

## English 131: Revolution and the Early American Novel

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Office: St. Joseph's 104

Office Hours: M 12:30-2:30 & by appointment

*revolution*: 1. The action or fact, on the part of celestial bodies, of moving round in an orbit or circular course; 2. The return or recurrence of a point or period of time; 3. A turn or twist; a bend or winding; 4. The action, on the part of a thing or person, of turning or whirling round, or of moving round some point; 5. The action of turning over in discourse or talk; discussion; 6. Alteration, change, mutation; 7. A complete overthrow of the established government of any country or state by those who were previously subject to it; a forcible substitution of a new ruler or form of government. (*Oxford English Dictionary*)

*periodical*: 1. Recurring at regular intervals; appearing intermittently; 2. Astronomical: rotation of celestial objects, as in orbit; 3. An elevated, formal, or ornamental style of writing; 4. Mathematical: relating to placement of numbers expressed in periods; 5. A magazine published at regular intervals; 6. Of or relating to historical periods. (*OED*)

### Course Description

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, three dramatic revolutions rocked the Atlantic world: in North America in 1776, in France in 1789, and in Haiti in 1791. We will read several novels (together with a variety of other writings) produced during and in the wake of these three revolutions—texts that include a strange cast of forgers, liars, flirts, cross-dressers, and sleepwalkers. How can we account not only for the often unusual content of such writing, but for its often equally unusual form? How do we explain the strange mixture of expectation and paranoia, utopian promise and violent danger, that characterizes this writing? What effect, in other words, might political revolution have had on narrative, and how did writing respond to political revolution?

### Course Goals

The goals of this course are to 1) work closely with novels and other writing from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century (post)revolutionary Atlantic; 2) read and understand this literature in its social, cultural, historical, and political contexts; 3) conduct research in late 18<sup>th</sup>-century periodical writing through use of the *American Periodical Series* database; 4) engage in literary and cultural analysis through critical writing, focused research, and active discussion.

### American Studies Pathway

This course is associated with the American Studies Pathway. If you declare this Pathway, you may use a representative piece of work from this course in the Pathway Portfolio you will complete during your senior year. It is recommended that you keep electronic copies of your work.

## Required Texts

Please note that almost all of these editions contain additional material besides the novel itself that will be assigned as course reading. Therefore it is critical that you purchase the specific editions listed below. The publisher is indicated in parentheses; as a historical reminder, the original publication date is listed before each title below.

1791: Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte Temple; or, a Tale of Truth* (Norton)

1797: Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette; or, the History of Eliza Wharton* (Penguin)

1799: Charles Brockden Brown, *Ormond; or, the Secret Witness* (Hackett)

1800: William Earle, *Obi; or, the History of Three-Fingered Jack* (Broadview)

1808: Leonora Sansay, *Secret History; or, the Horrors of St. Domingo* (Broadview)

Selected course readings available through Camino

Research and readings in the *American Periodical Series* database

## Course Requirements

*Thinking papers:* Thinking papers will typically be assigned for the next day's reading assignment, but sometimes may be written in class. These papers will often serve as the basis for class discussion. Do take note that thinking papers **cannot be turned in late or made up, and will not be granted extensions under any circumstances**. However, the lowest of these grades will be dropped at the end of the quarter, so that you can miss or do poorly on one of these assignments without penalty.

*Final Paper:* There will be one longer (12-20 page) paper, which asks you to engage in close and careful literary critical analysis supported by research in both primary and secondary sources. Work on this project will begin at the start of the quarter and will continue throughout the term.

*Class Participation:* Students will frequently participate in small discussion groups and all members of the class are expected routinely to take part in large class discussions. I encourage each of you to share your ideas and insights, to ask and answer questions, to offer your responses and thoughts. Please note also that your class participation grade will be impacted by a poor attendance record (for details, see Attendance policy below).

*Reading Assignments:* Our class discussions and your writing assignments depend on a careful reading of the assigned material. It is imperative that you keep up with the reading assignments, and that you come to class prepared to talk and write about them. Our once-a-week meeting schedule necessitates that you develop a regular daily reading schedule that will ensure your preparation for each class meeting.

*Class Presentation:* Each student will, as part of a small group, deliver an oral presentation to the class on an assigned novel that involves research and exploration in the *American Periodical Series* electronic database on a topic of interest and relevance both to the student and to the course and its texts.

