

English 241: American Literature to 1865

Section 2: CRN 11117. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 1:30-2:20, Clark Hall 317.

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Office Hours:
MWFs 12:30-1:20
and by appointment.

Course Description:

This course will introduce you to the canon, both the historical and the growing one, of American literature to the Civil War. The terms “American” and “literature” are both loosely coined, seeing as how the emergence of a National literature and the dominance of privileged forms like fiction and poetry did not come until late into this timeframe. We will trace how this happened, reading not only fiction and poetry but also letters, sermons, autobiographies, political pamphlets, and also captivity and slave narratives. We will not only read works from traditional, long read writers from predominantly New England but also expand our focus to include writers from the broader Atlantic World paradigm, which includes works from Spanish, French, and Caribbean authors, and later in the course look at some authors from the American South.

Texts

1. The Norton Anthology of American Literature, 8th edition, volumes A & B.
2. Leonora Sansay, *Secret History; or, the Horrors of St. Domingo*. Ed. Michael Drexler. Ontario: Broadview Publishing, 2007.
3. Robert Montgomery Bird, *Sheppard Lee*. NY: NY Review Books, 2008.
4. Additional readings scanned and posted to eCampus.

Except as noted, all readings are in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 8th edition, Volume A or Volume B. The schedule is subject to change, with reasonable additions or subtractions announced ahead of time. Also please note that we will be reading several works in electronic form that I will post to eCampus—be attentive as to when these readings happen and feel free to bring those readings to class in any way you see fit, whether by printing them or by bringing them in with laptops or tablets. Unless we have to cancel a class, I expect to adhere rigorously to this schedule (alas, we have little choice), by which I mean that we will at least begin the discussion of each work you are to read on the date specified.

A Note on the Reading: please note that the nightly reading load is intense. We might read anywhere from around thirty to sixty pages in one sitting (with the greater loads during the weekends), and with the novel I have selected, the reading goes over a hundred pages each sitting, although the pages are much smaller than the anthology. I will often either give a quiz or a short writing assignment to test that the reading has been done. With that said, questions I will give will be oriented more toward broad themes rather than miniscule details. I encourage you to read the longer pieces ahead of time and try to stay on course rather than get behind on the material. **Dictum sapienti sat est!**

Assignments:

EXAMS: There will be a mid-term exam (primarily dealing with historical context, identification, and a choice of short essays involving close reading) and a two part final-- the first part will deal with the last section of the course, the second will be synthetic, dealing with the whole period.

SHORT PAPERS: this is an English class, so as always, we should work to sharpen our writing and analytical skills. I will ask for a roughly 2-3 page paper responding to a prompt I will give. These prompts may do any of the following: direct you to do a close reading of a text, compare/contrast themes from multiple authors, offer a reading using a critical lens (Psychoanalysis, New Historicism, etc), or offer an ideas critique. Over the course of the semester, there will be six of these. You may skip one.

SHORT WRITINGS/QUIZZES: We will often begin periods by writing for about five minutes on some aspect of the day's reading assignment. If you have read attentively, you will have no trouble with these mini-essays. Unless otherwise announced, all these are closed-book assignments. If you miss a short writing or quiz, you may not make it up (except for college-sponsored activity absences), but I will drop two of these when I calculate grades. Failure to get some sort of credit (plus, check, or minus) on at least 60 % of these assignments will result in failure of the course.

TWITTER: I have created a Twitter account for our class, called USLit1WVU. You will need to follow me, and I will follow you back. Feel free to create a separate, "school safe" Twitter account for this purpose. For each reading, you will tweet some commentary about what you've read—in 140 characters or less. Feel free to be creative: you can tweet discussion questions, something funny, create memes, or engage in debate with one another: the possibilities are endless and open. Feel free to tweet to the class during discussion as well to make our class an interactive experience (especially if you're shy and feel hesitant about raising your hand.)

To tweet, write your message @USLit1WVU. Write your tweet, and once you are satisfied with it, use the hashtag #ENGL241 and the daily assigned hashtag (just use #ENGL241 if you run out of room). So, if we're reading Ben Franklin, you'd write your tweet @USLit1WVU and end it with hashtag #ENGL241 #BFranklin. The tweets will be graded as follows: 30+ Tweets=A, 24-27 Tweets=B, 21-23 Tweets=C, 18-20 Tweets=D, Less than 18 Tweets=F.

Grades: Grades will be calculated as follows: Midterm Exam, 15%; Final Exam, 30%; Short Papers, 20%; Participation 10%; In-Class Writes/Quizzes, 15%, and Twitter Participation 10%. I anticipate that 90-100 will be an A; 80-89.9 a B; 70-79.9 a C; and beyond that all is darkness.

