“The use of literature is to afford us a platform from whence we may command a view of our present life, a purchase by which we may move it.”
--Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Circles” (1841)

In the epigraph above, Emerson offers an unusual cost/benefit analysis of reading—literature may “afford us” a “purchase,” a means of leveraging our experience that has the potential to carry us beyond ourselves. Reading in this sense may thus offer two “uses” at once. To read literature critically is to gain a larger knowledge of cultural history; but reading also presents the opportunity for us to see how we understand our place in the world, both how our perspectives have developed to make us who we are, and how those perspectives may evolve in new directions.

This course offers a survey of American literature and literary history, from its beginnings in the early colonial period to the end of the Civil War. Our approach will be at once broadly historical and intimately textual. As we connect our acts of reading to established trends and signposts of American literary history, we will attend also to those social, political, historical, and philosophical factors that invite that history’s ongoing reconsideration. Topics and themes to be addressed will include: colonialism and conquest in the New World; Puritanism and typological hermeneutics; the Enlightenment and the American Revolution; Indigenous voices, land dispossession, and ethnic cleansing; republicanism, liberalism and the rise of individualism; slavery, abolition, and the evolving problematics of race in America; artistic innovation and literary tradition; gender and separate spheres ideology; formal constructions of citizenship and publicity; romance, sentiment, and the rise of the novel; political representation and the politics of canon formation; orthodoxy, dissent, and the sign of “America.”

Required Texts (available at the UTEP bookstore):

Schedule of Readings (to be completed by corresponding date).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lsn.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Aug. 29</td>
<td>Introduction: “What is This Thing Called American Literature?”; Stephen Greenblatt, “Culture” (Blackboard)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2 Aug. 31  **Mapping the Spanish Colonial Imaginary**
“Introduction: Beginnings to 1820” (3-25); Christopher Columbus “Letters” (I. 53-61); Bartolomé de las Casas, “The Destruction of the Indies” (I. 61-66); Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, from “The Relation” (I. 66-75)

3 Sep. 5  **Scenarios of Encounter in British North America**
John Smith, from *The General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles* (I. 105-117); William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation* Book 1, Chapters 1, 4, 7, 9, 10 (I. 125-139); Book 2, Ch. 2 (I. 144-149); excerpt from *Mourt’s Relation* (Blackboard)

4 Sep. 7  **Puritan Poetics, Antinomianism, and the Language of Dissent**

5 Sep. 12  **The Indian Captivity Narrative: Lamentation, Faith, and Restoration**
Mary Rowlandson, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (I. 260-293); “Captivity and Gender,” Selections by Annette Kolodny; Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse; Susan Howe; Louise Erdrich; and Lisa Brooks (I. 294-304)

6 Sep. 14  **The American Enlightenment I: The Representative Man**
Benjamin Franklin, from *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, parts 1 & 2 (I. 429-32; 457-520)

7 Sep. 19  **The American Enlightenment II: Language, Liberty, and Slavery**

8 Sep. 21  **The Coquette, the Rake, and Public Morality**

9 Sep. 26  **Epistololarity, Seduction, and the Novel**
Foster, *The Coquette*, cont’d (I. 823-867)

10 Sep. 28  **Literary Nationalism and the American Gothic I: Call it Sleep**
Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly; Or, the Memoirs of a Sleepwalker*, “To the Public”; chapters 1-8 (1-150)