## Grading

Your final grade will be calculated on the following basis:

Thinking papers	15%
Annotated Bibliography	20%
Class Presentation	20%
Class Participation	15%
Final paper	30%

## Course Policies

*Attendance and Lateness:* You are expected to attend each class and to arrive on time. Arriving late is impolite and disruptive—make it a habit not to do so. Although I certainly don't expect you to come to class if you are sick, **you are responsible for all material covered and due in class if you are absent.** If you are absent, you should check with a classmate or with me to determine what you missed. More than one absence (for any reason) will affect your grade: your final class participation grade will be reduced one full grade for each additional day missed.

*Late Papers:* All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date noted on the attached schedule or announced in class. No late papers will be accepted. If you absolutely need an extension, it must be requested from the instructor before the assignment is due. Thinking papers, as noted above, can neither be turned in late nor made up in the case of absence. All assignments must be turned in to the instructor on hard copy; **absolutely no papers of any kind will be accepted by email or fax.**

*Cell phones and laptops:* Cell phones are a serious disruption. Please turn off your cell phone in class. If it is absolutely imperative that you be reachable by dependents in the case of emergencies (for example, if you have small children), please put your cell phone on vibrate. Because this is a discussion course in which it is important for students to engage with each other face to face, laptops are not permitted to be used during class except under specific circumstances.

*Office hours and email:* I am happy to meet with you in my office to discuss course materials, assignments, and other academic matters. The best way to communicate with me is to come to my office hours, or to set up an appointment with me if you are unable to meet during my scheduled office hours. You can contact me to set up an appointment by talking to me before or after class, by emailing me, or by phoning me. Email is best used as a means to schedule an office appointment, not to take the place of such an appointment. Be advised that, although I try to check email regularly during the week, it can take a few days before I am able to receive and/or respond to your email. Please factor this common courtesy into your email communication plans.

*Academic Integrity:* Santa Clara University has a strong commitment to academic integrity. Failure to acknowledge sources of borrowed ideas and/or wording of ideas according to established academic conventions can result in an F in the course and a written record of your dishonesty filed in the Dean's office—even, in some cases, expulsion from the University. Resources on academic integrity at SCU are accessible from a weblink on our course Camino page. Please see me if you have any questions not covered in class about how properly to acknowledge sources.

*Disability Accommodation:* To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in the Drahmann Center in Benson 214, or by phone at \_\_\_\_\_. Students must provide documentation of a disability to Disability Resources prior to receiving accommodations.

### **Schedule of Meetings**

- 1/8 Introductions; Political/Historical/Cultural/Literary Context (all readings are on Camino): revolutionary documents from U.S., France, and Haiti; Klooster on Atlantic revolutions; Judith Sargent Murray, “Sketch on the Present Situation of America, 1794”; *Amelia; or, the Faithless Briton* (1787)
- 1/15 *Charlotte Temple* (5-90); “Reading in Early America” (197-261 in Norton edition of *Charlotte Temple*); APS and MLA research reports
- 1/22 Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette*; “Women in Early America” (107-124, 136-165 in *Charlotte Temple* edition); “Debates on Women’s Education and Rights” (309-335 in *Ormond* edition); APS and MLA research reports
- 1/29 *The Coquette*; group presentation; PAPER ABSTRACT DUE
- 2/5 Charles Brockden Brown, *Ormond*; Contextual Readings (240-252, 335-391)
- [2/6 ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE by 3:00 p.m.]
- 2/12 *Ormond*; “Introduction” (ix-lii); group presentation
- 2/19 William Earle, *Obi*; Appendixes (159-245); THESIS AND OUTLINING WORKSHOP
- 2/26 *Obi*; group presentation
- 3/5 Leonora Sansay, *Secret History*; “Contextual Documents” (270-314); DRAFT OF PAPER DUE
- 3/12 *Secret History*; group presentation; paper presentations
- 3/19 FINAL PAPER DUE in my office by 6:30 pm

Potential research topics by text:

*Charlotte Temple* (1791/1794)

Seduction

Female education

Soldiers

Representation of the French

American Revolution

Loyalists

New York/Wall Street/debt

*The Coquette* (1797)

Seduction

Marriage

Republicanism

Female education

Rakes and coquettes

Virtue

*Ormond* (1799)

