

The University of Texas at El Paso

Department of English

English 5305 (CRN: 18579)
American Literature to 1800:

Parallax Views: Re-Thinking Time, Space, and Perspective in Early American Literature

Mondays, 6:00 – 8:50 p.m., Hudspeth 213

Fall 2021

[Office Hrs: M/W, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., in person/Zoom & otherwise by Zoom appt.](#)

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“There is a Post-Script in Emerson’s self-school’d hand, exclamatory ending upon a long Quill-crunching Stop. ‘Time is the Space that may not be seen.—’

(‘Pon which the Rev’d cannot refrain from commenting, ‘He means, that out of Mercy, we are blind as to Time—for we could not bear to contemplate what lies at its heart.’)”

--Thomas Pynchon, *Mason & Dixon* (1997)

This course explores the relays between literary culture, modes of timekeeping and temporal orientation, and the construction of colonial and indigenous space in early America. Prompting this survey of early American literatures is the recent “temporal turn” in American Studies—a highly influential strain of scholarship that has its roots in excavations of “deep time” beyond the modern temporal schemes of empire and nationhood, and which has been perhaps most impactful in its re-orientation of 19th-Century Americanist literary studies. Our approach, by contrast, will work both earlier and later, attending to the multiple, non-overlapping modes of time orientation and time discipline in early literatures of encounter prior to its period of standardization in the 19th Century, and later, with the aid of two contemporary novelists who have sought to reimagine the fictional field of early American spatial representation over the last 30 years. Guiding our approach will be a number of key works of contemporary critical scholarship. Why, exactly, are so many early American writers, explorers, and commentators so preoccupied with timekeeping? And why do so many contemporary scholars and writers feel so compelled to return to this particular cultural, social, and technological concern? How might renewed critical attention to the multiple forms of temporal orientation within the literatures of early America lead us to reimagine the spaces of early American encounter? And how might this project lead us to reevaluate the worlds from which the early American novel emerges at the end of the 18th Century?

Required Texts:

Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *The Narrative of Cabeza de Vaca*, Ed. Rolena Adorno and Patrick Charles Pautz (U of Nebraska Press) ISBN: 9780803264168

Brown, Charles Brockden, *Ormond; Or, the Secret Witness* (Broadview) ISBN: 9781551110912

Crèvecoeur, J. Hector St. John, *Letters from an American Farmer and Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America*, Ed. Albert Stone (Penguin Classics) ISBN: 978-0140390063

Equiano, Olaudah. *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*, Ed. Vincent Carretta (Penguin Classics). ISBN: 0142437166

Foster, Hannah Webster, *The Coquette, & the Boarding School*, Ed. Bryan Waterman (Norton Critical Edition) ISBN: 9780393931679
 Lalami, Laila, *The Moor's Account* (Vintage) ISBN: 9780307911674
 Harriot, Thomas. *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (Dover) ISBN: 9780486210926
 Pynchon, Thomas. *Mason & Dixon* New York: Henry Holt-Picador, 2004. ISBN: 0312423209

Schedule of Readings (to be completed by corresponding date); "(B)" designates an item that will be posted to Blackboard.

