# ENG 391: The Novel in Nineteenth-Century America

**ENG 391: CRN 41411**  
**Summer 2021**  
**WEB**

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## What Students Say

- “Taking this course and reading these novels has really helped me get back into the mindset of what it means to close read and be a deeper thinker. As an academic college-level reader, you cannot gloss over, you cannot rush. You have to be able to take your time and really investigate all the weird things that literature can do.”

- “The complex questions that were posed in our class discussions, such as what a particular symbol means, allowed me to move past a surface-level reading of the text and truly analyze it, which will also push me in other academic readings to think more deeply.”

- “This course has likely been the most reading dense class I’ve taken throughout my undergrad this far. It has taught me a lot about who I am as an academic reader. I find myself a significantly better reader now than at the beginning of this term.”

Instructor: Dr. Kara B. Clevinger  
Office: 266 PLC (6-1514) currently not accessible  
Have a question or want to meet? Email me! Or request a Zoom meeting  
Email: kclev@uoregon.edu (allow 24 hours and except weekends)
Course Overview: Why am I here?

We’re here to read and analyze nineteenth-century American novels! I hope you’re here because you enjoy reading and writing and want to have lively intellectual conversations with others who enjoy reading and writing as you work on honing your literary analysis and written communication skills. I also hope you’re interested in learning more about the novel in nineteenth-century America. You’ll read about characters fighting imperialism, enslavement, and social injustice. You’ll learn about how nineteenth-century authors crafted their novels and about the historical contexts in which they wrote.

The big questions I’m excited to discuss with you over the course of our readings are: What obstacles do characters face on their journey to freedom or self-actualization? Are characters able to achieve freedom, happiness, or a fuller sense of self? What do these stories tell us about identity, difference, and gender in nineteenth-century U.S.?

How does the reading and work we do in this course transfer to your other classes and career? You’ll practice critical thinking and analytical writing skills, as well as cultivate empathy and cognitive patience with reading long-form fiction. These are valuable skills on the job market and in life, and they are becoming increasingly rare in the age of fast-paced internet reading. I hope you’re willing—maybe excited—to develop your deep reading practice.

Read me! The following pages introduce you to our learning outcomes, the four novels we will be reading this term, our labor and production and how it will be assessed, my policies on participation and late work, as well as guidelines and support for succeeding in an online course.

Learning Outcomes

What skills, experiences, and knowledge do I hope you will get out of this course? By the end of the term, my goals for your learning are that you will improve your proficiency and artistry at:

- reading nineteenth-century American novels with a view to better understanding their conventions, innovations, and limitations;
- drawing on relevant information to situate these novels and texts within their nineteenth-century American historical, cultural, and critical contexts;
- using creativity and interpretive skills to develop thoughtful, critical analyses rooted in close readings of the texts;
- writing and communicating your ideas with consideration of audience and purpose, using proper citation and acknowledgment of sources.
**Our Course Readings**

**What will we be reading in this course?** We will read and discuss four nineteenth-century American novels. I’ll refer to page numbers from the editions listed and available as print or digital texts through the UO Duckstore.

**Can you purchase a different print or digital edition from a different seller or can you use a free full-text edition?** Yes! In class discussions, please refer to chapter numbers instead of page numbers to help us find passages you reference.

To help you plan and manage the reading load (based on the average of reading 250 words per minute):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Word Count</th>
<th>Estimated Reading Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</em></td>
<td>81,104 (28,907)</td>
<td>plan for about 6 hours of total reading time; or, if English is your second language or you’re a slower reader like me, plan for about 8 hours of total reading time (reading time for select chapters: 2 hours total reading time; or 3-4 hours of slower reading time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>The Last of the Mohicans</em></td>
<td>148,530</td>
<td>This one is our longest novel of the course. But it’s an exciting action-adventure novel! Plan for 10 hours, or 12-15 hours of slower reading time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Behind A Mask</em></td>
<td>40,846</td>
<td>3 hours, or 5-6 hours of slower reading time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>The Awakening</em></td>
<td>50,105</td>
<td>4 hours, or 6-7 hours of slower reading time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***Note: Nineteenth-century novels are denser because they use "old-timey" English and idioms. This usually means slower reading times for everyone, but especially if English is not your first language. It's a good idea to factor in extra reading time as you get used to the denser language, and talk to me if you are really struggling with comprehension.***

