

English 203 / A01: Introduction to American Literature
Fall 2016 CRN 11382
T/W/F 12:30-1:20 PM @ Cornett B143

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Course Description

This course will offer a succinct and selective historical survey of American literature from the time of “contact” between Europeans and indigenous natives in the late fifteenth century through the present. While the course can by no means offer “coverage” of this more than 500-year period, it will provide an opportunity to read a considerable selection of the most influential and popular short stories, poems, novellas, autobiographies and essays of this long and diverse time span. Above all, my hope is that the texts I have selected will delight and entertain you with their ideas and artistry. In reading these texts, we will develop the fundamentals of analyzing literature by considering such major literary devices as theme, setting, narrative, perspective, style, pattern and imagery. We will use “close reading” and contextualization in our approach to these fundamentals. Many of the works we will consider have as their theme the liberty provided by literature to imagine the American nation as an organic or constructed spiritual and physical utopia. Literature (unlike typical historical, legal or journalistic discourse), as we shall discuss, at once makes possible such hopeful visions of the collective nation and, sometimes simultaneously, criticizes or complains about the perceived failure of such promises to be realized. The desire for a better or even ideal world can, in turn, represent a deeply creative or a potentially destructive impulse, depending on the context and means with which such desires are pursued. Recognizing literary tendencies toward possibility and critique—or, in the extreme, revolutionary idealism and worldly disenchantment—offers a key to understanding the literature we will read in this course as quintessentially American, even as it also grows increasingly cosmopolitan. Our primary text will be the most recent, shorter edition of the *Norton Anthology of American Literature*.

Required Text

Nina Baym, gen. ed. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Shorter 8th ed. New York: Norton, 2012. Print. ISBN: 978-0-393-91885-4.

I expect you to bring the book to class every day.

(Instructions for citing texts included in the *Norton Anthology*, using MLA citation format:

<http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/naal8/howtocite.aspx>.)

Assignments

1. 10 weekly quizzes, comprised of short answer questions (3% each = 30%). Make-ups only for a medically or otherwise documented reason.

2. A short (up to ten minutes) written play, composed with your group, based on the style of one of the authors of the term, to be performed/read in class in the last week of the term (20%).
3. A guided, self-directed play-writing workshop (November 22, 23 & 25), with a one-page daily write-up, submitted individually on each of the three meeting dates, of your evolving ideas and the group's process (10%).
4. A 1500-word max. (~5-6 pp.) term paper, topic to be assigned, due on the date of the officially scheduled final exam (35%).
5. Class participation mark (5%).

Grading

I use the University of Victoria's scale to calculate grades:

<u>Grades</u>	<u>Grade Point Value</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Description</u>
A+	9	90 – 100	Exceptional, outstanding and excellent performance. Normally achieved by a minority of students. These grades indicate a student who is self-initiating, exceeds expectation and has an insightful grasp of the subject matter.
A	8	85 – 89	
A-	7	80 – 84	
B+	6	77 – 79	Very good, good and solid performance. Normally achieved by the largest number of students. These grades indicate a good grasp of the subject matter or excellent grasp in one area balanced with satisfactory grasp in the other area.
B	5	73 – 76	
B-	4	70 – 72	
C+	3	65 – 69	Satisfactory, or minimally satisfactory. These grades indicate a satisfactory performance and knowledge of the subject matter.
C	2	60 – 64	
D	1	50 – 59	Marginal Performance. A student receiving this grade demonstrated a superficial grasp of the subject matter.
F	0	0 – 49	Unsatisfactory performance. Wrote final examination and completed course requirements; no supplemental.
N	0	0 – 49	Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.

Late Assignments

Late essays will receive a 2-point penalty per day, including weekends. If you need an extension on an assignment, you must request it at least one week in advance. Students who do not submit the essay, write the midterm and final exam, and submit two of three peer editing reports, or who are absent for more than 10 classes will receive an “N” in the course (failure through incompleteness).

Attendance

Regular attendance is obligatory. More than four absences will result in a grade penalty; more than 10 absences will result in failure of the course through incompleteness.

Computers in the classroom

Numerous studies have shown that computer use during class is a source of distraction. If you feel you must use a computer in class, please refrain from using it for any activity not directly related to class.

Academic Integrity

Students are part of the intellectual community at the University of Victoria. There are ethical standards we all adhere to; one serious breach of such standards is plagiarism. According to the University of Victoria Calendar, plagiarism is the representation of someone else’s work as one’s own work. This can include intellectual theft or merely inadequate attribution of borrowed material to its author. Plagiarism includes not just the use of another’s words, but also the use of another’s ideas. Plagiarism includes the uncredited use of Internet sources as well as the unattributed use of print or other sources. An assignment that plagiarizes someone else’s work will result in a failure for the course, but there can be further penalties as well, including disciplinary probation or expulsion from the university. If you have questions about plagiarism or the use of other peoples’ ideas, please come and talk with me about them. See the University Calendar online for definitions and regulations of plagiarism, where it says:

Principles of Academic Integrity

Academic integrity requires commitment to the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. It is expected that students, faculty members and staff at the University of Victoria, as members of an intellectual community, will adhere to these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research and service. Any action that contravenes this standard, including misrepresentation, falsification or deception, undermines the intention and worth of scholarly work and violates the fundamental academic rights of members of our community. This policy is designed to ensure that the university’s standards are upheld in a fair and transparent fashion.