Ses.	Date	Assignment
1	Aug. 23	Introductions. Barry Lopez, "The Stone Horse" (handout)
2	Aug. 30	Temporal Orientations Wai Chee Dimock, "Deep Time: American Literature and World History" <i>ALH</i> (B); Sandra Gustafson, "What's in a Date? Temporalities of Early American Literature" <i>PMLA</i> (B); Dana Luciano, "The Inhuman Anthropocene," <i>Aivdly</i> (B); Ian Bartky, "What a Difference a Day Makes," from <i>One Time Fits All</i> (B); Alexis McCrossen, "Unveiling the Jeweler's Clock," from <i>Marking Modern Times</i> (B); Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone" (B)
3	Sep. 6	LABOR DAY – NO CLASSES
3	Sep. 13	Castaways, Outcasts, and Indigenous Transits <u>Primary</u> : Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, <i>Chronicle of the Narváez Expedition</i> (a.k.a., <i>The Relation, Naufragios</i>) (1542); Garcilaso de la Vega (The Inca), from <i>La Florida</i> (in Sayre, ed., 59-82) (1605); <u>Secondary</u> : Rolena Adorno, "The Negotiation of Fear in Cabeza de Vaca's <i>Naufragios</i> " (B); Nan Goodman, "Mercantilism and Cultural Difference in Cabeza de Vaca's <i>Relacion</i> " (B)
4	Sep. 20	Imperial Chronotopes and Indigenous Spaces: Hawikku <u>Primary</u> : (Document 1): Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, "Letter to the King," October 20, 1541, <i>Documents of the Coronado Expedition, 1539-1542: 'They Were Not Familiar with His Majesty, nor Did They Wish to be His Subjects,'</i> Ed. and Trans., Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005); (Document 6): The Viceroy's Instructions to Fray Marcos de Niza, November 1538, and Narrative Account by Fray Marcos de Niza, August 26, 1539," <i>Documents of the Coronado Expedition</i> ; (Document 19): Coronado, "Letter to the Viceroy," August 3, 1540; (Document 28): Pedro de Castañeda de Nájera "La Relación de la Jornada de Cíbola," <i>Documents of the Coronado Expedition</i> ; Edmund J. Ladd, "Zuni on the Day the Men in Metal Arrived," <i>The Coronado Expedition to Tierra Nueva: The 1540-1542</i>

Route Across the Southwest, Ed. Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 1997) **N.b.** The above texts are all short, and are available through UTEP's Library as electronic books; Fray Francisco de Escobar's Diary of the Oñate Expedition to California, 1605," in *Don Juan De Oñate: Colonizer of New Mexico*, Ed. George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey (Albuquerque, NM: University of Mexico Press, 1953) (B)

Secondary: Mark Rifkin, from *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Duke UP) (B)

5 Sep. 27 **Revisionist Fictional Historiography**
Primary: Laila Lalami, *The Moor's Account*

6 Oct. 4 **Invisible Bullets: Art, Science, and Magic in Virginia**
Primary: Thomas Harriot, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*

(Read ahead in Pynchon)

Secondary: Ralph Bauer, "Of New Worlds and Old Words: Cultural Geography and the Linguistic Discovery of America" (B)

7 Oct. 11 **Class Cancelled – Read ahead in Pynchon!**

8 Oct. 18 **What, Where, and When is an American?**
Primary: J. Hector St. John Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer*

Secondary: Jennifer Schell, "Figurative Surveying: National Space and the Nantucket Chapter of J. Hector St. John Crèvecoeur's "Letters from an American Farmer," *Early American Literature* 43.3 (2008): 581-604; Dennis Moore, "Satire, Inoculation, and Crèvecoeur's Letters Concerning the English Nation: New Evidence from the Archives," *Early American Literature* 46.1 (2011): 157-64.

9 Oct. 25 **Early America, Deterritorialized and Remixed**
Primary: Thomas Pynchon, *Mason & Dixon* (1-370)

Secondary: Christy L. Burns, "Postmodern Historiography: Politics and the Parallaxic Method in Thomas Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon*" *Postmodern Culture* 14.1 (September 2003)

10 Nov. 1 Pynchon, *Mason & Dixon* (371-end)

Secondary: Angie Calcaterra, "Locating American Indians along William Byrd's *History of the Dividing Line*," *Early American Literature* 46.2 (2011): 233-261. (recommended)

11 Nov. 8 **Captivity, Enslavement, and Placelessness in the Atlantic Zone**
Primary: Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*

Secondary: Michael Wiley, "Consuming Africa: Geography and Identity in Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*," *Studies in Romanticism* 44.2 (Summer 2005): 165-179; Vincent Carretta, "Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa? New Light on an Eighteenth-Century Question of Identity" *Slavery and Abolition* 20.3 (Dec. 1999): 96-105.