**How can you read efficiently and effectively?** In an intensive summer course where you have to get reading done quickly, but you are also reading deeply to interpret and analyze texts, what’s a girl to do? Try my method! Read the text straight through once: you are reading for basic plot, characters, and themes. It’s fine to stop and admire literary beauty, but don’t get stuck deciphering difficult passages at this point. As you read, mark passages that you return to for a deeper reading. Use the week’s PowerPoint, discussion board prompt, and writing assignment topic to give yourself a list of questions/ideas that you can use to mark passages. I’m a slow reader, but when I need to manage a heavier workload, this method is my tried and true! It’s how I survived grad school, where students are given more reading than they can possibly get through.
**Assignments + Grading**

The following is a brief overview of the work for the course. I provide more detailed guidelines with each assignment on Canvas.

**Discussion Board Posts** (40%) are the lifeblood of our course. Refer to the “Guidelines for Discussion” for instructions on primary and secondary posts and peeps. Primary posts are due each week by Thursday at 11:59PM, and are how I keep the course paced; each week’s discussion board must be completed in order to unlock the next week’s module and content. You don’t need to have finished reading the novel before making your primary post! Secondary posts and peeps are due each week by Sunday at 11:59PM.

**Weekly Writing Assignments** (40%) practice skills and ideas in a lower-stakes way. WWAs will help you work through course concepts and readings, test interpretations, and practice close reading skills. The topics and requirements for WWAs will vary, but are due each week by Sunday at 11:59PM.

For the **Final Writing Project** (20%) you will have the option to choose an essay or creative project. The essay is an extended literary analysis of 1-2 major texts we’ve read, approximately 7-8 pages. The creative project lets you do a lesson plan, film adaptation, marketing package, or podcast/YouTube series for one of the novels. The last day to submit the final essay or creative project will be on Monday, July 19 by 11:59PM.

Note: English majors need at least a “C” to earn credit for the major. Grading scale: A: 94-100; A-: 90-93.99; B+: 88-89.99; B: 84-87.99; B-: 80-83.99; C+: 78-79.99; C: 74-77.99; C-: 70-73.99

**How do I assess your work and contributions to the course and our community?** Weekly writing assignments and the final writing project have a list of core criteria. If your work meets the core criteria, then it will earn a B. Assignments that are not adequately meeting the criteria will earn a B-. Assignments missing any of the criteria will earn a C or below. Contact me if you are struggling to meet criteria, and want help improving your work.

**Assessing your discussion board work.** You choose the level of participation and labor you want to do based on the grade you want to earn. A complete primary post earns a C on the weekly discussion board. A complete primary and secondary (response) post earns a B. A primary and secondary post, plus 3 “peeps” (additional response posts) will earn an A. Refer to the “Guidelines for Discussion” and the grading criteria on each week’s discussion board.

**“How do I get an A?”** So you want to strive for Jedi mastery, do you, my young padawan? Along with the core criteria for discussion board posts, weekly writing assignments, and the final writing project, I list criteria for excellence. In some cases, this will include advanced labor tasks intended to show you how students achieve mastery. Attempting advanced labor tasks is not the same as meeting the criteria for excellence and does not guarantee an “A”! Contact me if you would like help achieving excellence.
Late Work

