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Crime, Transgression, and Punishment in Early American Culture

In this class we will study a wide variety of crime and crime narratives, from the beginning of the colonial era to the emergence of crime fiction in the early 19th century. Topics will include the New England witch trials, piracy, religious “crimes” of dissent (Roger Williams, and Anne Hutchinson), “crimes” of sexual conduct, and cannibalism. Readings will include venerable classics (sections from Bradford’s *Plymouth Plantation* to stories of Edgar Allen Poe) as well as some less familiar examples of the early criminal biography. In addition to primary material, we will work through theories of criminality and some samples of contemporary literary criticism to aid us in our study of legally and culturally transgressive acts. Students will have the opportunity to pursue individual research projects on topics of choice.

Texts: *Norton Anthology of American Literature*, vols. A and B
Daniel Williams, *Pillars of Salt: An Anthology of Early American Criminal Narratives* (Madison House 1993).
Selected texts available online

Requirements and Assignments:

(More detail on individual assignments will be given in class.)

- **class participation:** Carefully read all of the day’s selections prior to class. Think about your reading, annotate your text, formulate questions and observations, and be prepared to share your ideas. Always bring your book(s) and notes to class.
- **2 essays:** The first will be an expository essay of about 5-6pp. and the second will be a research term project of about 10-12pp. Details for each to follow.
- **Reading Responses:** As Ralph Waldo Emerson famously notes in his essay the “American Scholar,” active minds engage in “creative reading as well as creative writing.” Reading creatively means, for Emerson, that readers think for themselves rather than just accepting what the author(ity) has put on the page. To facilitate creative reading in this course, we will keep reading journals throughout the term. Your assignment is to write ½ to 1 full page of single spaced, typed comments, ideas, insights, concerns, and/or questions on the day’s reading. This is not formal writing that has to be edited and rewritten; instead, it is a way of recording your reaction and engagement with the texts. Comparing and/or contrasting current readings with previous readings is always an option. Reading responses cannot be made up (only one will be accepted late).
- **Exams.** A midterm and a final will be given. There will be NO MAKE-UP EXAMS except in the case of documented emergencies.

Grading Breakdown:

Assignment	Percentage
Class participation	15%
Essay #1	15%
Midterm	10%
Reading Responses	20%
Term Paper	30%
Final Exam	10%
Total Grade	100%

course grade: <60=F; <70=D; <80=C; <90=B; 90-100=A

Participation Grades:

A—excellent participation in all areas: reading, class discussion (listening and speaking), attendance

B—good participation in all areas

C—satisfactory participation in all areas

D—satisfactory participation in only some areas

F—participation unsatisfactory in several areas, or excessive absences

Grade Descriptions:

I promise to hold you to high standards.

A excellent, insightful work, commanding attention in its fulfillment of requirements.

B work of good quality, intelligent, organized.

C work of average quality that fulfills all of the requirements of the assignment in a satisfactory manner; may be characterized by oversimplification, repetition, underdevelopment, minor composition errors.

D work of below average quality; may be characterized by illogical structure or inadequate development.

F work that in some prominent way fails to fulfill the requirements of the assignment. Plagiarism earns an F.

Further Notes and Policies:

- Writing assignments: Essays must be typed and double-spaced, and you must provide a word count. Essays that do not meet the minimum length requirement or are improperly formatted will be returned ungraded, to be completed and turned in late. Late papers will be reduced by 5% of the total points possible for each day late, including weekends. Missing a conference or peer editing session will result in a 5% grade reduction.
- Class attendance and promptness are required. I take roll at the beginning of every class. If you come in late, it is your responsibility to talk to me immediately after class and make sure you are marked present (but late). If you fail to do this, you will be counted as absent for the day. Three late arrivals count as one absence. Every student is granted four excused absences: I do not need to know your reasons for missing classes. For each absence beyond the fourth, however, you will reduce your final course grade by 5% (e.g. 5 absences = 5% deduction; 6=10% deduction; 7=15% deduction). If you miss 8 or more classes, you must withdraw from the course, or you will automatically fail.
- Plagiarism ("to pass off another's work as one's own") will result in a score of zero for that assignment and, possibly, a failing grade for the course. All cases will be reported appropriately. For more information, see academicintegrity.okstate.edu.
- Students must complete all course assignments in order to receive a passing grade.
- No late work will be accepted after the day of the final examination.

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, each student with a disability is responsible for notifying the University of his or her disability and for requesting accommodations. If any member of the class thinks that he/she has a qualified disability and needs special accommodations, he/she should notify the instructor and request verification of eligibility for accommodations from the Office of Student Disability Services, 315 Student Union (sds.okstate.edu.) Please advise the instructor of such

disability as soon as possible and contact the Student Disability Services to ensure timely implementation of appropriate accommodations. Faculty have an obligation to respond when they receive official notice of a disability but are under no obligation to provide retroactive accommodations.

