

**ENGL 741, Seminar in American Studies,
“Meta-survey of American literature, beginnings to 1865”**

Spring 2014, Tuesdays 4:00-6:50, Colson G10

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213 Colson Hours: Tuesdays 3:00-4:00 or by appointment

Literature. n.s. [literatura, Latin] Learning; skill in letters.
--Samuel Johnson, A Dictionary of the English Language (1755)

Overview

The course will examine how the standard survey of American literature to 1865, which originated in an uneasy alliance between the New Criticism and the old historicism, has been inflected by subsequent developments:

- Theoretical ferment of the 1970s and following (structuralism, various post-structuralisms, psychoanalytic criticism, Marxism, etc.)
- Identity-based paradigms of the 1980s and 1990s (race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, multiculturalism)
- Geopolitically-oriented paradigms of the 2000s (Atlantic world, transnational American studies, hemispheric studies, empire studies)

In different ways, these developments foreground a tension between the two competing principles that organize any survey: literary history (the impulse to recover and include the totality of literary production) and canon-formation (the impulse to judge and value).

Reising will take us from the old historicism through the New Criticism and myth-and-symbol American studies up to era of identity politics that generated the *Heath Anthology*. Guillory interrogates the “exclusion” thesis that governs that many of that era’s accounts of canon formation (e.g., Lauter et al.); however, the extension of Guillory’s Anglo-centric study to American literature remains open to question. Some recent work in early American literature (surveyed in clusters of essays in *ALH* 2010 and *PMLA* 2013) has redirected the archive away from its prior nationalist telos. This redirection has introduced discontinuities between early American literature and the rest of American literary history.

Texts

Heath Anthology of American Literature, 7th ed. (2013), ed. Paul Lauter et al., vols. A and B.
Norton Anthology of American Literature, 8th ed. (2012), ed. Nina Baym et al., vols. A and B.
Russell Reising, *The Unusable Past: Theory and the Study of American Literature* (Methuen, 1986). Out of print—but plenty of used copies available through Amazon, etc.

John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (1993), chapter 1.
WVU libraries E-book.

“Projecting Early American Literature,” joint special issue of *American Literary History* (22.2) and *Early American Literature* (45.2, 2010), selections. WVU libraries e-journals.

“Early American Literature” Theories and Methodologies cluster, *PMLA* (128.4, 2013), selections. WVU libraries e-journals.

Other selected essays as listed on the syllabus.

Selected supplementary bibliography on canon formation and the history of the discipline

- Robert von Halberg, ed., *Canons* (U of Chicago P, 1984).
Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (U of Chicago P, 1987).
Paul Lauter, *Canons and Contexts* (Oxford UP, 1991).
David Shumway, *Creating American Civilization: A Genealogy of American Literature as an Academic Discipline* (U of Minnesota P, 1994).
William Spengemann, *A New World of Words: Redefining Early American Literature* (Yale UP, 1994).
Elizabeth Renker, *The Origins of American Literature Studies: An Institutional History* (Cambridge UP, 2007).
Randall Fuller, *Emerson's Ghosts: Literature, Politics, and the Making of Americanists* (Oxford UP, 2007).

Assignments and grading

- Seven short papers, about 400 words each. For each week of readings in primary texts, write a short essay that addresses the question, What's important in this group of texts? Although the essay should refer to texts from both the *Norton* and the *Heath*, the primary focus should *not* be a comparison/contrast of the two anthologies. Rather, the focus should be on the significant genres, forms, themes, ideas, or trajectories indicated by this group of texts. Each paper will be worth 5% of your final grade (i.e., 35% total).
- A final project essay that investigates some aspect of canon formation, disciplinary history, or pedagogy for pre-1865 American literature: prospectus and annotated bibliography, review draft, and final article-length paper (~ 20 pp.). You will receive a separate assignment sheet for this. The project, graded primarily on the final paper, will be worth 65% of your final grade.

Policies

- Let's work to support WVU's inclusivity policy. The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (304-293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>
- Notwithstanding the risk to your intellectual development, you are allowed one absence. Each subsequent absence will lower your final grade by one full letter.
- Late work will not be accepted. If you have to miss class for any reason and a paper is due that day, email me the paper before class time.

Calendar

We'll take the *Norton* as our baseline, so the readings in primary texts are listed accordingly.

You also are responsible for the analogous texts (by period, genre, etc.) in the *Heath*.