Submitting assignments on time helps you to manage your time and the workload. It helps your colleagues, who will benefit from your voice and perspective in the discussions. It helps me give you timely and useful feedback on your work. However, life happens... and sometimes technology happens, too. Submissions are due at 11:59PM, and there is a one-hour grace period for technical difficulties. Please review the items below for how late work affects your grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You may submit Weekly Writing Assignments within 48 hours of the due date without penalty to your grade. Weekly Writing Assignments are due Sunday by midnight, but you can submit up to Tuesday by midnight without a grade deduction.</th>
<th>Discussion Board posts must be submitted on time to earn full credit. Your peers who wish to earn credit for secondary posts and peeps rely on your timely contributions. Late primary posts submitted within 48 hours of the due date can earn a C for that portion.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If submitted after 48 hours from the due date, the assignment can earn a C and will likely not receive feedback. Visit my office hours if you would like feedback. All writing assignments must be submitted by Monday, July 19 to earn credit.</td>
<td>Any posts to the week’s discussion board submitted after Sunday by midnight will not earn credit. In other words, you’ve missed the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. It’s like coming into an empty room and talking to yourself!</td>
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</table>

Students must submit all assigned work to earn a passing grade.

***Please do not hesitate to contact me as soon as possible if a situation occurs that may require additional accommodations.***

Other Policies + Expectations

**Incompletes:** A request for the grade “Incomplete” must be placed in advance of the end of the term. Approval is granted only in cases when some minor but essential aspect of the course cannot be completed by a student through unforeseen circumstances beyond their control.

**Access:** The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me in week one if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You may also wish to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

**Observance of Religious Holidays:** Students who observe their religious holidays at times when academic requirements conflict with those observances must inform instructors in advance of the holiday. Students are responsible for making up missed work according to a schedule determined with the teacher.
Academic Honesty, Authorship, and Plagiarism

What is plagiarism? It’s important to understand ‘authorship’ and ‘ownership of ideas and words’ in academic writing. This helps writers give the correct credit to other writers, thinkers, and sources for their words and ideas. When you use someone else’s or another source’s words or ideas without telling your reader where they come from, you are PLAGIARIZING. Common examples of plagiarism include incorrect citation of sources and copying and pasting parts of an assignment from the internet or other students. Copying from unauthored webpages is plagiarism. Getting too much help from someone editing your writing is also a form of academic dishonesty.

Submit original work and cite the sources you consult! All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course, which means you may not submit papers or portions of papers you have written for any other course without permission. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. Please refer to our e-handbooks as well as the Library Citation and Plagiarism guide and the Student Conduct Code on the Office of the Dean of Students website.

What are the consequences of plagiarizing? In cases where academic misconduct has been clearly established, the assignment earns a zero, and in some cases an award of up to an F for the final course grade is the standard practice of the English Department. Please see me BEFORE you submit your work if you have any questions about your use of sources.

Resources for Success

I am here to help you succeed; don’t hesitate to e-mail me! I will make every effort to respond to your e-mail within 24 hours. In addition, you have many UO resources and remote tutoring support services to help you with writing and studying. These campus resources offer online support, but may have limited summer availability.

- The Teaching and Learning Center’s Writing Lab offers free, remote synchronous and asynchronous access to a writing tutor for any subject. See also UO Online Writing Lab
- The Multicultural Center (MCC) offers many resources for students, and the Center for Multicultural Academic Excellence (CMAE) offers writing tutoring as well as advising. Both centers also offer many other mentoring services for students from all backgrounds in the utilization of all resources available regarding financial aid, scholarships, internships, career development, professionalization, food and shelter, and academic success! Check their website for online tutoring and advising options
- Student Support Services (SSS) is also taking qualified students. They offer advising, tutoring, a study lounge with computers and free printing, as well as personal counseling. Check their website for remote options
- You can find additional sources of academic support on the Undergraduate Studies webpage.
- See also Remote Resources for Students
- Writing handbooks: Purdue OWL, UNC Writing Center Tips + Tools
Navigating this Course

This course is fully online and asynchronous. This course was designed as a WEB course, not a “remote” course (which has synchronous elements like Zoom class sessions). In other words, I’ve set up the course to fully engage with you online, and I hope you have signed on to do the same.

