

American Fiction to 1900 (ENGL 4317)
Dr. Gunn
Fall 2021

In-Class Presentation Guidelines

Each student will be required to make a short presentation of **no longer than** ten minutes in length, focusing on something that you deem significant in that day's reading. You are welcome to bring in outside perspectives—critical or historical references, contextual theoretical elaborations, etc.—but this is not required. Nor are you required to cover every topic addressed in a given day's reading in comprehensive fashion. Instead, what I ask is that you draw attention to a few specific passages in the text(s) that you consider important, to make an effort to contextualize and explain those passages, and to offer at least a provisional argument as to why they deserve our attention within the larger context of the course. It's ok if you haven't quite made up your mind about what the ultimate significance of your argument is in any final sense. These presentations are not about finding definitive answers; rather, they are about asking deeper and more complex questions.

Usually, I will ask that presentations take place at the beginning, or near the beginning, of each class. They are designed principally to promote productive class discussion. To this end, I ask that presentations be made up of two basic parts (but feel free to innovate on this structure): one, your own observations that frame your issues and understanding of the text(s) (this is the main part of the presentation); and two, a short list of 2-3 questions for the class that follow from your remarks and which are designed to promote more extended discussion at the conclusion of your ten minutes. I also ask that you include a **handout** that delineates the major points addressed in your remarks, and spells out the specific questions/issues you have for the rest of us.