

The University of Texas at El Paso

Department of English

**American Literature to 1865**  
**English 3311 (CRN: 11110)**  
 T/R, 12:00 – 1:20, Huds 300

Fall 2016  
 Dr. Robert Gunn  
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Office Hrs: M/W 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.  
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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 readings to established trends of American literary history, we will attend also to those social, political, historical, and philosophical factors which beg that history's ongoing redefinition. Topics and themes to be addressed will include: colonialism and conquest in the New World; Puritanism and the typology of mission; the Enlightenment and the American Revolution; 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):

*The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, Ed. Nina Baym, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition (Vols. A & B).  
 Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly* (Penguin)  
 Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (Norton Critical Edition)

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

<b>Lsn.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Assignment</b>
1	Aug. 23	Introduction: "Historiographies of America and its Literatures"; Stephen Greenblatt, "Culture" (Blackboard)
2	Aug. 25	<b>Mapping the Colonial Imaginary</b> "Literature to 1700" (3-18); Christopher Columbus "Letters" (I. 34-38); Bartolomé de las Casas, "Devastation of the Indies" (38-42); Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, from <i>La Relación</i> (I. 43-51); "First Encounters" Selections (I. 52-71)
3	Aug. 28	<b>Rascality and Religiosity in English North America</b> John Smith, from <i>The General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles</i> (I. 81-93); William Bradford, <i>Of Plymouth Plantation</i> Book 1, Chapters 1, 4, 7, 9, 10 (I. 121-38); excerpts from book II (I. 138-48); excerpt from <i>Mourt's Relation</i> (Blackboard); John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" (I. 165-77)
4	Sep. 1	<b>Puritan Poetics, Antinomianism, and the Language of Dissent</b> Anne Bradstreet, selections (I. 207-230); Michael Wigglesworth, from "The Day of Doom" (I. 238-55); Excerpt from John Winthrop, "The Journal of John Winthrop" (I. 177-86)
5	Sep. 6	<b>The Indian Captivity Narrative: Lamentation, Faith, and Restoration</b> Mary Rowlandson, <i>A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson</i> (I. 256-288)

- 6 Sep. 8 **The American Enlightenment I: The Representative Man & Gender Equality**  
Benjamin Franklin, from *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, parts 1 & 2 (I. 480-542)
- 7 Sep. 13 **The American Enlightenment II: Language, Liberty, and Slavery**  
Thomas Paine, from *Common Sense* (I. 649-47), from “The Crisis, No. 1” (I. 647-53), from *The Age of Reason* (I. 653-59); Thomas Jefferson, from *Autobiography*, “The Declaration of Independence” (I. 659-67, Excerpts from *Notes on the State of Virginia* [On Phillis Wheatley, “Query XIV. Laws”] (I. 669-71); Phillis Wheatley, poems and letters (I. 763-774)
- 8 Sep. 15 **Literary Nationalism and the American Gothic: Call it Sleep**  
Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly; Or, the Memoirs of a Sleepwalker*, “To the Public”; chapters 1-10 (1-103)
- 9 Sep. 20 **The American Gothic, cont’d**  
C. B. Brown, *Edgar Huntly*, cont’d., ch-12-end (104-285)
- 10 Sep. 22 Class Cancelled
- 11 Sep. 27 **Race, Resistance, and Abolition (I)**  
“Native Americans: Contact and Conflict”: Speeches by Pontiac, Samson Occom, Chief Logan, Red Jacket, Tecumseh (II. 442-455); David Walker, from *David Walker’s Appeal in Four Articles* (II. 791-95); William Lloyd Garrison from *The Liberator*, “To the Public” (II. 795-97); Angelina E. Grimké, from *Appeal to the Christian Women of the South* (II. 798-800)
- 12 Sep. 29 **Call it Sleep (Redux)**  
Washington Irving, “The Author’s Account of *Himself*”, “Rip Van Winkle” (II. 25-41); William Cullen Bryant, “Thanatopsis” (II. 121-24)
- 13 Oct. 4 **American Gothic II: Dark Obsessions**  
Edgar Allan Poe (II. 625-43), “The Raven” (II. 637-40), “The Philosophy of Composition” (II. 719-27); “The Fall of the House of Usher” (II. 654-67)
- 14 Oct. 6 **MIDTERM**
- 15 Oct. 11 **American Romanticism I: Emersonian Individualism**  
Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*, Introduction & ch. 1 (II. 211-17), “The American Scholar” (II. 243-56); “Self-Reliance” (II. 269-86)
- 16 Oct. 13 **Poet of the Democratic Self**  
Walt Whitman, (II. 1311-14), “Song of Myself” (II. 1330-74), “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” (1383-87); Fanny Fern, “Leaves of Grass” (II. 909-11)
- 17 Oct. 18 **Politics, Retreat, and the American Romantic Landscape**  
Henry David Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government” (II. 961-79) from *Walden*, “Where I Lived and What I Lived For” (II. 1023-33), “Reading” (II. 1034-39), “Conclusion” (II. 1147-55); John L. O’Sullivan (Jane McManus), from “Annexation” (II. 1298-99)