12 Nov. 15 **Parallax Epistolarities: Gender and the Space of Romantic Abjection**

Primary: Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette*

Secondary: [revised, now from *NCE*] Anonymous, "A modern Coquette's account of herself" (265-66); Anonymous, for the *Massachusetts Gazette*, "On Coquetry (266-269); The Letters of Elizabeth Whitman to Joel Barlow, 1779-1783 (269-300); Inventory of Whitman's Belongings on Her Death" 300); Bryan Waterman, "The Elizabeth Whitman Paper Trail" (302-307); Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *from* Domesticating 'Virtue': Coquettes and Revolutionaries in Young America" (345-353); Claire C. Pettengill, [Female Friendship in Foster's Novels] (353-363); Julia A. Stern, [Live Burial and the Tyrannies of Voice in *The Coquette*] (363-378); Gillian Brown, *From Consent, Coquetry, and Consequences* (378-394)

Final Paper Prospectus Due

13 Nov. 22 **Conspiracy, Contagion, and Revolutionary Identities in the Atlantic World**

Primary: Charles Brockden Brown, *Ormond; Or, the Secret Witness* (1799)

Secondary: Kristin M. Comment, "Charles Brockden Brown's *Ormond* and Lesbian Possibility in the Early Republic," *Early American Literature* 40.1 (2005): 57-78; Michael Drexler and Ed White, "Secret Witness; Or, the Fantasy Structure of Republicanism," *Early American Literature* 44.2 (2009): 333-363

Nov. 25 THANKSGIVING

14 Nov. 29 Final Project Presentations

Final Seminar Papers will be due via Blackboard on Monday, December 13th, at 5:00 p.m.

Course Requirements:

Class Participation (20%): Although I will offer short lectures occasionally to provide historical and cultural context, this is primarily a discussion-based seminar. Your active and ongoing participation in the course is therefore essential to its overall success; all students are encouraged and expected to contribute to class on a daily basis. This requires that you come well-prepared for every class with observations, questions, and comments you have formulated in advance (a practice that will be assisted as a matter of course by the reading journal component; see below); this also means listening attentively to the comments of your fellow seminarians, and engaging their ideas in serious and productive ways. Please be advised that the reading assignments for this class are extensive, and will

take you several hours to read; it is your responsibility to have read all assigned materials thoughtfully prior to class, so be sure to budget your time carefully.

Online Reading Journal (20%, graded cumulatively): Each student will be required to post a one-page (roughly 250-300 words) reading journal entry each week under the “Discussion” section of our course Blackboard site. Entries must be posted by 3:00 p.m. every Monday, and should discuss material scheduled for that evening’s discussion. You are expected to offer an entry each week, except for the day on which you are scheduled to make your primary text in-class presentation (i.e., you must still post an entry when you are presenting on the scholarship). Although somewhat informal, these entries are expected to consist of deliberative, thoughtful paragraphs that are free of grammatical error. Use the journal entries to articulate the questions and ideas you develop in the course of your reading, taking care to respond specifically to relevant passages from the text.

Oral Presentations (10%; 10%): Each student will be required to make two 10-15-minute in-class presentations: one that focuses on a topic you deem significant in that week’s assigned primary textual reading; and another (on a different day) on at least one of the secondary texts assigned for discussion. More specific guidelines for each of these presentation types will be provided separately.

Final Paper Project (40%): A seminar paper of 14-16- pages will be due on Wednesday, December 13th. Students are encouraged to develop their topics early; a short prospectus will be due on November 15th.

Attendance: You are expected to attend every session. If you are absent more than twice (for non-medical or emergency reasons), you will either receive a “W” (if prior to the drop deadline of Oct. 29) or an “F” for the course (if after Oct. 29).

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.

COVID Protocols:

As you likely know already, due to sharply increased incidence of the Delta Variant locally and across the state the El Paso Health Authority issued a city-wide indoor masking mandate that went into effect on August 18th, a move that was affirmed by votes on both the City Council and the EPISD Board. However, because UTEP is an agency of the State of Texas, we cannot mandate that you wear masks on campus. But out of concern for my family and yours, I do strongly and warmly encourage you to get vaccinated and wear a mask during class, and to observe [the best practices recommended by the CDC](#). 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 CDC guidelines will be fully excused. For more information on COVID at UTEP, including an extensive and regularly-updated FAQ, please [click here](#). For information about UTEP’s free on-site COVID testing, [click here](#). For information on UTEP’s free vaccination clinic (including monetary incentives!), please [click here](#).