

English 452: Early American Literature

Fall 2005
Section 1
9:15 – 10:20 MWF
Bldg 24, Rm 106

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Course Overview:

American literature from the period before 1800 is culturally and linguistically diverse, drawing as it does from a host of European colonial powers and the indigenous peoples they encountered. The heterogeneity of the societies clustered along the Atlantic seaboard is difficult to apprehend when viewed through the retrospective lens of national independence and unification. In this course we will focus on competing visions of psychological and social unity as they are expressed in a variety of literary texts. Upon successful completion of the course, students should be competent in the following areas:

1. The ability to analyze varying genres of literature such as autobiography, sermons, political documents, poems, and novels.
2. The ability to distinguish between literary and historical approaches to non-fictional writings.
3. The ability to identify and distinguish major religious, historical, ideological, and intellectual influences upon early American writing.
4. The ability to identify and evaluate the influences exerted by the literary traditions of Europe, Africa, and the indigenous peoples of North America.
5. The ability to recognize and evaluate the continuities and discontinuities between colonial writings and those of the early republic.
6. The ability to use textual evidence to support interpretations of fictional and non-fictional writings.
7. The ability to conduct research on topics relevant to early American culture and literature.

Many of the works we will read are considered foundational texts of American culture; they are rightly described as masterpieces. They are all rich storehouses of religious, moral, and aesthetic aspirations, some of which may appear alien to you at first glance. Though many of the texts were not presented by their authors as works of fiction, we will approach all of the texts in the class—historical, political, autobiographical, poetic, and fictional—as imaginative creations that benefit from close attention to their literary qualities. As in any literature class, your ability to carefully read and understand these diverse and complex attempts to grapple with fundamental human problems and aspirations is an index of your intellectual, psychological, and emotional maturity. Class discussions and various writing activities will aid you in this task.

Finally, we will spend the last two weeks on a single novel. This unit will be a workshop on literary criticism inasmuch as we will use our readings from the rest of the quarter as background and evidence in our analysis of the novel. Our exploration of the cultural dialogue and historical controversies implicit in the novel will grow out of our initial focus on a close reading of the novel's plot development, characterization, and narrative style. By practicing in the classroom this critical methodology commonly used by literary scholars, members of the class will improve their ability to write on any literary topic, including the research paper required in this course.

Required Text:

Lauter, Paul, et. al. The Heath Anthology of American Literature, Volume A, 5th ed., 2006.
 Brown, Charles B. Wieland; and Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist. Oxford World Classics. Ed. Emory Elliott. Oxford UP, 1994.

Recommended:

Elliott, Emory. The Cambridge Introduction to Early American Literature. Cambridge UP, 2002.

Grading:

Daily Quizzes	20 @ 10 points	200 points
Online Review Forums	2 @ 100 points	200 points
Critical Research Paper	2,500 – 3,500 words	<u>300 points</u>
	TOTAL	700 points

You will note that I do not grade on attendance or participation. In their place, I give in-class and online assignments that comprise over 50% of your grade. These assignments cannot be made up for any reason, including medical ones. In other words, there is no such thing as an “excused absence” in my class. This does not mean that you cannot miss any classes; indeed, the direct grade penalty for missing a class is minimal, so do not worry yourself if you are unable to attend a class meeting due to a personal or family emergency or if your extracurricular involvements should prevent you from attending class. The indirect penalties are, of course, much more severe, especially if you do not obtain lecture notes for the missed class from one of your peers. You should keep in mind that the research paper is meant to build upon the content of class instruction and discussion. Since there will be a graded activity in nearly every class period, regular attendance will be rewarded.

No “Incomplete” grades will be assigned unless extenuating circumstances (e.g., death in the family, automobile accidents, hospitalization) prevail. If you find yourself in such a situation, contact me immediately. You must submit, in a timely fashion, any necessary and valid documents to verify your situation.

OTHER COURSE REQUIREMENTS, POLICIES & GUIDELINES:

- You are always welcome to visit my office without an appointment during my posted hours for consultation (**M 1-3, T 10-12, and W 10:30-11:30**). Please come with questions about the readings or any writing that you’ve done for the course. Contact me at wccorley@csupomona.edu to schedule an appointment at other times.
- **Reading Schedule:** You should plan to spend at least two hours daily on the reading and writing assignments for this course. A reading will be discussed on the day it is listed in the schedule. If the Schedule says: *M Emerson (1160-76)*, you should come to class on Monday of the specified week having read pages 1160-1176 in the *Heath Anthology*. Reading quizzes are drawn from the day’s assigned reading.
- **Email:** You are responsible for checking your csupomona.edu account daily for electronic messages from me (and sometimes from your classmates). You are fully accountable for all course material, announcements, communications that are distributed via email.
- **Classroom Decorum:** Side conversations, sleeping, recreational reading, cell phone noise, text messaging, web browsing for non-class purposes, and other disruptive behavior may result in an invitation to withdraw from class for the day or the remainder of the quarter.
- **Cheating and Plagiarism:** Academic dishonesty is a serious offense. Cheating on an examination or plagiarism of any kind will earn you an "F" for the work in question, and

may be grounds for failure in the course. Students who present the work of others as if it were their own commit plagiarism. Presenting another's work as one's own includes, but is not limited to, borrowing another student's work, buying a paper, and using the thoughts or ideas of others as one's own (using information in a paper without citation). Plagiarized work will result in a failing grade for the assignment and possibly for the course. In either event, a written report will be filed with the department chair and your college dean.