11 Oct. 3  **The American Gothic, cont’d**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Oct. 10</td>
<td>Race, Resistance, and Abolition (I)</td>
<td>William Apess, “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man” (II. 129-134); David Walker, from <em>David Walker’s Appeal in Four Articles</em> (II. 740-744); Samuel B. Cornish and John B. Russwurm, “To Our Patrons” (II. 744-747); William Lloyd Garrison from <em>The Liberator</em>, “To the Public” (II. 748-750); Sarah Louisa Forten Purvis, “The Slave Girl’s Farewell” (II. 750-752); Angelina E. Grimké, from <em>Appeal to the Christian Women of the South</em> (II. 752-755); James M. Whitfield, “Stanzas for the First of August,” (II. 755-757); Martin R. Delany, “from <em>Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent</em> (II. 757-759)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Oct. 12</td>
<td>Midterm (to be taken on Blackboard)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Oct. 17</td>
<td>Call it Sleep (Redux)</td>
<td>Washington Irving, “Rip Van Winkle” (II. 25-41); William Cullen Bryant, “Thanatopsis” (II. 115-118)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Nov. 2</td>
<td>“NO! in thunder”: Hawthorne and Romance</td>
<td>Herman Melville, “Hawthorne and his Mosses” (II. 1263-1278); Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Custom-House” (II. 380-401)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Nov. 7</td>
<td>The National Romance</td>
<td>Nathaniel Hawthorne, <em>The Scarlet Letter</em>, ch. 1-13 (II. 401-472)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Nov. 9</td>
<td>The National Romance, cont’d</td>
<td>Hawthorne, <em>The Scarlet Letter</em>, cont’d, ch. 14-end (II. 472-523)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Nov. 14</td>
<td>Gender, Print, and the Public Sphere</td>
<td>“Women’s Rights and Women Writing” (II. 666-667); Sarah Louisa Forten Purvis, “[We Are Thy Sisters,]” (II. 668); Catherine E. Beecher, <em>From A Treatise on Domestic Economy</em> (II. 669-671); Elizabeth Cady Stanton, <em>History of Woman Suffrage</em> (II. 672-676); Sojourner Truth, “Speech to the Women’s Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, 1851” (II. 676-677);</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Caroline Stansbury Kirkland, From A New Home—Who’ll Follow? (II. 677-681); Harriet Farley, From Suicide (II. 681-685); Fanny Fern, “Aunt Hetty on Matrimony” (II. 686-687), “‘Fresh Leaves, by Fanny Fern,’” (II. 688-689), “A Law More Nice Than Just,” (II. 689-690); [Recommended: Margaret Fuller, from “The Great Lawsuit: MAN versus MEN. WOMAN versus WOMEN” (II. 693-731)]

24 Nov. 16 Race, Resistance, and Abolition (II)
Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written By Himself (II. 1063-1133); Margaret Fuller, “Review” (731-733)

25 Nov. 21 Race, Gender, and the Politics of Sentiment
Harriet Jacobs, from Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself (II. 860-909)

26 Nov. 21 Thanksgiving – University Closed

27 Nov. 30 Slavery, Mutiny, and the Echoes of St. Domingue
Herman Melville, Benito Cereno (II. 1364-1397)

28 Dec. 5 Follow Your Leader
Melville, Benito Cereno, cont’d. (1397-1421)

29 Dec. 7 Poésie Sui Generis
Emily Dickinson, all selections (1507-1548)

29 Dec. 7 Births, Tragedies, and Final Reckonings
Walt Whitman, “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” (II. 1237-1243)

Dec 8 Final Papers Due via Blackboard, 11:59 p.m.

A Final Exam will be administered on a date and time to be announced by the University.

Course Requirements:

Reading of required texts. The reading load for this course is substantial; it is therefore important that you stay current in your work. Additionally, many of these texts can be quite challenging to read; to really understand them, you will need to read them more than once. As Thoreau said, reading “in a high sense” is “not that which lulls us as a luxury and suffers the nobler faculties to sleep the while, but what we have to stand on tiptoe to read and devote our most alert and wakeful hours to” (Walden, “Reading”). Let us be readers on Thoreau’s model. Practically speaking, this means re-reading, underlining, making marginal notes, writing provocative questions and observations to bring with you to class, and actively connecting ideas and techniques between the texts we read.

Attendance and Participation (10%): Although I will lecture frequently, your ongoing participation is vital to your learning and to the success of the course for all. Come to our sessions prepared to share your questions and observations; the more involved you are on a daily basis, the more you will learn and
enjoy. Faithful and on-time attendance is an important component of this, and is expected. Please be advised that, upon your sixth unexcused absence, you will be at risk either being dropped from the course (i.e., prior to the University drop deadline of November 3rd), or failing the course outright (after November 3rd). Do not assume that I will drop you myself prior to the deadline; doing so is your responsibility. In keeping with standard departmental policy, absences are only excusable in cases of documented family or medical emergency.

**Short Critical Essays** (30%): Each student will sign up to write two short essays (15% each) over the course of the session. A sign-up sheet for these essays will be circulated during the second class session. For each, you will write a short essay (4-5 pages, typed, double-spaced, 12 pt.) in which you offer a critical analysis of a text from our readings. Outside sources are discouraged. Unlike, say, a book review in a newspaper or magazine (in which a critic offers an aesthetic judgment about the quality of a given work—that is, whether it is “good” or “bad”), a critical analysis is an exercise in close reading that builds claims from evidence. I want you to show us how you understand the significance of your chosen text by developing an interesting interpretive idea through the analysis and discussion of a few important and carefully selected passages. In these papers, you must:

- **Provide a title.** Titles of academic essays should express the central thrust of your argument, and should pique interest in the paper that follows.
- **Introduce** the topic under review. Academic essays use argument as a tool of intellectual discovery. What do you want to investigate? What issues have you identified that beg closer scrutiny? Offer at least a provisional thesis statement that announces the argumentative work of the essay, and serves as a point of departure for your discussion.
- **Incorporate** (a minimum of) three quotations. These quoted passages will be the centerpieces of your paper, the evidence you offer for your interpretation and analysis. If you find it helpful to do so, you are welcome to include quotations from, or references to, other texts from the syllabus we’ve explored already. But these should be offered in the service of your interpretation of the principal text under review.
- **Come to a final reckoning** about the meaning and significance of the particular passages you’ve chosen to discuss. That is, your paper will use these quoted “parts” to offer us a new perspective on the “whole.” What can a reader gain by seeing the text as you see it? How do the elements you’ve identified correspond to the evolving issues and questions we’ve been developing in class?
- **In addition to the executing** the mechanics enumerated above, strong essays will advance sophisticated claims in compelling, well-crafted prose that is free of grammatical, spelling, syntactical, and typographical errors.

MLA-style parenthetical documentation, and a properly-formatted “Works Cited List” should be provided. For MLA citation guidelines, consult the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th Edition; a helpful online guide is available here: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/). Please note that no late work will be accepted.

**Final Paper** (30%): A longer Term Paper (7-8 pages) will be due on Friday, December 2nd. As with your self-appointed deadlines above, this date is firm. I will provide more information on this as the class unfolds, but you may write on any topic that bears relevantly on our work in the course. I will also have suggestions for you, depending on your interests. Please feel free to come talk to me during my office hours to help develop ideas. MLA bibliographical guidelines are to be followed.

**Midterm & Final Examinations** (15%; 15%): Details to follow.
Statement on Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty. Plagiarism, or submitting someone (or something) else’s work under your own name, are forms of academic fraud, and I take it very seriously. You will not receive credit for any work that has been plagiarized or for writing that was generated by AI; moreover, any work suspected of academic fraud may be forwarded, as a matter of University Policy, to the Office of the Dean of Students for adjudication. The consequences of academic dishonesty can be very serious, resulting in reduced course grades, course failures, and sometimes in academic suspension. If you are found to have submitted plagiarized work, or writing generated by Chat GPT, I will not write a letter of recommendation for you for future professional use. All that said, I completely understand that citing sources properly can be confusing at times! If you’re ever in doubt, just ask me.

Policy on Cell Phones and Electronic Devices:
Smartphones and ill-used electronic devices provide unwelcome distractions to you, me, and your classmates. Out of respect for others, cell phones are to be turned off or silenced during class. Although some of you may have electronic text editions of titles from the syllabus on, say, a kindle app, I ask you to recognize that cell phones are woefully inadequate reading devices for serious intellectual work in a classroom setting. If I see you looking at your phone or texting, or using a tablet or laptop for anything other than legitimate class purposes (e.g., facebook, twitter, instagram, and so on), I may ask you to leave and will mark you as absent for that day. If you have reason to expect an emergency phone call, please inform me of this before class begins and leave your phone on vibrate.

COVID Protocols:
If you are exposed to someone with COVID, please get tested; if you develop symptoms, please stay at home, get tested, and let me know via email. I promise to do what I can to keep you up to date with our course via Zoom; absences for reason of voluntary quarantine following positive COVID will be fully excused. For more information on COVID at UTEP, including an extensive and regularly-updated FAQ, please click here.

UTEP Land Acknowledgment Statement:
As members of the University of Texas at El Paso community, we acknowledge that we are meeting on unceded Indigenous land. We would like to recognize and pay our respects to the Indigenous people with long ties to the immediate region: Lipan Apache, Mescalero Apache, Piro, Manso, Suma, Jumano, Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, Piro/Manso/Tiwa Indian Tribe of the Pueblo of San Juan de Guadalupe, and Tortugas Pueblo. We also acknowledge the nations whose territories include present day Texas: the Carrizo & Comecrudo, Coahuiltecan, Caddo, Tonkawa, Comanche, Alabama-Coushatta, Kickapoo, and the peoples of Chihuahua and northern Mexico from whom most/many of our students descend, such as the Rarámuri, Tepehuan, Wixarrika and Nahuatlaca peoples. Finally, we recognize all of the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories here in Paso del Norte, on Turtle Island. The University of Texas at El Paso honors your history and cultures and we seek greater awareness of the myriad ways in which your legacy can guide us in fruitful partnerships and mutually fulfilling relationships.