luther, it could be. Examine the connections between literacy and spiritual enlightenment or conversion in two or three of the texts we read.

How did the Merchant/Ivory filmmaking team address the controversy over Sally Hemings in *Jefferson in Paris*? Did they use familiar cinematic devices of romance and courtship, or did they portray the relationship as immoral or indecent?