

English 103A: American Literature 1789 – 1900 Summer 2012

Instructor: Zach Horton

Meeting Time and Place: MTWR 3:30PM-4:35PM; Girvetz 1115

Office Hours and Location: Tuesday, 2:30-3:30pm, Thursday 4:45-5:45pm.
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Introduction:

Nations aren't born; they're made. During this 2012 election season we will take a hard look at the formative period of the United States through its literature. We'll try to gain as many perspectives as possible on an inherently slippery phenomenon: a nation and a people in a process of becoming. How were competing notions of nationhood and identity circulated in the discourse of the late 18th and early 19th century, and what effects did they produce? We'll consider the "United States" not as a fixed entity, but as a series of discursive productions; not only a collection of attitudes and social formations reflected in its contemporary texts but as a set of (sometimes opposing) identities constructed through the very circulation of those texts. How did a set of "national characteristics" come to be defined, and at what cost? In producing a new identity, "The American," which types and identities were elided; who was the American defined against? What were the competing claims on identity made by "Old World" ancestry, religion, and economic interests? The stabilization of an American identity was never a *fait accompli*; these processes are ongoing to the present day. We will attempt to trace a series of becomings and mutations through American literature from these formative texts through the literary masterpieces of the antebellum period (including Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Melville, and others) and through the transition to modernity in the late nineteenth century. We will explore how American literature of the nineteenth century trace many of the fault lines and sites of twenty-first century contestations of identity, values, and relationships to nature, land, and the world at large in the not-so-United States.

Required Texts:

Norton Anthology of American Literature, Volume B. 8th edition. ISBN 978-0-393-93477-9

Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (1855 edition)

Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (1899)

Course Reader, available as PDF from ERes. (<http://eres.library.ucsb.edu/> password: trader)

Assignments:

Forum: As you read the assigned texts, please comment on them in the course web site (URL and access to be announced in class). This is to get your direct feedback on the texts, and to keep track of your reading progress. The instructor will not comment on your posts directly; however, you are encouraged to comment upon each others' posts. At the end of the course, you will be assigned a grade based upon the number and quality of your contributions. The forum is meant to be a place of reflection and dialog about the texts we're reading. If you actively participate, you will receive a good grade! Your forum participation is in lieu of a midterm, and is **worth 15% of your grade**.

Paper #1: This will be a 4-5 page essay which will require you to close read and analyze one of the literary works covered so far in the course. I will provide you with prompts / topics to choose from; you may also create your own topic, with my approval. The essay must be MLA-formatted (see the MLA Handbook, Seventh Edition) and include a works cited page.

Paper #1 is worth 15% of your grade.

Paper #2: This will be a 6-7 page essay which will require you to close read and analyze one of the literary works covered so far in the course. I will provide you with prompts / topics to choose from; you may also create your own topic, with my approval. This essay *must include research* based on a *minimum of two scholarly sources*, and must be MLA-formatted (see

the MLA Handbook, Seventh Edition) and include a works cited page. **Paper #2 is worth 25% of your grade.**

Final: The *cumulative* final exam will include two parts. The first part will ask for identification of passages, terms, and characters. The second part of the exam asks for a short essay. The final counts for **30% of your grade.**

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Please note the following:

- o More than **one absence** requires a documented excuse
- o More than **two unexcused absences** will result in a failing participation grade
- o **Four or more absences** may result in being dropped from the course
- o Every **three “lates”** will amount to one absence; you will be counted late if you are not present when attendance is taken at the beginning of each class

In the event of an unavoidable absence, please contact me before class. You are responsible for whatever material you miss, including handouts, assignments, and announcements.

Class Participation:

Participation is worth 15% of your grade. Please come prepared to discuss the materials in a thoughtful manner. This means reading closely and carefully, taking notes, writing down questions, marking interesting, difficult, or significant passages you would like to discuss. **CELL PHONE use is not permitted** in class. Please keep your phones off and put away. You may use a computer or tablet to take notes if you turn your wifi off.

Papers and Late Work

All papers and assignments are due—in *hard-copy* format—on the specified due dates indicated in the schedule below. Any work submitted after this time will be considered “late.” Late work will be accepted up to 5 days after the original due date, with a 1/3 letter-grade-deduction per day late.

Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism, of all kinds, is a serious offense and will not be tolerated. Plagiarism includes the failure to acknowledge all secondary sources in your work, passing off another person’s work as your own, or submitting a paper written for a previous class. Plagiarism can be obvious or subtle, intentional or a careless mistake. Take your work and documentation seriously: keep track of your sources as you read and take notes; document quotes and paraphrases as you write, not when you are finished, scrambling to find who said what and where. If you are ever in doubt about when and how to acknowledge a source, please ask! At the very least, plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course and a mark on your academic records, and may result in disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion.

Schedule

Week One: Politics and American Exceptionalism

Monday 6/25

Introduction, Syllabus
Campaign speech excerpts, 2012
Walt Whitman, “Full of Life Now”

Tuesday 6/26

Benjamin Franklin, “The Way to Wealth” and *The Autobiography* (excerpt), from Reader

Wednesday 6/27

Thomas Paine, “Common Sense” (excerpt), from Reader
“The Declaration of Independence” from Reader

Thursday 6/28

Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance” from Norton

Week Two: Slavery and Protestantism

Monday 7/2

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) from Norton (Chapters I, VII, IX)

Paper #1 prompts distributed in class.

Tuesday 7/3

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) from Norton (Chapter X, XI)

Wednesday 7/4

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), from Norton (Chapters XX "Topsy" and XL "The Martyr")

Thursday 7/5

Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" from Norton

Week Three: Nature and Individualism

Monday 7/9

Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature" from Norton

Paper #1 due

Tuesday 7/10

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (1854) from Norton ("Where I Lived, What I Lived For," and "Conclusion")

Wednesday 7/11

Henry David Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government" from Norton

Thursday 7/12

Walt Whitman, "To a Stranger" from Reader
"Song of Myself" (sections) from *Leaves of Grass*

Week Four: Language and Business

Monday 7/16

Walt Whitman, "I Sing the Body Electric", "A Song of Occupations" from *Leaves of Grass*

Tuesday 7/17

Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, Chapters 41-42, from Norton

Herman Melville, "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" from Norton

Wednesday 7/18

Herman Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener" from Norton

Thursday 7/19

Mark Twain, "How to Tell A Story", "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County", "Political Economy" from Reader

Week Five: Science, Rationality, and Faith

Monday 7/23

Edgar Allan Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" from Reader

Paper #2 prompt

Tuesday 7/24

Edgar Allan Poe, "The Purloined Letter" from Norton

Wednesday 7/25

Nathaniel Hawthorn, "Rappaccini's Daughter" from Norton

Thursday 7/26

Emily Dickinson, poems: 202, 236, 373, 409, 411, 598, 817, 1263, from Norton

Week Six: Modern Awakenings

Monday 7/30

Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (Chapters I - XVII)

Tuesday 7/31

Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (Chapters XVIII - XXXII)

Wednesday 8/1

Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (Chapter XXXIII - end)
Conclusion and Review

Thursday 8/2

Final Exam

Paper #2 Due