- **Academic Accommodations:** All students are expected to meet the minimum standards for this course as set by the instructor. Students with learning disabilities who may need accommodations should first discuss options and services available to them in Disabled Student Services (869-3333). Disabled Student Services, in turn, will contact professors with official notification and suggested classroom accommodations, as required by federal law. Approved documentation must be provided by the student and placed on file with Disabled Student Services prior to the beginning of the quarter.

GUIDELINES FOR ONLINE REVIEW FORUMS (2 AT 100 POINTS EACH)

Online review forums will begin with questions that I post in the discussion board section of the course website on Blackboard. You will have the choice of responding to the questions I've posted, posting your own question or thoughts about the readings, or responding to a posting made by one of your classmates. You will receive a grade based on the quality and number of your postings. After the debate is ended, I will archive the discussion threads.

Online review forums serve multiple purposes. Primarily, the online forums allow you to interact with your classmates regarding the readings you are doing this term. Your comprehension of the readings will also be tested as you challenge, extend, or clarify the postings of your classmates. Although I may post clues or leading questions, I will not directly answer questions about these topics. You must come to an understanding of the relevant issues by pooling your ideas with others in the class. This is an exercise in group learning as much as it is a way to review for the examination.

Here are a few guidelines to help you plan your participation:

- Familiarize yourself with the Blackboard discussion board interface and procedures. For instance, anonymous postings are not permitted, but you can edit your posts after your initial submission.
- Visit the discussion board multiple times throughout the period of the online forum. I will expect you to make several postings over the course of the forum responding to arguments made by your classmates and reacting to critiques made of your own ideas. The highest scores will go to those who have thoughtfully and consistently participated in the discussions.
- Take notes as you read the assignments. Notes can often become the basis for your postings in the forum.
- Limit yourself to one major idea per posting. The ideal length of a post will be between one to two paragraphs. Long postings that try to exhaustively discuss the issue make it difficult to foster discussion. If you have a lot to say, put it in multiple postings.
- Give your posting a new title in the subject line unless you are directly responding to another person's ideas.
- Interact vigorously, but politely with each other. The posts I will view most positively will probably be the ones which respond critically and persuasively to a viewpoint expressed in another posting.

- If you do not have internet access where you live, you should plan time while you are on campus to visit the computer labs.
- **There are no alternatives to participating in the online debates, and I do not allow any form of make-ups for these assignments.** If computers or the internet are new or intimidating to you, ask a classmate for help. You can also visit the computer labs to get help accessing the discussion board section of Blackboard.

Pre-Course Quiz

Name:

Major:

Email address:

Class standing:

Message phone #:

[I give this quiz on the first day of class in lieu of discussing the syllabus. Instead, we discuss the students' responses to these leading statements that are far more ambiguous than they appear upon first reading. I find that it is a good entry point into the debates that inform early American studies.]

T or F The United States was formed out of relatively monoethnic and monolingual communities.

T or F Religion was the primary motivation for most European immigration into the New World.

T or F People present themselves in journals and letters pretty much as they are in real life.

T or F Interpretations of colonial American literature and culture are politically important today.

T or F Culturally speaking, the United States of today is fundamentally similar to the communities and peoples of its colonial origins.

Reading old literature requires

- A.** basic people skills (patience, empathy, curiosity, and a good memory).
- B.** sophisticated linguistic and historical background.
- C.** a dictionary and access to the internet.
- D.** both A and C.

Eng 452 Schedule of Assignments

Week 0

9/23—Friday Syllabus; quiz/poem

Week 1

9/26—Monday Origin of Stories 51-53
Creation of Whites 65-66
How America was. . .803-804

9/28—Wednesday Cabeza de Vaca 139-151
Villagra 159-170
The Coming. . . 203-213

9/30—Friday Harriott 235-246
Smith 255-269
Bacon 273-280

Week 2

10/3—Monday Winthrop 307-324
Bradford 324-346

10/5—Wednesday Morton 289-307
Williams 347-367

10/7—Friday Bradstreet Poems: “Prologue”
“Author to Book” “Before the Birth” “Upon the Burning. . .” “To My Dear
Children”
Taylor 472-478

Week 3

10/10—Monday Shepard 367-393

10/12—Wednesday Rowlandson 440-467

10/14—Friday Mather 507-533

Week 4

10/17—Monday Cluster 633-644
Edwards 645-666

10/19—Wednesday Woolman 689-708
Ashbridge 677-689

10/21—Friday Open Discussion

Week 5

10/24—Monday Occom/Hammon 1115-1143

10/26—Wednesday Equiano 1152-1185

10/28—Friday Franklin 808-828

Week 6

10/31—Monday Franklin 828-876

11/2—Wednesday Crevecoueur 921-957

11/4—Friday Paine 957-965
Confederacy. . . 54-57

Week 7

11/7—Monday Adams 979-983
Murray 1193-1199

11/9—Wednesday Jefferson 986-1010; 1057-1061

11/11—Friday NO CLASS

Week 8

11/14—Monday Federalist 1027-1041
1065-1066

11/16—Wednesday Songs 1067-1086

11/18—Friday Foster/Rowson 1341-1373

Week 9

11/21—Monday Wieland I 1-117

11/23—Wednesday Wieland II 117-224

11/25—Friday NO CLASS

Week 10

11/28—Monday Wieland III Biloquist

11/30—Wednesday Wieland IV vii-xxx

12/2—Friday Open Discussion