ENG 215 Survey of American Literature: Beginnings to 1850

Fall 2011 MWF 10:00-10:50 am CRN 12637 204 Chapman Hall

Instructor: Dr. Kathleen O’Fallon
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Hours: MWF 1:00-1:50 p.m., W 11-11:50 a.m. and by appointment

Shorter Seventh Edition
Beginnings to 1865

Course Description:

This course explores the forces that have shaped American literature as it has come to be defined by both academia and popular perception. We will consider the importance of “the word” to the way we define our culture, and then go on to examine the ways words have been combined into various literary forms that tell the American story. Although this is a survey course, we will not follow a strictly chronological structure. Instead, we will look at the way literature has emerged from many voices and in many forms, and we will analyze the formation of a canon of “important” literature and the ways that canon has been challenged and revised. Throughout our studies, we will keep asking ourselves how the early literature of the United States continues to speak to us.

Written and Oral Requirements:

Journal entries for each assigned text
Two 3-4 page essays
One midterm (in-class) examination---Covers material assigned in Weeks 1-4
One final (take-home) examination—An essay that is a culmination of journal entries
One memorized poem--
Regular contributions to class discussion, especially through group leadership

**Policy on Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:**

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. Please consult a writers’ handbook for a definition of plagiarism and information on documentation, and refer to the Student Conduct Code on the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards website, 
http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/StudentConductCode/tabid/69/Default.aspx. In cases where academic dishonesty has been clearly established, the award of an F for the final course grade is the standard practice. Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources.

**Policy on Access for Students with Disabilities**

If you have a disability (physical or learning) which you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first day of the term so we can make arrangements, if necessary, for your full access to all classroom activities.

**Essay Assignments**
In class assignments, we are considering the writing of this period in American history according to the various forms it took. For your individual writing assignments, I would like you to consider two other approaches: whose voices are making up the “conversation” of American literature, and what issues concern these writers. **For each essay, you must choose one writing from the anthology that has NOT been assigned for class.** Read it closely and analyze both what the author is saying and how he/she says it.

**ESSAY ONE:** Discuss how the point of view of this particular author contributes to our understanding of the many voices that make up the American character. Consider why it is important for 21st century readers to read this work in order to have an adequate understanding of American culture and literature.

**ESSAY TWO:** Discuss how the work you have chosen addresses an issue that has significantly affected American culture and literature. Possible issues include (but are not limited to) slavery, relations between native cultures and European settlers, rights of women, war and peace, religion and politics, etc.

Each essay must have a clearly worded thesis statement that is fully supported by evidence from the text you are analyzing. Underline your thesis statement.

All essays must be no longer than 4 typed, double-spaced pages in length. Use 1-inch margins on all sides, and do not use a font smaller than 10 point. MLA in-text citation format must be used, and YOU MUST CITE ALL MATERIAL QUOTED, SUMMARIZED OR PARAPHRASED FROM YOUR PRIMARY SOURCE. **Do not** bring in outside criticism. This should be your analysis, not a summary of professional critics.

**Journal Assignment**
Students will need to purchase a “composition book” (the sewn journal-type notebook with speckled cover). Explanation of this assignment is contained in a separate handout.

**Poetry Memorization**

All students will choose one poem of no fewer than 14 lines to memorize and recite. Recitation may be in front of the class or private, in the instructor’s office.

**Class Participation**

The success of this course depends on regular and informed participation in discussion by as many members of the class as possible. To facilitate this participation, the class will be divided into three groups, and the responsibility for taking the lead in discussion will rotate among those groups. (The numbers next to the days of the week in the assignment schedule indicate which group is responsible for which days.) Groups will be assigned on Friday of Week 1, and they will have time in class to begin planning their strategies.

Groups responsible for discussion should bring discussion starter questions—that is, questions which cannot simply be answered with a yes/no or a detail recalled from the texts. Instead, these questions should help everyone in the class to consider the important issues raised by each reading. Some areas to discuss may include the following:

- What makes a work unique, and what makes it similar to other texts?
- How does the work’s purpose get revealed?
- How is the reader’s response to a work affected by the kind of work it is (e.g., argumentative/political, narrative, spiritual, philosophical)?
- What key ideas are being set forth by the work?
- What qualities mark the “voice” of the text?
What information given about the author and the time period is helpful in understanding the text?