Short Papers: 20%
 Midterm Exam: 15%
 Final Exam: 30%
 In-Class Writes: 15%
 Participation: 10%

Twitter Participation: 10%

Course Policies:

Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism: Plagiarism is described in the student handbook. I have a particular set of skills, skills which make me a nightmare for plagiarists. I have a strict Zero Tolerance policy for plagiarists, no matter how low the stakes of any particular assignment. If you plagiarize accidentally, it might be forgiven once. If you plagiarize purposefully, I will not hesitate to file sanctions up to an unforgivable F for the course. The same can be said about any other sort of cheating, including on exams.

Attendance: Because our class sessions are short, I will not take attendance; however, you are expected to attend all class meetings. Something you need to be familiar with will be discussed each day, and if you miss it, there will be a hole in your education. To hold you accountable for attendance and doing the readings, I will offer either a random quiz or short writing periodically. As far as tardies go, please be courteous and don't disrupt the class if you come in late. Please don't be disruptfully late either: as in showing up twenty minutes into the class or more.

E-Mail: my e-mail is listed. It's not necessary to e-mail me if you miss class, as I will drop the two lowest grades in case you miss a quiz. If you have questions relating to anything not on the syllabus, feel free.

Office Hours: I will be in my office for about a hour before class each day. If you're having difficulty with the readings or would like to come by and chat about anything, feel free. My office is in Colson G3, right across the street from our classroom in Clark.

Participation: Except for a few brief points in which I lecture to establish historical context, this will be a discussion class. I will guide the discussion to some extent, in order to get in some points which I consider essential, but there will be room for your own interests to set our agenda. This is essentially a class designed to make us better readers, and we achieve that by talking about our reading experiences and hearing about those of others. For this reason, participation will figure importantly in your grade.

Social Justice: be adults. I will have a Zero Tolerance Policy for disparaging remarks on race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, or appearance.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented learning disability, a serious hearing or vision problem, or any other special need that might affect your performance and participation in class, please inform me. Also, please be aware of the support services available to you through the Office of Accessibility Services in Suite 250 at 1085 VanVoorhis Rd (beside Applebee's and across from the Mountaineer Station transportation center). The phone number is 304-293-6700, and email is access2@mail.wvu.edu. Access the website at <http://accessibilityservices.wvu.edu/>.

Technology: I encourage you to bring readings on laptops or tablets, especially on eCampus reading days. Taking notes on them is fine, but know that I frequently walk around the room and can tell if you're listening to the conversation or not. I encourage you to use our class Twitter to make our classroom interactive, especially if you're shy to raise your hand, to help your participation grade. I am not even banning cell phones for

this class, so long as you're using them for classroom purposes. If your device is becoming distracting because you are using them for lamentable ends, I reserve the right to tell you to put it away and then dock participation.

University Counseling Services: The Carruth Center provides resources to help manage stress, improve relationships, make healthy lifestyle choices, and face new challenges and transitions. The Center is in the newly constructed Health and Education Building, 390 Birch Street, located on the Evansdale campus adjacent to the Student Recreation Center. Its website is <http://well.wvu.edu/ccpps>, and its phone number (answered 24 hours) is 304-293-4431.

Schedule of Readings for each Class:

*Subject to Change According to Progress

I: European Contact/Atlantic World Picture/Puritan Origins (Readings are either in Norton A or eCampus)

M Jan 12: Syllabus discussion: brief historical overview of the Atlantic World

W Jan 14: **Columbus** (34-38), **John Smith** (81-93). **#FirstEncounters**

F Jan 16: **Winthrop**, Selection from "A Model of Christian Charity" (175-77), Selections from *The Journal of John Winthrop* (177-86). **#CityonaHill**

M Jan 19: **NO CLASS: MLK Day**

W Jan 21: **William Bradford** (131-56); **Cotton Mather**, "Wonders of the Invisible World" (328-33). **#Plymouth**

F Jan 23: **Sor Juana Ines De La Cruz (ECampus!)**, **Anne Bradstreet**, "Contemplations", "The Flesh and the Spirit", "The Author to Her Book", "Before the Death of One of Her Children", "To My Dear and Loving Husband", "Here Follows Some Verses upon the Burning of our House"...). **#AtlanticPoets**

M Jan 26: **Jonathan Edwards**, "Personal Narrative" (398-408), "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (430-41). **#AngryGod**

II: The Growing Captivity Narrative Genre

W Jan 28: **Rowlandson**, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (256-88). **#Captivity**

F Jan 30: **Rowlandson** (continued discussion), **Cabeza De Vaca** (43-51). **Short Write #1 Due**. **#Captivity**

M Feb 2: **Mary Jemison (eCampus!)** **#Captivity**

W Feb 4: **Elizabeth Ashbridge**, from *Some Account of the Fore Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge, ...Written by her own Hand Many Years Ago* (**eCampus!**) **#Captivity**

III: Enlightenment, Revolution, & Consequences (Readings from both Volumes of the Norton)

F Feb 6: **Crevecoeur**, "From Letter III: What is an American", "From Letter IX: of Charles-Town; Thoughts on Slavery; on Physical Evil; a Melancholy Scene" (605-18). **#Crevecoeur**

