

**ENGL 3912-003 Topics in American Literature
Conquest and Consumption Across the Americas:
Bodies, the “Indian Weed,” and Sugar**

Fall 2011
Section 001, W 6-8:50 PM
Location: LANG 211
Phone: ***

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Office hours: Wed., 4-6 PM

A. Description

Colonists who published reports of their travels to the Americas frequently described seeing Native Americans commit acts of cannibalism, and reports of New World cannibalism were soon incorporated into accounts of the New World, from travel writing to captivity narratives. Meanwhile, the same descriptions were reinvigorated in the eighteenth century, in order to describe the behavior of Africans. Colonists often—but not always—interpreted cannibalism as a sign of Native American and African barbarity and savagery, a sign of the differences between European peoples, on the one hand, and Native Americans and Africans, on the other. Europeans claimed that such behavior justified conquest and enslavement, which—they argued—would bring civility and Christianity to the heathen people of the Atlantic World. Yet the divide between colonists and Native Americans or Africans was complicated when Europeans began to smoke an intoxicating weed—tobacco, and thus to consume an American substance themselves. Finally, the opposition between civilized Euro-Americans and savage “Others” was further complicated by the slave trade and consumption of products such as sugar and rum, which, many writers argued, constituted the “consumption” of Africans’ bodies. This course will examine the theme of consumption in early American literatures, in order to discover:

- How representations of Native Americans and Africans as cannibals articulated differences between New and Old World cultures, and why many colonists seemed so *sure* that Native Americans were cannibals, despite the fact that few firsthand accounts of cannibalism actually existed.
- How English colonists represented the effects of smoking tobacco, a weed that allowed America inside European bodies, and how they countered arguments that tobacco degenerated English bodies and identities.
- How colonists justified the consumption of African bodies, as well as how Afro-American and –British writers contested European forms of cannibalism to critique the Atlantic slave trade and slavery.

B. Texts

Hans Staden, *Hans Staden’s True History: An Account of Cannibal Captivity in Brazil* (Duke, ISBN 978-0-8223-4231-1)

Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *The Narrative* (Oklahoma, 080326416X)

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (Norton 2nd ed., ISBN 0-393-96452-3)

Edgar Allan Poe, *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (Penguin, ISBN 978-0-14-043748-5)

Herman Melville, *Typee* (Penguin, ISBN 978-0-14-043488-0)

William Earle, *History of Three-Fingered Jack* (Broadview, ISBN 9781551116693)

Colonial American Travel Narratives, ed. Wendy Martin, Susan Imbarrato (Penguin, 9780140390889)

*Note: I will distribute many of the texts for this course in class and will post them on Blackboard. Please be sure that you bring each text to class when it is assigned.

C. Assignments

1. Reading Questions and Participation (15 %)

By midnight each **Monday**, you should respond to the reading questions by posting a short, paragraph-long response to our Blackboard discussion page (at <http://ecampus.unt.edu/webct/entryPage.dowebct>). Responses should make a specific argument in answer to each question and must provide specific textual evidence to support your thesis. By midnight each **Tuesday**, you should respond to one of your classmates' posts on the class discussion space. *Reading questions cannot be made up; late submissions will not receive credit.*

Participation includes attendance, reading the texts for each class, bringing all readings to class, and participating in each discussion with thoughtful comments on the readings and your classmates' ideas. You will receive a participation grade of check plus, check, or check minus for each class.

2. Papers (50 %)

You will employ close reading, literary analysis, and argumentation skills in two papers (4-5 pages each). Detailed assignment sheets to follow.

Each paper will consist of one preliminary draft and one final draft, due two weeks apart from one another. You will receive comments on preliminary drafts; grades will be assigned ONLY on final drafts. No comments will be given on final drafts. If a student does not submit a preliminary draft by the assigned deadline, s/he forfeits his/her right to a comment. Final papers that lack preliminary drafts will receive a lower grade.

*** Papers will lose one-third of a letter grade each day they are late and will receive "F's if not turned in a week after the due date. Emailed papers will not be accepted.*

3. Research Project: Analysis and Annotation (20 %)

You will choose a text in the electronic archive, *Early American Imprints*, to study and annotate for your research project. You will analyze the text's description of consumption and write an annotation for the text that you will post on the course wiki. Detailed assignment sheet to follow.

4. Final Exam (15 %)

The final exam will be cumulative and will be held during the scheduled final exam time (see: <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/schedule/fall/final.html>).

D. Course Policies

1. Participation/Attendance

Because discussion will be an essential part of the class, you will be expected to participate in discussions in class and on Blackboard with relevant, interesting, and respectful questions and

responses. Reading questions and discussion count as part of your participation grade. Roll and participation will be recorded for every class.

The only absences that are excused are those that are university-approved: for religious holidays, documented illness, and representation of the University at approved events. **Excused absences must be documented in writing, no later than *one week* after the absence. Please let me know, *in writing*, ahead of time if you will be absent for a university-approved reason.**

More than three absences will result in your final grade dropping one letter grade for each class day missed thereafter. Two late arrivals (10 minutes after class begins) or two early departures will count as an absence. You are responsible for keeping track of your absences and tardies.

