The University of Texas at El Paso Department of English

**American Non-Fiction and Poetry to 1900:**
**Literatures of Conquest, Captivity, and Transformation**
**English 4316 (CRN: 27437)**
T/R 3:00 – 4:20 p.m., Hudspeth

Spring 2025

Office Hrs: T/R 9:00-10:30 a.m.; and otherwise via appointment (including Zoom)

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This course thematizes early American literatures of conquest, captivity, and transformation vis-à-vis two major recent critical trends in American Studies. On one hand, we will investigate what is often referred to as "spatial turn" in Americanist scholarship—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 and African American 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, scenarios of enslavement; and explorations of the North American wilderness. Our goal will be to uncover and follow the storylines that traffic between literature, bodies, economies, scenarios of performance, settings of encounter, and archival remainders that contribute to the evolving cultural history of early America. Other topics include: marvelous honeybees and un-killable grizzly bears; cannibalism, plagues, monsters, and invisible bullets; Welsh Indians (and other racial fantasies); pirates, witchcraft, and calamities at sea; romantic dreams and doomed undertakings; prophetic visions and visionary madness; daring crimes and miraculous escapes; enslavement and liberation; massacres, starvation, suicide, and the enduring importance of pretending to know what you're doing.

Required Texts (available at UTEP Bookstore):

Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition* (Penguin Classics) ISBN: 9780142437070

Thomas Harriot, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (Dover) ISBN: 9780486210926

Exquemelin, Alexander O. *The Buccaneers of America*. New York: Dover, 2000. ISBN: 9780486409665

Equiano, Olaudah. *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*. 1789. Ed. Vincent Carretta. New York: Penguin Classics, 2003. ISBN: 0142437166

Susan Shelby Magoffin, *Down the Santa Fe Trail and into Mexico*, Ed. Stella M. Drumm (U of Nebraska P) ISBN: 0803281161

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Ed. Jean Fagin Yellin (Harvard-Belknap) ISBN: 0674002717

**Schedule of Readings** (to be completed by corresponding date). Items marked "(B)" will be placed, in .pdf format, on the course Blackboard site for you to download and/or print:

| Lsn. | Date | Assignment |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Jan. 21 | **Histories, Archives, and Performance**<br>Introductions. Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West"/*The Couple in the Cage: A Guatinaui Odyssey* (Coco Fusco and Paula Heredia) |
| 2 | Jan. 23 | **Bodies, Texts, and Archives of "the Contact Zone"**<br>Walt Whitman, from *Democratic Vistas*, "Prayer of Columbus" (B); Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone" (B); Diana Taylor, "Acts of Transfer" (B) |
| 3 | Jan. 28 | **Columbus for "Future Designers, Comprehenders"**<br>Christopher Columbus, from the *Diario* (B); Letter to Luis de Santangel/Gabriel Sánchez (B) |
| 4 | Jan. 30 | **Castaways, Conversion, and Hospitality**<br>Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition* (aka, *La Relación*; *Naufragios* (1-48) |
| 5 | Feb. 4 | Cabeza de Vaca, cont'd (48-end) |
| 6 | Feb. 6 | **Exploration and Capitalism**<br>Cabeza de Vaca, cont'd; Thomas Harriot, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Lands Found in Virginia* (Introduction; 1-33) |
| 7 | Feb. 11 | **Invisible Bullets and Miraculous Plagues**<br>Harriot, cont'd (34-end) |
| 8 | Feb. 13 | **"Savage" Transformations and Saving Graces**<br>Harriot, cont'd; Garcilaso de La Vega (the Inca), from *La Florida* (B); John Smith, from *Generall Historie of Virginia*" (B) |
| 9 | Feb. 18 | **American Epic: Constructing the Conquest of New Mexico**<br>*From* Gaspar Perez de Villagrá, from *The History of New Mexico* (through Canto XV) (B) |
| 10 | Feb. 20 | **Oñate's Legacies**<br>Villagrá, cont'd. (Canto XV-end); John Sherrill Houser, "The Equestrian" |
| 11 | Feb. 25 | **The Prototypical Captivity Narrative**<br>Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (B) |
| 12 | Feb. 27 | Rowlandson, cont'd (B) |
| | **Feb. 28** | **Paper #1 Assignment Due on Blackboard, 11:59 p.m.** |