M Feb 9: **Franklin**, *The Autobiography: Parts 1 & 2* (481-542). **Short Write #2 Due** **#BFranklin**

W Feb 11: **Paine** (*Common Sense* extracts; *the Crisis: Part 1* (**A**: 641-52)). **#CommonSense**

F Feb 13: **Jefferson**, From *Autobiography & Notes on the State of Virginia* (661-76); **Madison**, "Federalist No. 10" (681-86). **#EarlyRepublic**

M Feb 16: **Philip Freneau & Phillis Wheatley** (**A**: 756-74); **William Cullen Bryant**, "The Prairies" (**B** 126-28). **#EarlyRepublic**

W Feb 18: **Jefferson**, "Chief Logan's Speech" (**A** 448-50), Native American selections from *Notes on the State of Virginia* (**eCampus!**); **Lydia Sigourney**, "Indian Names" (**B** 112-13), "Our Aborigines" (116-17); **Black Hawk** "(349-53); **William Gilmore Simms**, "The Cherokee Embassy" (**eCampus!**). **#NativeViews**

F Feb 20: **Toussaint L'Ouverture** (**eCampus!**), Introduction to *Secret History*, (Sansay 10-55). **Short Write #3 Due!** **#LSansay**

M Feb 23: **Lenora Sansay**, *Secret History; or, the Horrors of St. Domingo* (Letters 1-16: 61-110). **#LSansay**

W Feb 25: **Sansay**, Letters XVII-XXXII (111-54). **#LSansay**

F Feb 27: Midterm Exam

IV: 19th Century American Romanticism & Antebellum Reform Movements

M March 2: **Emerson**, "Nature, Ch. 1" (214-17), "Self Reliance" (269-85). **#RWEmerison**

W March 4: **Whitman**, "Song of Myself": (1330-74). **#SongofMyself**

F March 6: **Whitman**, "Song of Myself" continued, Selections from *Calamus* (1380-82), "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer" (1394). **#SongofMyself**

M March 9: **Thoreau**, *Walden* Chs. 1-3 ["Economy" to "Reading"] (981-1039). **#WaldenPond**

W March 11: **Thoreau**, *Walden* Chs. 4-12 ["Sounds" to "Brute Neighbors"] (1039-1104).
#WaldenPond

F March 13: **Thoreau**, *Walden* Chs. 13-18 ["House-Warming" to "Conclusion"] (1104-1155)
#WaldenPond

M March 16: **Frederick Douglass**, *A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*: Chs. I-IX (1174-1208). **#FDouglass**

W March 18: **Frederick Douglass**, Chs. X-Appendix (1208-1239); **Southern Perspectives (Ecampus!)** **#FDouglass**

F March 20: **Fanny Fern** (907-916); **Emily Dickinson** (See Norton Table of Contents for Page Numbers): 207 [214], 225 [199], 236 [324], 599 [536], 591[465], 788 [709], 1577 [1545] **#Ffern**
#EDickinson **Short Write #4 Due!**

March 23-27: Spring Break!!!

V: The Emergence of American Fiction

M March 30: **Washington Irving**, "Rip Van Winkle" (30-41) **#RipVanWinkle**

W April 1: **William Gilmore Simms**, "The Grayling; or, Murder Will Out" (**Ecampus!**)
#WGSimms

F April 3: **Good Friday: NO CLASS**

M April 6: **Poe**, "Ligeia" (644-653), "The Tell-Tale Heart" (691-95), and "The Black Cat" (695-701) **#EAPoe**

W April 8: **Poe**, Poetry Selection (633-44), "The Purloined Letter" (695-714). **#EAPoe**

F April 10: **Hawthorne**, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" (373-86), "Young Goodman Brown (386-95), "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" (401-09), **Bradford**, "Thomas Morton of Merrymount" (**A**: 144-47). **#NHawthorne**

M April 13: **Melville**, "Benito Cereno" (1526-82). **#BCereno**

W April 15: **Melville**, "Benito Cereno" continued discussion. **#BCereno**

F April 17: **Melville**, "Bartleby the Scrivener" (1483-1509); **James Henry Hammond**, "Mudsill Theory" (**eCampus!**). **#Bartleby**

M April 20: **Rebecca Harding Davis**, "Life in the Iron-Mills" (1706-32) **#IronMills**

Short Write #5 Due!!

VI: The Civil War/Course Conclusion

W April 22:

Robert Montgomery Bird, *Sheppard Lee* Books 1 & 2 (1-98). **#SheppardLee**

F April 24:

Sheppard Lee Books 3-4 (101-250) **#SheppardLee**

M April 27:

Sheppard Lee Books 5-7 (253-408). **#SheppardLee**

W April 29: **Civil War Poetry: A Turn Toward Realism:**

Whitman, "Drum-Taps" and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd (1395-1408)

Melville, "Battle-Pieces" (1583-86)

#CivilWarPoetry

F May 1: Final Exam Review! **Short Write #6 Due!**

May 5: Final Exam: 11:00-1:00