2. Academic Integrity

You are expected to abide by the University's Policy of Academic Dishonesty in the Student Handbook. Academic dishonesty (including plagiarism, cheating, or falsification of academic records) will not be tolerated; possible penalties can include failure of an assignment, failure of the course, or even expulsion from the university. The UNT Student Handbook defines plagiarism as:

- a) the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person with out full and clear acknowledgement, and/or
 - (b) the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.
- Please see UNT's policy on academic integrity, available in the Student Handbook, <http://www.unt.edu/csrr/handbook.html>.

3. Disabilities

If you have a disability that you feel will affect your performance in this class, please register with the Office of Disability Accommodation, University Union, Suite 321, (940) 565-4323, and inform me in writing as soon as possible.

The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112—The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

4. Instructor Contact

Please feel free to contact me with any questions: through email, during my office hours, or by making an appointment. I will respond to your emails within 48 hours.

Caveat: The instructor reserves the right to make necessary changes to this syllabus and schedule; all changes will be communicated to students in class and on Blackboard.

Schedule

31 August: Introduction to the Course

Cannibalism

7 September

- “The Letter of Columbus”; “The Journal of Columbus”; “The Report of Dr. Chanca”; “Michele de Cuneo’s Letter on the Second Voyage” (handouts)
- Amerigo Vespucci, *Letters* (handout)
 - Peter Hulme, “Introduction” *Cannibalism and the Colonial World and Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797*, chapter one

14 September

- John de Lery, *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil* (handout)
- Michel de Montaigne, “Of Cannibals” (handout)
- Bartolomé de Las Casas, *A Brief Relation of the Destruction of the Indies* (handout)
 - Anthony Pagden, “The Savage Critic: Some European Images of the Primitive,” *The Yearbook of English Studies* vol. 13 (1983): 32-45.
 - Frank Lestringent, *Cannibals: The Discovery and Representation of the Cannibal from Columbus to Jules Verne*, chapters 1-4

21 September

- Hans Staden, *The True History of his Captivity, 1557*
- Neil L. Whitehead and Michael Harbsmeier, “Introduction,” pages LVI-LXIII

28 September

- George Percy, “A Trewe Relacyon” (handout)
- Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *The Relation of Cabeza de Vaca*
 - Rachel B. Hermann, “The “tragicall historie”: Cannibalism and Abundance in Colonial Jamestown” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d. ser. 68.1 (Jan 2011).

5 October

- Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*
 - Minaz Jooma, “Robinson Crusoe Inc(corporates): Domestic Economy, Incest, and the Trope of Cannibalism,” in *Eating Their Words: Cannibalism and the Boundaries of Cultural Identity*, ed. Kristen Guest. Albany: SUNY Press, 2001: 57-78.

Paper 1, Draft 1 DUE

12 October

- Edgar Allan Poe, *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*
 - Geoffrey Sanborn, “A Confused Beginning: The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, of Nantucket,” in *Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*: 163-77

19 October

- Herman Melville, *Typee*
 - Henry Hughes, “Fish, Sex and Cannibalism: Appetites for Conversion in Melville's *Typee*,” *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies* 6, no. 2 (October 2004): 3-16.

Paper 1, Draft 2 DUE

Tobacco, Food, and Gender

26 October

- James I, A Counter-Blaste to Tobacco
- Nicholas Monardes, *Joyfull Newes out of the New Founde Worlde*
- Thomas Harriot, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*
 - Peter Mancall, "Tales Tobacco Told in Sixteenth-Century Europe," *Environmental History* 9.4 (October 2004): 648–78.

2 November

- Sarah Kemble Knight, *The Journal of Madam Knight*
- Mary Rowlandson, *Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*
 - Julia Stern, To Relish and to Spew Disgust as Cultural Critique in *The Journal of Madam Knight*” *Legacy* 14.1 (1997): 1-12.
 - Heidi Oberholtzer Lee, “‘The Hungry Soul’: Sacramental Appetite and the Transformation of Taste in Early American Travel Writing.” *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 3.1 (Spring 2005): 65-93.

Sugar and Slavery

9 November

- Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative* (handout)
- Andrew Burn, “A Second Address to the People of Great Britain, Containing a New, and Most Powerful Argument to Abstain from the Use of West India Sugar” (handout)
- Thomas Tryon, *Friendly Advice to the Gentlemen-Planters of the East and West Indies* (handout)
 - Plasa, Carl, Stained with Spots of Human Blood: Sugar, Abolition and Cannibalism,” *Atlantic Studies: Literary, Cultural and Historical Perspectives* 4, no. 2 (2007): 225-43.

Paper 2, Draft 1 DUE

16 November

- William Earle, *History of Three-Fingered Jack*

23 November

Paper 2, Draft 2 Due

30 November

- Maggie Kilgour, “The function of cannibalism at the present time,” in *Cannibalism and the Colonial World* (handout)
- Additional readings, TBA

7 December

Presentations on research projects