

ENGLISH 352

AMERICAN NOVEL

THE ROOTS OF AMERICAN FICTION

FALL 2005 MW 9-9:50

KIRBY 103

Dr. Mischelle B. Anthony

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Office: Kirby 302² (408-4529)³

Hours: MW 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Th 1-3⁴

Problems of culture and country never go away. We must attend to them now every bit as assiduously as did the first generation of Americans.

---Cathy Davidson,
Revolution and the Word

TEXTS:

--*Robinson Crusoe*, Daniel Defoe (Oxford, 1972)

--*A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Mary Wollstonecraft (Dover, 1996)

--*The Power of Sympathy & The Coquette*, William Hill Brown & Hannah Webster Foster (Penguin, 1996)

--*Female Quixotism*, Tabitha Gilman Tenney (Oxford, 1992)

--*The Algerine Captive*, Royall Tyler (Modern Library, 2002)

--*Modern Chivalry*, Hugh Henry Brackenridge (Rowman & Littlefield, 1965)

--*Charlotte Temple*, Susanna Rowson (Penguin, 1991)

--*Wieland*, Charles Brockden Brown (Penguin, 1991)

COURSE GOALS:

American eighteenth century fiction is not well known, even among English departments. If you didn't know the reading list for this class, for example, try naming an early American novel—everyone says Hawthorne, but he's fifty years later. In other words, this time period's fiction is the blues of American literature—the roots that we no longer recognize or remember. (Hawthorne would be the B.B. King of the novel, the name people mention when they don't know jack about the blues.) We are definitely working against the academic norm in this course. None of these authors made their living through book sales, and all were writing at a time when fiction was widely thought of in America as “the cause of female depravity,” according to one Harvard University commencement address. (So you can imagine what people thought of women who *wrote* such texts.) At the same time, the very people who were speaking out against fiction owned libraries full of novels imported from England, bought from local booksellers, and checked out from village libraries.

This scenario eerily resembles the politics surrounding the Revolutionary War: the national anti-

¹ Use this often. Email me questions and concerns about class. I want this to be a pleasurable learning experience, and I take you and your concerns seriously.

² (See note 1.)

³ (See note 2.)

⁴ and by appointment. I'm in my office. Lots. When I'm not there, I'm probably close to or still on campus. Take advantage of this and get all the help you can, if you need it, for the class. Writing is hard, frustrating work! This syllabus, for example, is giving me a cramp just below and to the right of my left shoulder blade. It could be because I have terrible posture when I type on this laptop, but, also, are human beings *meant* to sit before an electronic screen for hours each day? Our brains win out over our bodies sometimes, I guess. Where was I? Oh, yes . . . writing is hard, yada yada yada. What I don't want to happen at the end of our time together is for you to write on our class evaluation “professor could have been clearer about grading standards.” Come on!! It's on page 6!! If page 6 seems incomprehensible, see note 1.

British, patriotic rhetoric did not reflect a majority of the population. Most wanted no war because they feared the financial and human cost, something history books have only recently begun to admit about America. The everyday and private differed much from the public, and novels brought out this individuality. Our task this semester will be to explore many different types of fiction circulating in eighteenth-century America. We will see how even in books that have a conservative moral (like don't have sex outside of marriage, and don't marry outside your social class) *always* complicate that moral in the course of the plot.

I fell into this fiction when I was taking prerequisites for my master's degree, and I was pleasantly surprised by how enjoyable these are to read. As in novels today, there's sex, death, ghosts, spontaneous combustion, mystery, suicide, political intrigue, and satire. There's also a glimpse into the daily lives of people who largely left very few traces of themselves.

I expect perfect ATTENDANCE; I also understand that life interferes with the academic education. But if missing class becomes a habit, you might consider dropping. Attendance is essential to complete group and other in-class assignments, which cannot be made up or accepted late. I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences.⁵ If you miss class, even for a university-sponsored, required-for-another-class field trip, it's an absence.