Crime and Narrative in Early American Culture
Schedule: Fall 2008

Wk	Day	Readings (Norton)	Readings (<i>Pillars</i> , and online items)	Assignments
1	Aug 19 (T)	Introductions		
	Aug 21 (Th)	Columbus, "Letter" 33-5; Las Casas, <i>Devastation of the Indies</i> 35-9; Cabeza de Vaca 40-8		Reading Response #1
2	Aug 26 (T)	Bradford, "Mr. Morton" 126-29; Bradford, "A Horrible Truth" 136-37; Morton, <i>New English Canaan</i> 139-46	Durkheim, pp 70-82	
	Aug 28 (Th)	Winthrop, <i>Journal</i> 158-67; Roger Williams, selections 173-87	Smith, Cheryl. "Out of Her Place: Anne Hutchinson and the Dislocation of Power in New World Politics," <i>Journal of American Culture</i> 29 (4): 437-53.	RR#2
3	Sept 2 (T)	Bradstreet, "To My Dear Children" 214-7; Rowlandson, <i>Captivity</i> 235-66	Rodgers, "Declaration and Confession" 95-109	
	Sept 4 (Th)	Mather, <i>Wonders of an Invisible World</i> 308-13; Calef, <i>More Wonders of the Invisible World</i> 334-42	Knight, "Telling It Slant: The Testimony of Mercy Short," <i>EAL</i> 37 (2002).	RR #3
4	Sept 9 (T)	Mather, "Pillars of Salt" (1699); 65-93	Fly, "Vial Poured out upon the Sea" 111-17	
	Sept 11 (Th)	Hannah Dustan's Captivity and Revenge 343-53		RR#4
5	Sept 16 (T)	workshopping		Essay #1 Draft Due
	Sept 18 (Th)	Franklin, "Remarks Concerning Savages" 468-72	Franklin, "Witch Trial at Mount Holly"	Essay #1 Due
6	Sept 23 (T)		Syllavan, "Life of John Alias Owen Syllavan" (1756); Jubeart, "Confession and Dying Words" (1769)	
	Sept 25 (Th)		Packer, "Journal of the Life and Travels" (1773) 207-217; Buchanan, Ross, Brooks, "Dying Declarations" (1778); 219-231; Franklin, "Speech of Miss Polly Baker"	RR#5
7	Sept 30 (T)	Paine, <i>The Crisis</i> , No. 1 637-43; Jefferson, <i>Declaration of Independence</i> 651-7		
	Oct 2 (Th)	Crèvecoeur, "Melancholy Scene" 605-9	Mountain, "Sketches of the Life of Joseph Mountain, a Negro" (1790)	RR#6
8	Oct 7 (T)	Wheatley, Letters, 760-64; Apess, "Indian's Looking Glass for the White Man" 1051-8	"The Address of Abraham Johnstone, a Black Man, Who Was Hanged at Woodbury" (1797); http://docsouth.unc.edu	

			/neh/johnstone/johnstone.html)	
	Oct 9 (Th)	Fuller, <i>The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men. Woman versus Women.</i> 1637-59		RR#7
9	Oct 14 (T)			Midterm Exam
	Oct 16 (Th)	Hawthorne, <i>Scarlett Letter</i> 1377-1415		RR #8
10	Oct 21 (T)	Hawthorne, <i>Scarlett Letter</i> 1415-1454		
	Oct 23 (Th)	Hawthorne, <i>Scarlett Letter</i> 1454-end	'A' for Atlantic: The Colonizing Force of Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter By: Doyle, Laura; <i>American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography</i> , 2007 June; 79 (2): 243-73	RR #9
11	Oct 28 (T)	Poe, "The Purloined Letter" 1599-1612;	"Murders in Rue Morgue" (pdf) The Detective Gaze: Edgar A. Poe, the Flaneur, and the Physiognomy of Crime By: Werner, James V.; <i>American Transcendental Quarterly</i> , 2001 Mar; 15 (1): 5-21	Essay 2 proposals due
	Oct 30 (Th)	"The Tell-Tale Heart" 1589-93; "The Black Cat" 1593-99		RR #10
12	Nov 4 (T)		Poe, "Imp of the Perverse"	
	Nov 6 (Th)	Melville, "Billy Budd, Sailor" 2468-2495		RR #11
		19th Century		
13	Nov 11 (T)	Melville, "Billy Budd, Sailor" 2495-end	Billy Budd: Melville's Dilemma By: Hunt, Lester H.; <i>Philosophy and Literature</i> , 2002 Oct; 26 (2): 273-95.	
	Nov 13 (Th)	Melville, <i>Benito Cereno</i> 2405-2435		RR #12
14	Nov 18 (T)	Melville, <i>Benito Cereno</i> 2435-end		
	Nov 20 (Th)	workshop		Essay #2 draft due
15	Nov 25 (T)			Essay #2 Due
	Nov 27 (Th)	THANKSGIVING	No Class	
16	Dec 2 (T)	Thoreau, <i>Resistance to Civil Government</i> 1857-72		
	Dec 4 (Th)	Review		RR #13
Fin		Exam time:		Final Exam

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