

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

Spring term 2017
12:00 – 12:50 MWF in Gerlinger 302
4 credits ~ CRN 36672

Prof. Gordon Sayre
Office: 472 PLC
Office Hours: Wednesdays 1-3; Thursdays 1-3

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 Literature: 1500-1789 requirement in the English major. The course does not emphasize familiar genres such as the 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 feature films that are based on some of the historical sources we are reading, and that demonstrate how the literature and history of colonial America resonate in modern popular culture in the United States, Canada, and Mexico: *Cabeza de Vaca*, *Black Robe*, *Pocahontas*, 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 literature, cinema, 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
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

Leonora Sansay, *Secret History: or, The Horrors of Santo Domingo and Laura* ed. Michael J. Drexler. Broadview Press

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

Films (and Knight library call numbers):

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

Black Robe (1991, 101 minutes) Knight library dvd 165

Pocahontas (1995: 81 minutes) Knight library dvd 3301

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

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

Unit 1

Ralph Bauer, part of 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, and of 1636 in the *Jesuit Relations* vol. 8, pp. 69-153; vol. 10, pp. 253-315 [pdf]
- Paul Le Jeune, “What the Hurons think of their Origin” (Iroquois Creation Story” *Jesuit Relations* vol. 10, pp. 124-139, 158-169 [pdf]
- 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]

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]
- Oludah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*, chapters 7 and 8
<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/equiano2/equiano2.html>

Unit 5

- 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.
- April 3rd Introduction to course, watch first half of *Cabeza de Vaca*
- April 5th assignment: first half of Cabeza de Vaca's *Narrative*, pp. 44-109
- April 7th screen remainder of *Cabeza de Vaca*
 assignment: second half of *Narrative* pp. 110-176
- April 10th 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
- April 12th 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]; Iroquois Creation myth in *The Jesuit Relations* vol. 10 [pdf]
- April 14th The Captivity and Martyrdom of Isaac Jogues
 assignment: *American Captivity Narratives* pp. 95-121
- April 17th Jean de Brébeuf, missionary, ethnographer, martyr
 assignment: *American Captivity Narratives* 122-126; Brébeuf, "Relation of 1635," Brébeuf's Huron Ethnography from *Jesuit Relations* vol. 8 [pdf]
- April 19th film analysis of *Black Robe*
 assignment: watch *Black Robe*; read Ward Churchill, "And they did it like dogs in the dirt" [pdf]
- April 21st The Huron Feast of the Dead
 assignment: Brébeuf on Huron Feast of the Dead from *Jesuit Relations* [pdf]
- Lecture by Annette Gordon-Reed and Peter Onuf 4 pm
- Unit 3: *Captivity Narratives and American Identities***
 themes: protestant conversion narratives; captivity, communion, and contamination; the romance of conquest; the Disney-fication of history
- April 24th John Smith's captivity

- assignment: *American Captivity Narratives* 1-17, 83-90;
First Essay Due
- April 26th Film analysis of *Pocahontas*
assignment: watch *Pocahontas*; read John Rolfe letter [pdf]; excerpts from Smith's *General Historie* [pdf]; Drew Lopenzina, "The Marriage of Pocahontas and John Rolfe" [pdf]
- April 28th James Nelson Barker, *The Indian Princess* (1808)
assignment: the text is on gutenberg.org
- May 1st Juan Ortiz and the Enchanted Muslim Princess tale
assignment: *American Captivity Narratives* pp. 59-82
- May 3rd The Romance of Conquest
assignment: Leslie Fiedler, *The Return of the Vanishing American* pp. 69-83; Drew Lopenzina, "The Marriage of Pocahontas and John Rolfe" [pdf]
- May 5th Rowlandson's Captivity Narrative 1
assignment: *American Captivity Narratives* pp. 127-176
- May 8th Rowlandson's Captivity Narrative 2
assignment: Gordon Sayre, "Communion in Captivity" [pdf]
- May 10th American Historical Typology
assignment: John Augustus Stone, *Metamora, or, The Last of the Wampanoags* [pdf]
- May 12th James Smith's Captivity
assignment: *American Captivity Narratives* pp. 258-323
- Unit 4: Olaudah Equiano and Black Atlantic Spiritual autobiography**
themes: the talking book; the Black Atlantic; African-American literary traditions; conversion and emancipation
- May 15th Gronniosaw and Gates' "Talking Book"
assignment: Gronniosaw [link] and Gates [pdf]
- May 17th John Marrant's Conversion Narrative
assignment: *American Captivity Narratives* pp.198-224
- May 19th Equiano's slave and conversion narrative 1
assignment: Equiano in *American Captivity Narratives* pp225-257
Second Essay Due
- May 22nd Equiano's slave and conversion narrative 2
assignment: chapters 7 & 8 of Equiano's book [link]
- May 24th Introduction to the Haitian Revolution
assignment: *Account of a remarkable Conspiracy formed by a Negro in the Island of St. Domingo* or "Makandal" [pdf]
- May 26th *The Secret History* Introduction and letters 1 – 13 (pp. 10-35, 60-100)

May 29th Memorial Day: no class

May 31st *The Secret History* Letters 14 – 32 (pp. 100-154)

Unit 5: Thomas Jefferson

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

June 2nd *Notes on the State of Virginia*
assignment: Waldstreicher, Introduction to NSV [pdf]; Queries IV – VII (pp. 20-27, 43-71 in Penguin edition)

June 5th visit to Knight library special collections, James Merchant papers
assignment: watch *Jefferson in Paris*

June 7th film analysis of *Jefferson in Paris*
assignment: *Notes on the State of Virginia* Query IX, (98-113, 137-149)

June 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*

June 15th 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 April 24th

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 May 19th

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 June 15th

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?