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| 13 | Mar. 4 | **Pirates of the Caribbean**<br>Alexander O. Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America* (1-118) |
| 14 | Mar. 6 | **Outlaw Jurisdictions and "States of Exception"**<br>Exquemelin, cont'd. (119-end) |
| **Mar. 10-14** | | **SPRING BREAK** |
| 15 | Mar. 18 | **Midterm** |
| 16 | Mar. 20 | **Captivity, Testimony, Enslavement**<br>Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* (chaps. I-IV) |
| 17 | Mar. 25 | **British Subjects and Atlantic Personhood**<br>Equiano, cont'd (through chapter VIII) |
| 18 | Mar. 27 | **Olaudah Equiano or Gustavas Vassa?**<br>Equiano, cont'd (chapter IX-end) |
| 19 | Apr. 1 | **Nationalist Explorations**<br>*The Journals of Lewis and Clark* (selections) (B) |
| 20 | Apr. 3 | **Of Memory and Melancholia**<br>*The Journals of Lewis and Clark*, cont'd; letters from Jefferson, et. al., on the occasion of the death of Meriwether Lewis (B) |
| 21 | Apr. 8 | **Indigenous Graveyards and the Plight of Romantic Feeling**<br>Philip Freneau, "The Indian Burial Ground," (B); William Cullen Bryant, "Thanatopsis" (B); William Cullen Bryant, "The Prairies" (B); Lydia Maria Child, *from* "Letters from New York" (Letter XXXVI) (B) |
| 22 | Apr. 10 | **Of Martyrdom and Melancholia**<br>Thomas Gray, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (B) |
| | **Apr. 11** | **Paper #2 Assignment Due on Blackboard, 11:59 p.m.** |
| 23 | Apr. 15 | **Gender, Trade on the Santa Fe Trail, and the U.S./Mexico War**<br>Susan Shelby Magoffin, *Down the Santa Fe Trail and into Mexico* (1-69 [through "*Friday morning 31st of July*"]) |
| 24 | Apr. 17 | Magoffin, cont'd (70-126) |
| 25 | Apr. 22 | Magoffin, cont'd (70-126) |
| 26 | Apr. 24 | **"No Notice Gave She, But a Change"** |

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| | | Emily Dickinson, selected poems (B) |
| 27 | Apr. 29 | **Slavery, Sentiment, and the Loophole of Captivity**<br>Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) (1-68) |
| 28 | May 1 | Jacobs, cont'd (76-142) |
| 29 | May 6 | Jacobs cont'd (143-203) |
| 30 | May 8 | Last Day of Class: Re-Dialing the Compass |
| | **May 9** | **Paper #3 Assignment Due on 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 offer informal lectures frequently, this is primarily a discussion-based class; therefore, 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. If you do not have your text with you, you are not prepared to participate in class. Faithful and on-time attendance is an important component of our work, and is expected. Please be advised that, upon your sixth unexcused absence, you may be dropped from the course (i.e., prior to the University drop deadline of April 4th —DO NOT assume I will drop you automatically; withdrawing is your responsibility), or will fail the course (after April 4th). In keeping with standard departmental policy, absences are only excusable in cases of documented family or medical emergency.

**Critical Essays** (20%; 20%; 20%): Over the course of the semester, students will write three medium-length critical essays (5-6 pages), which will be due on February 28th, April 11th, and May 9th. More details on these assignments will be provided as the class unfolds.

**In-Class Presentations** (10%): Each student will offer, in singles or in pairs, a short in-class presentation (10 minutes) on a given day's reading assignment; these presentations are intended to provide a gateway into discussion of the text and are encouraged to enlist relevant information from the author's biography and tribal background. Students will sign up for their preferred presentation dates during the second week of class.

**Midterm Examination & Final Examinations** (10%; 10%): Details to follow.

**Statement on Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty.** I completely understand that citing sources properly can be confusing at times, and I recognize that, increasingly, A.I. is being integrated into our computing tasks—if you're ever in doubt about these things, just ask me. For this class, I *implore* you to resist assigning A.I. to perform cognitive tasks. A.I. degrades the core educational task of humanistic inquiry: learning to confront and work through complexity and difficulty in the world. As Ted Chiang has argued eloquently, "the task that generative A.I. has been most successful at is lowering our expectations, both of the things we read and of ourselves when we write anything for others to read. It is a fundamentally dehumanizing technology because it treats us s less than what we are: creators and apprehenders of meaning. It reduces the amount of intention in the world." [1]

Plagiarism, or submitting someone (or something) else's work under your own name, are forms of academic dishonesty, and I take it very seriously. Please be advised that you will not receive credit for any work that has been plagiarized or for writing that was generated by A.I.; 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 or expulsion. In addition, i you are found to have submitted plagiarized work, or writing generated by a language-based generative A.I. model like Chat GPT, I will not write a letter of recommendation for you for future professional use.

**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., TikTok, twitter, twitch, 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

[1] Ted Chiang, "Why A.I. Isn't Going to Make Art," *The New Yorker* (August 24, 2024). https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-weekend-essay/why-ai-isnt-going-to-make-art

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