

GENG 247 (Section 5)
M W F 1:25 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.
Keezell Hall G008

Spring 2001

Survey of American Literature: Beginnings to Civil War

General Information

Instructor: Dr. Alan Silva
E-Mail: silvaaj@jmu.edu
Office Hours: M W F 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
and by appointment

Office: Keezell 205
Phone No.: 568-6412

Course Description

All survey courses offered by the English department give students a taste of the breadth and diversity of literature spanning several generations. Surveys focus on the continuities and discontinuities in canon formation and emphasize the historical and cultural contexts of literature. They introduce students to literary periods and nationalities and provide a basis for further independent exploration of the literatures of any period or nationality.

In this particular survey, you will read a variety of pre-Civil War texts beginning with the 16th-century Spanish discovery narrative and concluding with the flowering of American prose and poetry in the mid-19th century. You will encounter many of the multiethnic voices of early America (European, Latin, African, and Native American), a number of religious groups (Puritan, Quaker, Catholic), and a wide variety of genres (sermons, spiritual autobiographies, slave and captivity narratives, poems, short stories).

Text

Paul Lauter, ed., et al., *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, Vol. 1, 3rd ed. (Houghton Mifflin)

Reading Assignments

All of the reading assignments are located on the calendar below; please read each assignment before coming to class. You are solely responsible for staying caught up with the reading; you will not be given any daily quizzes. Be forewarned, however, that you may be called upon in class to share your thoughts on the reading. Know also that if you do not read the assignments prior to coming to class, you will not be able to follow the lectures. If you do not understand the lectures, you will not be successful on the exams.

Writing Assignments and Exercises

On occasion, I will give you either a take-home writing assignment or an in-class short answer exercise. These brief assignments and exercises are primarily designed to help you prepare for the essay exams, but they should also assist you in becoming a more reflective, critical thinker. I will give you feedback on each one, but I will not grade them or give you any points for them. They are solely for your benefit. You may choose not to do them; your course grade will not be penalized. I strongly recommend, however, that you do the assignments and exercises to help you prepare for the exams.

Exams

You will have four graded exams in this course, all of which are listed on the calendar below. The first three will be non-comprehensive exams given at approximately three-week intervals during the semester. The fourth will be a comprehensive final exam given at the scheduled final examination time. All four exams will require you to answer factual questions on the historical, cultural, and biographical contexts of early American literature. Each one will also ask you to write short essays on excerpts from the readings and longer essays on general topic questions.

Major Project

You will be asked to complete an interdisciplinary, textual studies project that focuses on early America. As with your four exams, this project will also be given a letter grade. You will have great flexibility to design and develop your own project—aural, visual, verbal, creative, expository, on-line—based upon a set of early American topics. I will give you a separate handout that describes the scope of the project and provides you with a lengthy list of potential topics. All projects must be given prior approval by the instructor.

Late Work

All exams must be completed in-class on the day designated on the calendar. If you are absent on that day, you can only make up the exam if you have a verified excuse for serious illness, death in the family, or other serious and compelling emergency. *No exceptions.* The Major Project is due on the day indicated on the calendar. Late projects will be penalized one full grade for each class day they are late. A “B+” becomes a “C+” the first class day it is late, a “D+” the second class day, and so on.

Attendance and Participation

Although attendance and participation are your responsibility, and I will not take attendance after the first week, I want to strongly encourage you to attend class. You simply will not be successful in this course if you do not come to class regularly and participate in all classroom activities. You also will not find this class very enjoyable if you do not come every time, on-time, and stay for the entire period. I strongly recommend you not take this course if you think you will have difficulty coming to class.

Academic Honesty

For some of your assignments, you may need to refer to scholarly books, articles, or websites. When you refer (by quotation or paraphrase) to the work of others, you must provide proper attribution and citation. Failure to do so is considered academically dishonest. The consequences of such behavior ranges from failure on the assignment to dismissal from the university. Please ask if you are in doubt about when you need to cite a source and/or how to make that citation.

Incompletes

You must complete at least two-thirds of the course work, be in satisfactory standing (a “C” average or above) and have an unforeseen emergency arise at the end of the semester (serious illness, death in the family) in order to receive an incomplete. All incomplete grades must be given prior approval by the instructor.

Grading

Exam #1	10%
Exam #2	15%
Exam #3	20%
Major Project	25%
Final Exam	30%

Grades represent my evaluation of the quality of your work. If you are ever dissatisfied with an evaluation, please see me immediately (don’t wait until the end of the semester). All letter grades are converted into numerical equivalents and then calculated as percentages. Please see me for further details or to request a copy of my grade conversion table.

Calendar

M 1/8 Introduction: What is American Literature?