Paced Modules: The course is organized in 4 modules, following the 4-week summer session. We will read a novel a week and complete discussion board posts and a writing assignment each week. Although some online courses can be completed in a flurry of activity at the very end of the term, this course asks for consistent and regular participation in different activities and assignments each week.

You cannot wait until the end of the term to complete the work for the course. To succeed in the course, you will need to follow the weekly schedule of readings and assignments.

To help you manage your time, each week’s content unlocks on Sundays (at midnight), and only if you’ve completed a primary discussion post by then. E.g. If you’ve posted to the discussion board for Week 1, then Week 2’s module will become available on Sunday, June 27 at midnight PST. The course follows that pattern each week.

Turn on Canvas Notifications + Check your UO Email! Remaining engaged also requires you to check your university email at least once a day. I post an Announcement early each week wrapping up the previous week and setting up the current week’s work. Announcements made to the entire class appear at the top of the Canvas homepage and will also notify in your university email’s inbox. Double check your Canvas Notification settings and ensure that Announcements will go to your email immediately by confirming that the check mark next to Announcements is highlighted. Make sure if you have your university email forwarded to a personal email client that all relevant emails from me and/or Canvas are making it to your inbox. Let me know if you have questions about notifications for our class.

Academic Fraud

Students enrolled in an online class may not allow any other individual to submit work on their behalf. Doing so constitutes a form of cheating known as academic fraud. In order to ensure that the individual submitting the work to Canvas is the enrolled student, I may require a synchronous conference with a student. These conferences may be held by webcam or by telephone so long as both the student and me agree to the conference format. Email correspondence or text-based chat/communication cannot be used for these conferences. Refusal to participate in a required conference as requested by me can be evidence of academic fraud and the student’s case will be forwarded to Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards as potential academic misconduct.
Technical Requirements + Knowledge

If you are taking a course online you will need to have stable internet access and a basic knowledge of computer and internet skills in order to be successful.

- Basic computer/web knowledge, such as:
  - Using software applications, like MS Word, Google Docs, PowerPoint, email clients
  - Copying and pasting, spell-checking, saving files in different formats
  - Sending and downloading attachments
- Checking UO email and Canvas Messenger at least once a day
- A functional microphone and webcam (usually built in to laptops and computers) to participate in conferences, chats, and for some assignments
- Submission of all formal written work to SimCheck-enabled assignment portals on Canvas
  - SimCheck is a plagiarism prevention tool. All work submitted for this course must be created by you, submitted by you, and be original to this course. See more about my Academic Honesty, Authorship, and Plagiarism policies
- Respectful interactions with other students and the instructor, including respecting the privacy of classmates and their shared materials. See Netiquette guidelines.

***Technology problems:*** Technology can be tricky, but you need to be organized enough to anticipate computer problems. Submissions are due at 11:59PM, and there is a one-hour grace period for technical difficulties. Because everything will be turned in online, be sure to back up your hard drive regularly.

Need Canvas help? See the Student Technology Support page.

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Netiquette

To create a safe, productive working environment, be mindful when you communicate with both your colleagues and professors. These guidelines for online behavior and interaction are known as netiquette.

- Respect the privacy of your classmates and what they share in class. It is prohibited to screenshot and repost posts or material from this course on social media.
- Ask classmates for clarification if you find a discussion posting offensive or difficult to understand.
- Avoid sweeping generalizations. Stay focused on the text and topic.
- Understand that we may disagree and that exposure to other people’s opinions is part of the learning experience.
- Be respectful of each other. We’re all in this together. Before posting a comment, ask whether you would be willing to make the same comment to a person’s face.
- Keep in mind that you are taking a college class. Something that would be inappropriate in a traditional classroom is also inappropriate in an online classroom.
- Remember that all college-level communication should be in complete sentences and proofread for clarity. Tip: Start in Word and use the spell and grammar check.
- Avoid abbreviations used in texting such as “u” instead of “you.”
- Be careful with personal information (both yours and other’s).
- When emailing your professors or peers, use a descriptive subject line and don’t forget to sign your message with your name.
- Be aware that typing in all caps indicates shouting.
# Course Schedule—Summer 2021