- 18 Oct. 20 **Poesis Sui Generis**  
Emily Dickinson, all selections (1659-1704)
- 19 Oct. 25 **“NO! in thunder”:** **Hawthorne and Romance**  
Herman Melville, “Hawthorne and his Mosses” (II. 1427-39); Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Custom-House” (II. 450-76)
- 20 Oct. 27 **The National Romance**  
Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, ch. 1-13 (II. 476-542)
- 21 Nov. 1 **The National Romance, cont’d**  
Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, cont’d, ch. 14-end (II. 542-594)
- 22 Nov. 3 **Gender, Print, and the Public Sphere**  
Margaret Fuller, from “The Great Lawsuit: MAN *versus* MEN. WOMAN *versus* WOMEN” (II. 740-77); Fanny Fern, “Aunt Hetty on Matrimony” (II. 905-08), “Hungry Husbands,” (II. 908), “Male Criticism on Ladies’ Books,” (II. 912), ““Fresh Leaves, by Fanny Fern,”” (II. 913-14), “A Law More Nice Than Just,” (II. 914-15)
- 23 Nov. 8 **Race, Resistance, and Abolition (II)**  
Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written By Himself* (II. 1170-1239)
- 24 Nov. 10 **Race, Gender, and the Politics of Sentiment**  
Harriet Jacobs, from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself* (II. 920-42)
- 25 Nov. 15 **“Call Me Ishmael”**  
Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, ch. 1-29 (6-114)
- Nov. 17 **“The Whiteness of the Whale”;** **Or, Reading Through Skins**  
Melville, *Moby-Dick*, cont’d, ch. 30-71 (114-254)
- 26 Nov. 22 **American Bodies Politic/Body Politics**  
Melville, *Moby-Dick*, cont’d, ch. 72-99 (254-336)
- 27 Nov. 24 **THANKSGIVING**
- 28 Nov. 29 **Of Fire, Water, and Fate**  
Melville, *Moby-Dick*, cont’d, ch. 100-Epilogue (337-427)
- 29 Dec. 1 **Births, Tragedies, and Final Reckonings**  
Walt Whitman, “Out of the Cradle, Endlessly Rocking” (II. 1387-92), “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” (II. 1402-08)
- Dec. 2 Final Papers Due in my office box by 5:00 p.m.**

**A Final Exam will be administered on Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, between 1:00 and 3:45 p.m..**

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 either be dropped from the course (i.e., prior to the University drop deadline of October 28<sup>th</sup>), or will fail the course (after October 28<sup>th</sup>). 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 (3-4 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 anticipates 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*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition; a helpful online guide is available here: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>. Please note that no late work will be accepted.

**Final Paper** (20%): A longer Term Paper (7-8 pages) will be due on Friday, Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>. 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** (20%; 20%): Details to follow.

**Plagiarism.** This is a form of academic fraud, and I take it very seriously. You will not receive credit for any work that has been plagiarized; moreover, any work suspected of plagiarism will be forwarded, as a matter of official University Policy, to the Office of the Dean of Students for adjudication. The consequences of plagiarism can be very serious, resulting in reduced course grades, course failures, and sometimes in academic suspension. I understand, though, that citing sources properly can be confusing at times; if you’re ever in doubt, just ask me.

**Cell Phone Policy:** No cell phones in class; please silence them and put them away for the duration of our class sessions. 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. Other cell phone uses are likewise not permitted; they are a distraction to all, and their use (however habitual, however addicting—believe me, I get it) is disrespectful to your fellow students and to me. If I see you texting, checking your email, &c., I will ask you to leave and mark you as absent for the day. If you have reason to anticipate an emergency phone call (say, a sick child or relative that may require you to excuse yourself during class), please inform me before class begins.