1/14	<p>Before the first class meeting, please read all the prefatory and introductory materials from the various sections of the <i>Norton</i> and <i>Heath</i> anthologies—and bring all the volumes to class:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Nina Baym, et al., Preface, “Beginnings to 1700,” “American Literature 1700-1820,” “American Literature 1820-1865,” <i>Norton Anthology</i> 8th ed., A.xvii-xxvi, 3-20, 365-78, B.3-24.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Paul Lauter, et al., Preface, “Beginnings to 1700,” “Eighteenth Century,” “Early Nineteenth Century, 1800-1865,” <i>Heath Anthology</i> 7th ed., A.xxiii-xxx, 1-17, 613-31, B.1539-1574.</p> <p>Before the first class meeting please also read—and bring to class:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Ronald Gottesman, et al., Table of Contents and Preface, <i>Norton Anthology of American Literature</i>, 1st ed. (1979). eCampus folder “Anthology TOCs”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Michael Warner, General Introduction, Myra Jehlen and Michael Warner, ed., <i>The English Literatures of America, 1500-1800</i> (1997). eCampus folder “Readings”</p>
1/21	Russ Reising, <i>Unusable Past</i>
1/28	<p>Paul Lauter, et al., “To the Reader,” <i>Heath Anthology of American Literature</i>, 1st ed. (1990). eCampus folder “Readings”</p> <p>John Guillory, <i>Cultural Capital</i>, Preface and chapter 1, vii-xiv, 3-82. WVU Libraries E-book</p> <p>Ed White and Michael Drexler, “The Theory Gap,” <i>American Literary History</i> 22.2 (2010): 480-94.</p>
2/4	<p>Native American. <i>Norton</i> A.21-34, 52-81, 100-20, 442-55.</p> <p>Non-Anglophone colonial. <i>Norton</i> A.34-51 (note that the <i>Heath</i> has lots more of this).</p> <p>Short paper #1 due</p>
2/11	<p>Anglophone 16th & 17th c. <i>Norton</i> A.81-99, 121-363.</p> <p>Short paper #2 due</p>
2/18	<p>Anglophone 18th c. and early national. <i>Norton</i> A.379-949.</p> <p>Short paper #3 due</p>
2/25	<p>Sandra Gustafson and Gordon Hutner, “Projecting Early American Literary Studies,” <i>American Literary History</i> 22.2 (2010): 245-49.</p> <p>Ralph Bauer, “Early American Literature and American Literary History at the ‘Hemispheric Turn,’” <i>American Literary History</i> 22.2 (2010): 250-65.</p> <p>Stephanie Fitzgerald and Hillary Wyss, “Land and Literacy: The Textualities of Native Studies,” <i>American Literary History</i> 22.2 (2010): 271-79.</p> <p>Frances Smith Foster, “Genealogies of Our Concerns, Early (African) American Print Culture,” <i>American Literary History</i> 22.2 (2010): 368-80.</p> <p>Timothy Sweet, “Projecting Early American Environmental Writing,” <i>American Literary History</i> 22.2 (2010): 419-31.</p> <p>Michelle Burnham, “Early America and the Revolutionary Pacific,” <i>PMLA</i> 128.4 (2013): 953-60.</p>

3/4	<p>Sandra Gustafson, "What's in a Date? Temporalities of Early American Literature," <i>PMLA</i> 128.4 (2013): 961-67.</p> <p>Jared Hickman, "Cosmic American Studies," <i>PMLA</i> 128.4 (2013): 968-75.</p> <p>Lloyd Pratt, "Early American Literature and its Exclusions," <i>PMLA</i> 128.4 (2013): 983-88.</p> <p>Sarah Rivett, "Early American Religion in a Postsecular Age," <i>PMLA</i> 128.4 (2013):989-96.</p> <p>Christopher Hager and Cody Marrs, "Against 1865: Reperiodizing the Nineteenth Century," <i>J19</i> 1.2 (2013): 259-84.</p> <p>Paul Lauter, "Melville Climbs the Canon," <i>American Literature</i> 66.1 (1994): 1-24.</p>
3/11	Spring Break
3/18	Prospectus and annotated bibliography due
3/25	<p>Prose, 1820s-1840s. <i>Norton B</i>: Irving 25-62, Cooper 62-86, Sedgwick 86-106, Apess 129-59, Schoolcraft 164-67, Kirkland 167-80, Child 180-210, Emerson 211-339, Native American cluster 349-69, Hawthorne 369-595</p> <p>Short paper #4 due</p>
4/1	<p>Poetry, 1820s-1860s. <i>Norton B</i>: Sigourney 106-21, Bryant 121-29, Schoolcraft 161-63, Emerson 341-48, Longfellow 596-607, Whittier 608-28, Poe 629-44, 719-29, Whitman 1310-1420, Harper 1644-51, Dickinson 1659-1704</p> <p>Short paper #5 due</p>
4/8	<p>Prose, 1840s-1850s. <i>Norton B</i>: Poe 644-719, Fuller 740-86, Slavery and Race cluster 787-804, Fern 905-20, Brown 942-60, Douglass 1170-82, Melville 1424-1582</p> <p>Short paper #6 due</p>
4/15	<p>Prose, 1850s-1860s. <i>Norton B</i>: Lincoln 730-40, Stowe 805-904, Jacobs 920-42, Thoreau 961-1170, Section/Hemisphere cluster 1283-1310, Whitman 1420-24, Harper 1652-59, Davis 1705-32, Alcott 1733-56</p> <p>Short paper #7 due</p>
4/22	<p>Draft of final paper due Peer conferences on drafts</p>

Final paper due Monday, April 28.