Nothing in this policy is intended to prohibit students from developing their academic skills through the exchange of ideas and the utilization of resources available at the university to support learning (e.g., The Writing Centre). Students who are in doubt as to what constitutes a violation of academic integrity in a particular instance should consult their course instructor.

Plagiarism

A student commits plagiarism when he or she:

- submits the work of another person in whole or in part as original work
- gives inadequate attribution to an author or creator whose work is incorporated into the student's work, including failing to indicate clearly (through accepted practices within the discipline, such as footnotes, internal references and the crediting of all verbatim passages through indentations of longer passages or the use of quotation marks) the inclusion of another individual's work
- paraphrases material from a source without sufficient acknowledgement as described above

The University reserves the right to use plagiarism detection software programs to detect plagiarism in essays, term papers and other work.

Learning environment

The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing, and protecting a positive, supportive, and safe working and learning environment for all its members. We, students and faculty members, are all expected to adhere to the UVic human rights policy. Please let me know if something is going on in the classroom that makes you feel personally uncomfortable.

Assignment Schedule

Wed., Sept. 7	<p>Introduction</p> <p>When do we describe an American literature text as a “classic”? How can we read American literary classics “against the grain”?</p> <p>Course outline and assignment structure</p>
Fri., Sept. 9	Mary Rowlandson (126-7), <i>A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson</i> , beginning through “The Third Remove” (127-31).
Tue., Sept. 13	Quiz 1. Mary Rowlandson, <i>A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson</i> , “The Twentieth Remove” (135-43).
Wed., Sept. 14	Further discussion of previous week’s texts.
Fri., Sept. 16	American Literature 1700-1820 (157-69); Anne Bradstreet (110), “Prologue,” “The Author to Her Book,” “Before the Birth of One of Her Children,” “To My Dear and Loving Husband” (111-20); Edward Taylor (143-4), “Prologue,” “Upon Wedlock, and Death of Children,” “Upon a Wasp Chilled with Cold” (144-9).
Tue., Sept. 20	Quiz 2. Ralph Waldo Emerson (505-8), “Self-Reliance” (549-66).
Wed., Sept. 21	Discussion.
Fri., Sept. 23	“American Literature 1820-1865” (445-465); Nathaniel Hawthorne (603-6), “The May-Pole of Merry Mount” (629-636); “The Minister’s Black Veil” (636-45).
Tue., Sept. 27	Quiz 3. Edgar Allan Poe (683-7), “The Raven” (688-91); “The Fall of the House of Usher” (702-14).
Wed., Sept. 28	Discussion.
Fri., Sept. 30	Herman Melville (1099-1102), <i>Benito Cereno</i> (1128-83).
Tue., Oct. 4	Quiz 4. Melville, <i>Benito Cereno</i> .
Wed., Oct. 5	Discussion.
Fri., Oct. 7	Quiz 5. Walt Whitman (1005-9), <i>Song of Myself</i> (1024-67): parts 1-6; 10; 15; 20-1; 24; 44; 48-52.
Tue., Oct. 11	Discussion.
Wed., Oct. 12	No class. Read in Vol. 2: “American Literature 1865-1914” (3-16).
Fri., Oct. 14	Emily Dickinson (Vol. 1, 1189-93), poems (1195-1213) 202, 236, 446, 448, 479, 656, 1108; “Letters to Thomas Wentworth Higginson” (1218-1219).

Tue., Oct. 18	Quiz 6. Mark Twain (Vol. 2: 98-101), <i>Huckleberry Finn</i> (excerpts), Opening: 105-8; Huck runs away and unexpectedly meets Jim on an island in the Mississippi River: 130-4; Huck and Jim argue about King Solomon: 151-3; Huck fools Jim: 153-57; Shakespeare Revival: 188; Huck's crisis of conscience: 233-4.
Wed., Oct. 19	Discussion.
Fri., Oct. 21	William Faulkner (994), "A Rose for Emily" (998-1004).
Tue., Oct. 25	Quiz 7. Faulkner, "Barn Burning" (1004-1016).
Wed., Oct. 26	Discussion
Fri., Oct. 28	"American Literature since 1945" (1071-87); Elizabeth Bishop (1103-5), "In the Waiting Room" (1110-12); Adrienne Rich (1379-81), "Diving into the Wreck" (1386-8).
Tue., Nov. 1	Quiz 8. Allen Ginsberg (1354-6), "Howl" (1356-65).
Wed., Nov. 2	Discussion.
Fri., Nov. 4	James Baldwin (1327), "Going to Meet the Man" (1328-1339).
Tue., Nov. 8	Quiz 9 and discussion.
Wed., Nov. 9	Reading break.
Fri., Nov. 11	Reading break.
Tue., Nov. 15	Sherman Alexie (1645-6), "At Navajo Monument...", "Pawn Shop," "Crow Testament" (1646-9).
Wed., Nov. 16	Quiz 10. Toni Morrison (1401-3), "Recitatif" (1403-16).
Fri., Nov. 18	Discussion.
Tue., Nov. 22	Self-directed playwriting workshop.
Wed., Nov. 23	Self-directed playwriting workshop.
Fri., Nov. 25	Self-directed playwriting workshop.
Tue., Nov. 29	Perform plays.
Wed., Nov. 30	Perform plays.
Fri., Dec. 2	Perform plays.