



**American Non-Fiction and Poetry to 1900:
Literatures of Exploration, Captivity, and Encounter (ENGL 4316; CRN 27888)**

**Dr. Gunn
M/W/F 11:30 – 12:20, Hudspeth 300**

This course thematizes early American literatures of exploration, captivity, and encounter vis-à-vis two major recent critical trends that have remapped the topographies of Americanist scholarship. On one hand, we will investigate what is often referred to as “spatial turn” in Americanist historiography—a broad critical orientation that encompasses transnational, transatlantic, hemispheric, and regionalist approaches to critical studies that aspires to supplant, or at least to modify, the traditional nation-state model of cultural studies that is foundational to the field. On the other, we will explore the critical tools of performance studies—particularly as refracted through studies of indigenous cultural practices and embodied discourse—and apply the methods and perspectives of each to a wide range of fascinating texts and performance modes that document Euro-American encounter with Native America and with the North American wilderness. In this particular survey of American non-fiction and poetry, our goal will be to uncover and follow the discursive traffic between literature, bodies, economies, scenarios of performance, and modes of representation that contribute to the evolving storylines of early America. Other topics include: marvelous honeybees and unkillable grizzly bears; cannibalism, plagues, monsters, and invisible bullets; Welsh Indians (and other racial fantasies); romantic dreams and doomed undertakings; sign language, embodied oratory, and Native resistance; love and loss; conquest and rebellion; massacres, starvation, suicide, and the importance of pretending to know what you’re doing. Writers to be discussed include: Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca; Gaspar Perez de Villagrà; Thomas Harriot; Garcilaso de la Vega (“El Inca”); Mary Rowlandson; Olaudah Equiano; Meriwether Lewis; John Dunn Hunter; William Cullen Bryant, Zitkala-Sa, et.al.