*See Canvas for the sequence of assignments and topics.*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week One</strong></td>
<td>Introductions + Harriet Jacobs’ <em>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</em> (1861) Discussion: The Seduction Novel + the Slave Narrative</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>by Wednesday, June 23</td>
<td>Syllabus Quiz and Intro Discussion Board Post</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>by Thursday, June 24</td>
<td>by Sunday, June 27</td>
<td>by Sunday, June 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Discussion Board Post</td>
<td>Secondary Post and Peeps</td>
<td>Weekly Writing Assignment 1</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week Two</strong></td>
<td>James Fenimore Cooper’s <em>The Last of the Mohicans</em> (1826) Discussion: The Historical Novel + Action-Adventure Story</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>by Thursday, July 1</td>
<td>by Sunday, July 4</td>
<td>by Sunday, July 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Discussion Board Post</td>
<td>Secondary Post and Peeps</td>
<td>Weekly Writing Assignment 2</td>
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<th>Week</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week Three</strong></td>
<td>Louisa May Alcott’s <em>Behind A Mask</em> (1866) Discussion: The Gothic Novel + Early Pulp Fiction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>by Thursday, July 8</td>
<td>by Sunday, July 11</td>
<td>by Sunday, July 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Discussion Board Post</td>
<td>Secondary Post and Peeps</td>
<td>Weekly Writing Assignment 3</td>
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***Thursday, July 8: Last day to withdraw from this class or change the grading option to P/N***

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week Four</strong></td>
<td>Kate Chopin’s <em>The Awakening</em> (1899) Discussion: The Feminist Novel</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>by Thursday, July 15</td>
<td>by Sunday, July 18</td>
<td>by Sunday, July 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Discussion Board Post</td>
<td>Secondary Post, Peeps, and Writing Lab</td>
<td>Weekly Writing Assignment 4</td>
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<tr>
<th>Final</th>
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<tr>
<td>Final Writing Project due by midnight on Monday, July 19</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Hello! I am excited that you've signed up for ENG 391 on the nineteenth-century American novel. I love sharing my passion for reading and writing with my students.

What can you expect from me as a fellow reader?
I approach analyzing novels with a deep cultural and historical knowledge of nineteenth-century American lives and writings. As a writer of fiction, I also enjoy reading these novels with an eye toward how long-form narratives are formally constructed. Along with close reading, these contextual and formal approaches open up rich interpretive possibilities, which is what I love exploring with my students.

What can you expect from these texts?
A challenge! Nineteenth-century novels are denser because they use "old-timey" English and idioms. This usually means slower reading times for everyone, but especially if English is not your first language. It's a good idea to factor in extra reading time as you get used to the denser language, and talk to me if you are really struggling with comprehension. We’ll read a diverse set of novels that offer a glimpse into the strange world of nineteenth-century U.S. We’ll encounter protagonists escaping enslavement, adventuring in the wilderness, and challenging patriarchal society. How does the novel represent the nineteenth-century American experience?

What can you expect from this course?
Expect to develop cognitive patience and read deeply as you engage long-form fiction. This is an intensive summer course where we are reading a novel a week. Familiarity with close reading practices and literary analysis are crucial to success. In order for us to have vibrant discussions, I expect students to be able to talk about things like characterization, point of view, metaphor, symbol, and irony. Refer to the Lit Guides resources page for terminology to help develop your interpretations. Refer to the Writing Guides for help with discussion board posts, weekly writing assignments, and writing literary analysis.

I use a holistic and criteria-based grading system that honors the labor of reading and writing. The core criteria for each assignment offers a straightforward path to success and earning a B. If your goal is to achieve mastery, then expect to develop more complex analysis and interpretations. This is not an “easy A” course!

When contacting me: Kara, Dr. C., Dr. Clevinger, Professor Clevinger, or Your Royal Highness are all fine with me! Not "Mrs." "Ms." "Miss" or "Hey." My pronouns are she/her as well as they/their.