

English 142: Revisiting Early America

Professor Michael Ziser
209 Voorhies Hall

Winter 2010, 1150 Hart Hall
Lectures: MWF 11:00-11:50am

Much of the literature, film, television, and music we enjoy today has deep roots in early American literary culture. The television series *Lost*, for example, draws heavily upon literary archetypes developed during the exploration of the “New World” by European colonists. The biography of Army PFC Jessica Lynch might have been lifted directly from Indian captivity narratives dating back to the early 1600s, right down to its paternalistic and propagandistic editing history. And Benjamin Franklin wouldn’t have batted an eye at the philosophical questions concerning virtuality posed by *The Matrix* and its sequels. This lecture and discussion course will investigate key moments in early American cultural history as they have been told, retold, and retooled through literature and film, aiming to demonstrate some of the major continuities that still bind our contemporary moment to an otherwise alien past. Average weekly reading load for this class will be 300+ pages, and students will be required to attend two film screenings outside of class time (or view the films on their own time).

Required Texts:

- John Barth, *The Sot-Weed Factor* (Anchor, 1987) ISBN-13: 978-0385240888
- Charles Brockden Brown, *Arthur Mervyn; or, Memoirs of 1793* (Hackett, 2008) ISBN-13: 978-0872209213
- Lydia Maria Child, *Hobomok* (Rutgers UP, 1986) ISBN-13: 978-0813511641
- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2002) ISBN-13: 978-0312257378
- Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography* (Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2003) ISBN-13: 978-0312404154
- Thomas Hariot, *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (Dover Publications, 1972) ISBN-13: 978-0486210926
- Frances Hill, ed., *The Salem Witch Trials Reader* (Da Capo, 2000) ISBN-13: 978-0306809460
- [Ursula LeGuin, *The Word for World is Forest* (Tom Doherty Associates, 2006) ISBN 076534985X] (OP: in reader)
- Arthur Miller, *The Crucible* (Penguin, 2003) ISBN-13: 978-0142437339
- Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1997) ISBN-13: 978-0312111519
- Stuart B. Schwartz, ed., *Victors and Vanquished: Spanish and Nahua Views of the Conquest of Mexico* (Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2000) ISBN-13: 978-0312393557
- [John Edgar Wideman, *The Cattle Killing* (Mariner Books, 1997) ISBN-13: 978-0395877500] (OP: in reader)
- E-textsr available at the SmartSite for ENL 142

Requirements:

Short assignments (3X). Each week there will be a short assignment sent out with the weekly reading guide, usually due the following Friday. You are responsible for completing **ANY THREE** of these. Your work on these assignments will be graded Acceptable/Unacceptable/Redo. In the case of a “Redo” grade, you can either do the assignment over or simply replace it.

Film Responses (2X). Respond in detail to a portion of one of the films screened for the course (2pp). Responses are due no later than one week after the film screening.

One short paper (4 pp), on a topic assigned by the professor. **Due Monday 1 February class.** Details to follow.

One long paper (8 pp), comparative and contextualized, on a topic of your choosing. **Due Mon. 15 March in class.**

In-class midterm and final examinations (the latter not cumulative) consisting of short answer questions and passage identifications

Extra Credit. There will be several opportunities for small amounts of extra credit. Details to follow.

Grading:

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|-----------------------------|-----|--|
| Short Assignments (3x3.33%) | 10% | Due at various points throughout the quarter |
| Film Responses (2 x 5%) | 10% | Due at various points throughout the quarter |
| Short paper | 20% | Due 1 February |
| Midterm Exam | 15% | 8 February |
| Long Paper | 30% | Due 15 March |
| Final Exam | 15% | 20 March 1-3pm, Hart 1150 |

NOTE: This syllabus and all other course handouts will be posted on ENL142’s SmartSite webpage. Important reading links, images, etexts, writing guides, class policies, and FAQs will also be posted there. Make it a habit to check the site on a regular basis.