Fathers and daughters

Cross-dressing

Seduction

Female education

World revolutions

Yellow fever

French immigrants

Forgery, money, bills of exchange

Secrecy, privacy, spying

Commerce

Conspiracy, illuminati

*Obi* (1800)

Obeah

Tacky's Rebellion (and other Caribbean slave rebellions)

Epistolary correspondence

Male-male friendships

Abolitionism and slavery

The West Indies, Jamaica

Medicine, healing, disease

Plants, botany

*Secret History* (1808)

Haitian revolution

Race relations and racial identity

French planters, French women

Santo Domingo, Saint Domingue, Haiti

Female friendships, sisterhood

General Rochambeau, Napoleon (French military)

Plantations in Caribbean

Le Cap, Cap Haitien

### Class Presentation Assignment and Guidelines

Class presentations give you an opportunity to work very closely with and learn more about a particular text, writer, and/or literary movement; to practice and develop your skills in oral communication; to work collaboratively as well as independently; and to lead the class for a period of time. For your assigned class session, you will—along with the other students working with you—be the authority on the particular topic that you’ve researched and studied. This is also your chance to make choices about the content and structure of class, so I encourage you to be creative and inventive about how you organize and present your material.

This group presentation assignment asks you to do some exploring in the fascinating but understudied genre of the American periodical and to use the results of that exploration to reflect on the novel to which you are assigned. You will be researching magazines and journals that were published on a periodic basis and read by a variety of regional and national audiences during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, and that are fully searchable through the *American Periodical Series* database. You should begin looking through that database to become familiar with it immediately. Each individual will be researching and exploring a particular topic of interest to him or her; the group as a whole will be reporting on themes that grow out of your consideration of that material in relation to your assigned novel. I am willing to grant considerable flexibility and creativity in your definition of your individual area of research. You are also encouraged to explore additional *primary source databases* to help you find additional materials. Here is an outline of how your planning should progress over the course of the term:

1. You should plan to spend a dedicated amount of time each week exploring the *APS* to become familiar with its contents, ways to search and view its contents, and to read items of interest to you. You will be making your life and your bibliography (see C and also annotated bibliography assignment) much easier if you keep track of the items and documents you read. Each of you will be submitting weekly reports (sometimes oral, sometimes written) on what you discovered during each week’s exploration. You will select or be assigned a topic from the beginning of the course, though it is possible to revise or modify that as your research progresses.
2. About a week before your scheduled presentation, get together as a group in order to pool your ideas, to see where they intersect and overlap, and to come up with topics and/or questions for discussion. Each member of the group must do research and must take part in the presentation. I will be happy to offer advice and suggestions to you either individually or as a group—but be aware that the earlier you consult with me about your presentation, the better.
3. On the day of the presentation, each of you must turn in a bibliography of the sources and documents you consulted and discovered in the course of your research, using correct MLA style. In your annotation, please indicate how you located the source, in addition to a brief description of its content and relevance. Your grade will be based on both the content of your presentation (in the three categories listed below) and your effectiveness in presenting that content.

- i. *APS* research (individual)

- Be prepared to spend a good deal of time on the *APS* database, searching and exploring

and reading. Your weekly research reports will document your explorations, but should also help you to work toward defining a focus for your presentation. As you prepare for your presentation, choose **relevant** ideas and information from amongst your reading that you will share with the class in order to assist our understanding of your topic and its relation to an assigned text and/or writer.

ii. Present material (individual and collective)

You should distill salient and relevant materials and insights from your research to present to the class. It is a good idea both to raise questions about the material and your topic of research, and to suggest ideas about that material—particularly as it relates to or provides some perspective on the novel under discussion and the course themes. There should be some **coherent** theme or thesis or principle that holds together the contents of your presentation. Aim for coherence, clarity, relevance, and interest in your presentation.

iii. Class discussion (collective)

You should generate discussion among the class about the text, writer, and/or material you present. You may do so both by inviting responses and questions from your classmates, and by posing questions, problems, dilemmas, or debates of your own for the class as a whole to respond to.

### **Presentation Schedule**

The next page lists some sample topics associated with each novel. These are intended only to offer ideas; feel free to locate and invent your own topics of interest, and to further focus or refine the ones suggested, especially as you explore through the periodical literature.

Presentation #1 (*The Coquette*): January 29

Presentation #2 (*Ormond*): February 12

Presentation #3 (*Obi*): February 26

Presentation #4 (*Secret History*): March 12