Any student with perfect attendance will have 2 extra points added onto his or her course grade.⁶ You may miss up to 3 times without any extra penalty to your grade beyond the missed class discussion and work, but the 4th absence will result in a 5% drop in your course grade, the 5th a 10% one, the 6th a 15%, and the 7th 20%. Missing 8 times means you fail the course. Your best bet is to check with me if you know you will miss a class, BEFORE that class, so you can complete the necessary assignments as soon as possible.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE PERCENTAGES

Weekly responses	15% (total)
Mid-term exam	15%
Presentation	20% (10% each spoken / written)
Research essay	30%
Final exam	20%

WEEKLY RESPONSES

Beginning the second week of class, a 1-2 page double-spaced RESPONSE (1 total) will be due at the beginning of many class periods. (I'll let you know at the end of the class day before.) In it, you may explore some focused point covered in discussion and any reading you've done up to that day. Somewhere in the brief paper, posit a question that doesn't have an easy answer. For example, "What religion did Wieland follow?" is not a discussion-building question; instead, try something more like, "How does Wieland's religion inform his rampage or blood and gore?" Feel free to wonder. Also briefly reference other novels, movies, or music if you'd like. These papers are to help you develop your thoughts for class discussion and larger assignments, and will earn a \surd , $\frac{1}{2}$, or $-$. These assignments is

⁵ I know, I know. I'm a horrible person, an automaton who despises the human condition. But think about it like this: say someone is ill, so she misses class. Okay. She calls the same day she misses and arranges to make up any missed work (except that in-class stuff that she can't), and it's good. What about the person who is helping out a friend in crisis? Maybe you are having the most important conversation of your life, and it bleeds over into class time so you decide to go out for coffee instead, or stay home and play with your kids, or spend some quality time with your grandmother. These are just as valid to me as being sick. Just arrange to make up the work with me the same day you miss class; avoid excuses.

⁶ I cannot tell you how many students have jumped a letter grade by the end of the semester because of this bonus. Be here.

semi-formal and should conform to standard grammatical and structural guidelines. Feel free to turn in this daily work to my email address, anthony@wilkes.edu.⁷

Once during our time together, you will lead the class discussion with a 20-30 MINUTE PRESENTATION that includes a short overview of our library's holdings and MLA search of the text we'll cover for that day along with your own focus. A 3-5 page written account, expanding on your ideas and those you gained from class discussion, is due the class day after your presentation. This shorter essay should have a focused, arguable thesis and be accompanied by both a 2-3 source MLA works cited page and a 10-source works consulted page. Your sources must be scholarly articles and books. These will be graded on how well they analyze the primary text (not merely summarize its plot), integrate various literary critics well, show an awareness of difficult passages and break them down into understandable scenarios, and relate all this information well within your chosen angle of research. Though how you present is important, your oral grade will emphasize the quality of material provided. (Stay tuned for sign-up sheet with angles to choose from.) Above all, have fun! This is your chance to research sex, death, crime, and revolution and earn a grade for it. YOU MUST CHECK YOUR PROGRESS WITH ME AT LEAST FIVE DAYS BEFORE YOUR PRESENTATION DAY TO GAIN CREDIT FOR THIS PART OF THE COURSE.

ARGUMENT ESSAY

I expect you to spend the most amount of time on this assignment. These should be 8-10 pages (10-12 pages for those enrolled in ENG 452) and could simply be an expansion of your oral presentation. Whereas the earlier assignment might have covered economic unfairness in *The Power Of Sympathy*, for this paper you'll want to go deeper into the text and criticism to make a well-honed argument. You may cover as many as three primary texts for this assignment, but keep the focus on your argument, not a listing of common features among the novels. Your essay must include 3-6 outside sources that fit well into your discussion. Your topic and angle must receive my approval.

To receive full credit for each writing assignment, you must complete rough and final drafts. All drafts must be typed in double-spaced, reasonably sized font on 8 ½ x 11 paper. Additionally, your name, course ID, my name, the date, and description of assignment should appear in the upper left-hand corner of the paper, where the paper should be stapled (not paper clipped or folded down):

Joe Student
ENGL 101K
Mischelle Anthony
29 August 2005
Response #1

Additional pages should also include your last name and page number as an upper right-side header:

Student 2

Your writing will be evaluated based on

- a strong, coherent thesis statement that makes a claim
- a well-organized essay that includes quotations
- cohesive paragraphs with topic sentences
- appropriate citation method
- correct grammar and spelling

⁷To receive credit, these must be in my Eudora inbox by the beginning of the class period due.

Please see the attached grading guide for more detailed information on why your essays receive the grades they do.

LATE WORK

Papers will be penalized 5% for every weekday late. In-class work will not be accepted late. Your best bet is to check with me before you miss class and arrange for extra time to turn in your work.

The MID-TERM and FINAL EXAMS will be answering one of your choice of open-ended, comprehensive essay questions.