Groups need to have agreed upon possible responses to the questions—don’t ask anything for which you can’t anticipate the answer. Divide up responsibilities so that no one person shoulders everything. Shy people need to challenge themselves to speak up, and people who have a tendency to dominate discussion need to let others have a chance to shine.

Finally, it is important that all members of the class come fully prepared to discuss the assigned works. Discussion leaders need classmates to respond to their questions.

Schedule of Readings

Please note that the assigned pages include the “head notes” containing author background. You are expected to read these introductory materials.

Week 1: Sept. 26-30

“In the beginning was the word...”

Monday
Introduction: What do we mean when we say “American”? (117-134)

Wednesday
“A Declaration...” (handout)

Friday
The Iroquois Creation Story (17-21)

Pima Stories of the Beginning of the World—“The Story of the Creation” (21-24)

Columbus letters (24-28)

DISCUSSION GROUP MEETINGS

Week 2: Oct. 3-7

Personal Narratives

Monday
Mary Rowlandson’s Captivity Narrative (117-134)
Wednesday 2  Olaudah Equiano, “The Interesting Narrative. . .” (355-390)

Friday 3  Henry David Thoreau, “Walden” (844-920)

Week 3: Oct. 10-14  Religious Forms and Influences

Monday 2  Jonathan Edwards, “Personal Narrative,” “A Divine and Supernatural Light,” and “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (168-205)

Wednesday 3  Edward Taylor, “Preparatory Meditations” (134-142)

Cotton Mather, Selections from The Wonders of the Invisible World (143-149)

Friday 1  Nathaniel Hawthorne, short stories (589-643)

Week 4: Oct. 17-21  Personal and Public Rhetoric: Letters and Speeches

Monday 3  John and Abigail Adams, Letters (300-309)


Wednesday 1  Pontiac, Speech at Detroit (206-209)

Red Jacket, Speech to the U.S. Senate (214-216)

Tecumseh, Speech to the Osages (216-218)

PAPER ONE DUE

Friday 2  Abraham Lincoln, “Gettysburg Address” (732-735)
and Second Inaugural Address (735-736)

Sojourner Truth, Speech to Women’s Rights Convention (761-764)

Week 5: Oct. 24-28  Beginnings of Fiction
Monday          MIDTERM EXAMINATION—In class (bring “green book”)

Wednesday 1     J.F. Cooper, excerpt from The Last of the Mohicans (467-475)

Friday 2         E.A. Poe, “The Philosophy of Composition” (724-732)

“The Tell-Tale Heart” (702-705)
“The Purloined Letter” (711-724)

Week 6: Oct. 31-Nov. 4  Further Fiction

Monday 3         H. B. Stowe, excerpts from Uncle Tom’s Cabin (764-799)

Wednesday 2      Stowe, continued

Friday 1          Herman Melville, “Benito Cereno” (1118-1174)

Week 7: Nov. 7-11  Fiction and/or Fact

Monday 2         Melville, continued

Wednesday 1      Harriet Jacobs, excerpts from Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (804-825)

Friday 3         Jacobs, continued

PAPER TWO DUE

Week 8: Nov. 14-18  Poetic Voices

Monday 1         Women’s poetry (391-404)

Wednesday 3      Anne Bradstreet, selected poems

Friday 2         Phyllis Wheatley, selected poems
Week 9: Nov. 21-25  (Thanksgiving Week)
Monday      Selections from Bryant, Longfellow, Whittier, Poe
            (Group responsibilities to be assigned)
Wednesday   Memorization work
Friday      NO CLASS MEETING

Week 10: Nov. 28-Dec. 2  Modernist Leanings
Monday 3       Walt Whitman, selected poems
Wednesday 1/2   Emily Dickinson, selected poems
Friday            POETRY PERFORMED (memorized)

Final Exam: Thursday, Dec. 8
            Final essay due in my office (256 PLC) by 10:15 a.m.