Cultures in Contact: Voices from the New World

W 1/10 Cabeza de Vaca, from *La Relación* (128-40)

F 1/12 Yuchi, “Creation of the Whites” (115-16)
 A Gentleman of Elvas, from *The Discovery and Conquest of Terra Florida* (140-44)
 Fray Marcos de Niza, from *A Relation* (156-59)
 • *Selected Film Clips from Cabeza de Vaca*

M 1/15 **CLASS CANCELED: MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. HOLIDAY**

W 1/17 Iroquois, “Confederacy of the Five Nations” (59-62)
 Selection of Native American Oral Poems (102-09)
 Smith, from *The Generall Historie of Virginia* (184-91)
 • *Selected Film Clips from Pocahontas*

God’s Plot: The Construction of the Puritan Self

F 1/19 Bradford, from *Of Plymouth Plantation* (247-66)

M 1/22 Bradford (continued)
 Morton, from *New English Canaan* (211-23)

W 1/24 Winthrop, from *A Modell of Christian Charity* (223-34), *Christian Experience* (234-38)

F 1/26 Rowlandson, from *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restauration* (340-66)

M 1/29 **EXAM #1**

God's Altar Needs Not Our Polishings: The Art of Puritan Poetry

- W 1/31** Cotton, from "Preface" to *The Bay Psalm Book* (329-30)
 Psalm 23 (334-35)
 Wigglesworth, selections from *The Day of Doom* (315-26)
 Bradstreet, "The Author to Her Book" (293)
- F 2/2** Bradstreet, "A Letter to Her Husband, Absent Upon Public Employment" (306-07),
 "In Memory of My Dear Grandchild Elizabeth Bradstreet" (309-10), "On My
 Dear Grandchild Simon Bradstreet" (310), "Upon the Burning of Our House"
 (311-12)
- M 2/5** Taylor, "Upon Wedlock, & Death of Children" (386-87), "Prologue" to *Preparatory
 Meditations* (388-90), "Meditation 8" (391-92)

Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft in Salem

- W 2/7** Mather, from *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (419-25)
 Sewall, from *The Diary* (408-11)
- F 2/9** Franklin, "A Witch Trial at Mount Holly" (730-31)
 Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" (2207-16)
- M 2/12** *Film Viewing of The Crucible*
- W 2/14** *Continued Film Viewing of The Crucible*
- F 2/16** *Continued Film Viewing of The Crucible and Discussion*
- M 2/19** **EXAM #2**

A Rising People: The Formation of the American Self

- W 2/21** Edwards, from *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (577-81),
Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God (592-603)
- F 2/23** *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (continued)
Edwards, *Personal Narrative* (581-92)
• *Selected Film Clips from The Apostle*
- M 2/26** Franklin, *The Autobiography*, Parts One and Two (762-819)
- W 2/28** Ashbridge, from *Some Account* (604-18)
Occom, *A Short Narrative of My Life* (979-86)
- F 3/2** Equiano, from *The Interesting Narrative* (1018-36)
- M 3/5 to F 3/9** **CLASSES CANCELED: SPRING BREAK**

Revolutionary Visions: The Literature of American Independence

- M 3/12** Crèvecoeur, from *Letters from an American Farmer*, “Letter III: What is an American?” (854-59)
Paine, from *Common Sense* (884-90)
John and Abigail Adams, selections from *Letters* (905-06)
“The Yankee’s Return from Camp” (955-57)
“Burrowing Yankees” (964)
- W 3/14** Jefferson, “A Declaration by the Representatives” (919-23), from *Notes on the State of Virginia* (932-37, 939-40), from “Letter to James Madison” (941-44)
Wheatley, “On Being Brought from Africa to America” (1104)
- F 3/16** Madison, from *The Federalist*, “No. 10” (1248-53)
Winthrop [Agrippa], “An Anti-Federalist Paper” (1253-56)
- M 3/19** **EXAM #3**

Trust Thyself: Selfhood in the American Renaissance

- W 3/21** Emerson, “Self-Reliance” (1622-38)
- F 3/23** Fuller, from *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1714-35)
Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government” (2093-2107)
- M 3/26** Copway, from *The Life of Kah-ge-gah-bowh* (1564-77)
Douglass, selections from *Narrative of the Life of an American Slave* (1762-65, 1784-1818)

Liberating Gods: The Rise of a National Literature

- W 3/28** Emerson, “The American Scholar” (1609-21)
“The Poet” (1646-61)
- F 3/30** Tales from the Hispanic Southwest: “Dona Sebastiana” (1320-22), “La Llorona” (1330-31), “The Devil Woman” (1331-32)
• Film of *The New England Transcendentalists*
- M 4/2** Irving, “Rip Van Winkle” (1342-54), “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (1354-73)
- W 4/4** “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (continued)
• *Selected Film Clips from Sleepy Hollow*
MAJOR PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE
- F 4/6** **CLASS CANCELED: PROJECT WORKSHOP**
- M 4/9** Sedgwick, from *Hope Leslie* (1427-39)
- W 4/11** Poe, “The Philosophy of Composition” (1529-37)
“The Raven” (1514-17)
- F 4/13** Poe, “The Purloined Letter” (1489-1501)
- M 4/16** Hawthorne, “The Minister’s Black Veil” (2216-24)
- W 4/18** Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (2402-27)
- F 4/20** Cary, “Uncle Christopher’s” (2607-23)

MAJOR PROJECT DUE

- M 4/23** Whitman, "Preface" to *Leaves of Grass* (2729-43)
Selections from *Song of Myself* (2743-48, 2758-60, 2762-64, 2786-94)
- W 4/25** *Song of Myself* (continued)
- F 4/27** Conclusion: American Literature Revisited
- *Course Evaluations and Discussion of Final Exam*

FINAL EXAM: MONDAY, APRIL 30
10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.