PLAGIARISM is the stealing of someone else's words or ideas and passing them off as your own. Painfully easy to catch, plagiarism is dishonest, inappropriate and insulting to you, the person you stole from, and me. This asinine behavior will result, at least, in a failure of the assignment and may result in expulsion from the university.⁸

If any member of the class has a DISABILITY and needs SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION of any nature whatsoever, please talk with me so I may provide reasonable assistance to ensure you a fair opportunity to perform in this class. Please tell me of the issue and your desires immediately after our first scheduled class meeting.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND WRITINGS

8.29 Introductions & details; what we already know

8.31 A little history; *Revolution* HO

9.2 Summary v. analysis

5 **Labor Day break**

7 RC

9 RC

12 RC

14 RC

16 RC

19 PS

21 PS

23 PS

26 PS

28 C

30 C

⁸ This is the one thing you can do in our class, short of mooning us or spewing profanity at a fellow student that will result in the much-dreaded evil eye. It's the dishonesty that's so insulting. The famed Student Handbook has a whole section on academic dishonesty, which is quite descriptive. The penalty can be close to subterranean medieval torture, and it's often up to the teacher's discretion. I have a hard time being merciful when faced with plagiarized writing. In other words, schoolsucks.com is not a safe bet.

10.3	<i>FQ</i>
5	<i>FQ</i>
7	Midterm review
10	Midterm exam
12	<i>FQ</i>
14	Fall Break
17	<i>AC</i>
19	<i>AC</i>
21	<i>AC</i>
24	<i>AC</i>
26	<i>AC</i>
28	<i>AC</i>
31	<i>MC</i>
11.2	<i>MC</i>
4	<i>MC</i>
7	<i>MC</i>
9	<i>MC</i>
11	<i>MC</i>
14	<i>RW</i>
16	<i>RW</i>
18	
21	<i>CT</i>
23	Thanksgiving break
25	Thanksgiving break
28	<i>CT</i>
30	<i>CT</i>
12.2	<i>W</i> ; rough draft due
5	<i>W</i>
7	<i>W</i>
9	<i>W</i>
12	(follow Friday schedule) Final draft argument essay due ; final exam review
13-17	Final exam week

A Rough Guide to Essay Grading

Please note that this is a guideline to grading, not a fixed policy. Keep in mind that there is no single kind of B paper, for example, and that a number of variables figure into any evaluation of a given paper. I've listed the grades from lowest to highest not because I'm pessimistic, but because I want you to read all the descriptions, not just the "A" description.

F An F paper simply doesn't work. It has no thesis directing it, and it lacks even a minimal coherence. The writing may fail on the sentence level (in other words, individual sentences are incoherent). It reflects little knowledge of the text.

If your paper receives an F, come see me immediately. I can help you. Do not despair.

D Think of a D paper as a C paper that doesn't work. A D paper tries to delineate an argument with a coherent outline, but does not make its point sufficiently clear. The thesis may be vague or unsupported, and it may not move beyond plot summary (remember, a successful paper must make an argument, not merely demonstrate that you've read the text). The paper may lack important factual information, and may suffer from logical gaps. A grade of D or F is not an assessment of a writer's intelligence; it is a measure of how successful the paper is about conveying an argument about a particular topic. The grade is on the paper, not on the student.

C A grade of C reflects adequate college work. A C paper demonstrates a firm grasp of the obvious but doesn't move very far beyond that point. The thesis is a general statement or an obvious point in the text; the argument coheres but is simply structured (i.e., it doesn't explore any secondary arguments). There is adequate support for the assertions in the paper, and supporting quotations are adequately explained. Sentence structures are not especially sophisticated, but they are free from serious errors in grammar and punctuation.

B A B paper is more than merely adequate. The paper has a strong sense of unity, for it grows out of a tightly focused thesis. The thesis demonstrates some insight and original thinking on the part of the writer. The argument is carefully arranged and fully developed; supporting evidence is appropriate and well-integrated. A B paper will often explore secondary arguments or address possible objections to its argument. Sentence structures show some sophistication. Mechanics are sound, and those mechanical problems which exist arise from the complexity of the sentences. (In other words, the mechanical problems for a B paper are more sophisticated than those in a C paper.)

A An A paper is a B paper in which everything works. A paper in this range speaks with a lively and intelligent voice and has something interesting to say that goes beyond issues we've discussed in class or casts new light on those issues. It is well-organized and fully developed, and has few or no mechanical mistakes. Sentences are clear and unambiguous and, ideally, stylistically elegant. An A paper makes an insightful argument with force and clarity. It combines subtlety of thinking with linguistic and rhetorical excellence. An A paper is a real accomplishment.

*Taken from: Alison Peipmeier,
Vanderbilt University*