Week One: The Shadow of Spain

M 4 January

NONE: Introduction

W 6 January

Christoffa Corombo, from *Diario del primer viaje* (online reader)

---, *Letter to Santangel* (reader))

Stephen Greenblatt, "Marvellous Possessions" (reader)

F 8 January

Victors and Vanquished

Las Casas / Phillip, from *The Tears of the Indians*

Joel Barlow, from *The Vision of Columbus*, Introduction, Book I, and Book IX (reader)

Films: *Aguirre, The Wrath of God* (Herzog, 1977)

The Mission (Joffe, 1986)

Week Two: Contact Zones

M 11 January

Thomas Hariot, *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*

Virtual Jamestown (online) http://www.virtualjamestown.org/images/white_debry_html/jamestown.html

W 13 January

Captain John Smith, from *Historie of Virginia* (reader)

Linwood (Little Bear) Custalow and Angela Daniel (Silver Star), from *The True Story of Pocahontas* (reader)

F 15 January

Lydia Maria Child, *Hobomok*

James Fenimore Cooper, from *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* (reader)

Longfellow, *The Courtship of Miles Standish* (reader)

Films: *The New World* (Malick, 2006)

Pocahontas (Goldberg, 1995)

Week Three: Metacomet

M 18 January

Jill Lepore, "Chronology of King Philip's War," and "Prologue: The Circle," from *The Name of War*

Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*

Richard Slotkin, "Israel in Babylon," *Regeneration Through Violence* (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1973) 94-115.

W 20 January

Cotton Mather, "A Notable Exploit: Dux Femina Facti," from *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 634-6.

Susan Faludi, "Introduction" and "Original Shame," from *The Terror Dream* (NY: Metropolitan, 2007) 199-216. (reader)

Angela Carter, "Our Lady of the Massacre" (on-line) *Burning Your Boats* (Chatto & Windus, 1995) 248-261 ®

Apess, *Eulogy on King Philip* (reader)

John Augustus Stone, *Metamora* (reader)

F 22 January

Ursula LeGuin, *The Word for World is Forest* (reader)

Film: *The Searchers* (Ford, 1956)

Week Four: Versions of Apocalypse

M 25 January

Michael Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom* (reader)
Lahaye, from *Left Behind* (reader)

W 27 January

Anne Bradstreet (reader)

F 29 January

Edward Taylor (reader)

Short Paper Due

Film: *Alien* (Scott, 1979)

Week Five: Theocracy

M 1 February

Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" (reader)
"The Minister's Black Veil" (reader)
Michael Colacurcio, *The Province of Piety*, chapters 5 and 6 (reader)

W 3 February

Hutchinson Transcript (reader)
Witchtrial Reader

F 5 February

Arthur Miller, *The Crucible*

Film: *The Crucible* (Hytner, 1996)

Week Six: Staple Culture

M 8 February

MIDTERM EXAM: No Reading

W 10 February

Cooke, "The Sot Weed Factor" (reader)
Granger, *The Sugar-Cane* (reader)

F 12 February

John Barth, *The Sot-Weed Factor* (Anchor, 1987) ISBN-13: 978-0385240888

Film: *Mandingo* (Fleischer, 1975)

Week Seven: American Picaro

MWF 15, 17, 19 February

John Barth, *The Sot-Weed Factor*

Film: *Barry Lyndon* (Kubrick, 1975)

Week Eight: Slavescapes

M 21 February

Charles Brockden Brown, *Arthur Mervyn; or, Memoirs of 1793*

W 23 February

Arthur Mervyn

F 26 February

Finish *Arthur Mervyn*

Film: Make-up film

Week Nine: Self Confession

M 1 March

Wideman, *The Cattle Killing*

W 3 March

Olaudah Equiano (reader)

F 5 March

Jonathan Edwards (reader)

John Woolman (reader)

Film: *Amazing Grace* (Apted, 2006)

Week Ten: Self Effacement and Creation

M 8 March

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative*

W 10 March

Franklin, *Autobiography*

Warner, from *The Republic of Letters*

F 12 March

Jefferson, *Declaration of Independence* (reader)

Derrida, The "Pharmakon" and "The Pharmakos" in *Dissemination* (reader)

Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," from *Simulacra and Simulation*.

Films: *Videodrome* (Cronenberg, 1983)

The Lawnmower Man (Leonard, 1992)

Week Eleven: The Fate of Words

M 15 March

Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Experience" (reader)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Final Paper due in class

Final Examination: Saturday, 20 March, 1-3pm 1150 Hart Hall