ENGLISH 227-501: AMERICAN LITERATURE: BEGINNINGS TO CIVIL WAR
SPRING 2011: CHEN 108, MWF 11:30-12:20

Instructor: Professor Dennis Berthold
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Catalog Course Description: ENGL 227 American Literature: The Beginnings to Civil War. Credit 3. Representative writers, genres and movements of the period.

Course Description: The course begins with readings in Puritan settlement literature, moves on through the Age of Reason and early nationalism, and then focuses on the years 1830-1860, including such classic writers as Poe, Irving, Melville, Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, plus less well known authors such as Harriet Jacobs and Rebecca Harding Davis. Material from this course will include written texts and such visual representations as photographs, illustrations, films, or theatrical performances.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
☐ Identify major writers and works of the period.
☐ Place key texts and authors in their historical periods.
☐ Distinguish among key ideologies and values that shaped American identity.
☐ Use the internet critically to research important questions and solve problems.
☐ Recognize the continuing influence of early American literature on today's culture.

Core Curriculum Objectives:

Critical Thinking Skills (CTS): The course will enhance critical thinking skills through consistent reading and class discussion of key ideas in American Literature from the Puritans to the Civil War.

Communication Skills (CS): The course enhances communication skills through small and large group discussion of ideas, issues, questions, and themes central to course reading.

Personal Responsibility (PR): The course will enhance personal responsibility through engagement with moral and thorny ethical issues that arise in class readings.

Social Responsibility (SR): The course enhances social responsibility by providing students with a cross cultural understanding of how history, region, and broader social forces have shaped the distinctive literary traditions of American Literature from the Puritans to the Civil War.

Evaluation of Core Objectives

CTS: The evaluation of critical thinking skills will be based on exams and class participation and may include written work. Exams will be designed to allow students to
demonstrate their ability to evaluate and synthesize key ideas from the assigned reading. Class room discussion will focus on helping students better understand the nuances and complexities of American Literature from the Puritans to the Civil War.

CS: The course will help students learn how to develop a greater understanding of American Literature from the Puritans to the Civil War that may involve guided writing assignments in which they will receive feedback, exams in which students will be expected to effectively convey key ideas from the course succinctly and clearly, and class room discussion in which students will learn how to express questions and thoughts about the subtleties of each text under examination. Material from this course will include written texts and such visual representations as photographs, illustrations, films, or theatrical performances.

PR: The course material throughout the semester will offer students an opportunity to reflect upon personal responsibility through such topics as religious persecution, slavery and the abolition movement, quest for freedom and civic disobedience, values of individualism, self reliance and utopian ideals, respect for nature, sin and repentance, and the relationship between war and industry. Students will explore these topics through group discussion, writing assignments, and exams.

SR: The evaluation of social responsibility will be based upon an end-of-the-semester short writing assignment in which students will be asked to reflect upon how their knowledge of literatures from previous historical periods and world cultures outside of their own has changed in light of the new information that they now possess. Students will be expected to demonstrate how key insights from the course have helped broaden their understanding of how history, culture, and philosophical outlooks have shaped the literary traditions of American Literature from the Puritans to the Civil War.

Grading Scale
A=90-100
B=80-89
C=70-79
D=60-69
F=0-59

Readings: These are the core of the course, and you must read all the required assignments as scheduled. Note that all author introductions are required reading, too.

Examinations (70%): Exams will use a mix of objective and short answer questions to test your knowledge of both lectures and readings. The schedule and grade percentages are:
☐ Exam 1: Monday, February 21 (20%)
☐ Exam 2: Monday, April 4 (20%)
☐ Comprehensive Final Exam TBA (30%). On the final students will be expected to answer a short question in which they will have to demonstrate how key insights from the
course have helped broaden their understanding of the way differing histories, cultures and philosophical outlooks shape the development of a literary tradition, including their own.

Exams are based on all class reading, discussion, lectures, and on-line materials, and each exam will incorporate some material from previous exams.

**Reading Questions (10%; 1% for each of 10 postings):** Starting on second week of class and continuing once a week the rest of the semester, I will open a discussion board on eLearning where you must post a question or observation about the week’s readings. I will read and respond briefly to all of them and use them to formulate team research questions and encourage class discussion. Once you have posted ten times you will be done with this requirement, but I encourage you to read the posts every week to prepare for your team research and review for exams.

**Team Research (20%):** Half of this grade will be assigned by your team members and half will be a team score that I determine based on the team’s work over the entire semester. I will post rubrics for both grades.

**Attendance and Participation:** Attendance and participation will be based on constant attendance and fidelity to reading and other assignments; quizzes; in-class assignments; contribution to discussion. All students are expected to complete readings before the class period in which they will be discussed. University rules related to excused and unexcused absences are located on-line at [http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07](http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07).

**Grading:** I use a point system with each exam counting 100 points and 90% = A, 80% = B, and so forth. There will be 10 reading questions, and each one will count 1 point in your course average. Your team grade will also be a raw score totaling 20 points.

**REQUIRED TEXT**
American Literature, volume 1, ed. William E. Cain (Penguin Academics, 2004). It is available at the TAMU Bookstore and online. It is our only text but will be supplemented by required online readings I will post on eLearning.

**READING SCHEDULE**
All page numbers refer to the Cain anthology. Note that all introductory material is assigned. I reserve the right to make minor changes and will let you know them in advance. Note the days when reading assignments are posted on eLearning too.

1: The Emergence of the American Self
Week I MWF: Puritan Influences
   Introduction to course. Overview of recurrent American themes and ideals.
   Background essay: "Contexts for Early American Literature," 3-33.

Smith & Pocahontas continued.

Week 2: MWF  **Remembering King Philip's War**

Continue Rowlandson, A True History, 92-137. Bradstreet, poems, 84-91. Organize research teams. Team research.

Week 3: MWF  **Sacred and Secular Traditions**


Team research.

Week 4: MWF  **Nature and the Enlightenment**


Team research.

Week 5: MWF  **A New American Self**
Emerson, 475-77; "Self-Reliance," 532-54.

Irving, 424-26; "Rip Van Winkle," 426-42.

Review for Exam 1.

2: A National Literature Arrives
Week 6: MWF  **History into Literature**
Exam 1.


Week 7: MWF  **Conscious Craftmanship: Poe and Hawthorne**
"Early American Short Narratives." Read selections on eLearning.
Poe, 786-88; poetry, 788-93; "The Philosophy of Composition," 830-41.
Poe, eLearning: "How to Write a Blackwood Article" and "A Predicament."

Week 8: MWF The Psychology of Gothic
Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Fall of the House of Usher," 788-809. Mid-
semester grades due.


Team research and Poe and Hawthorne.

Spring Break

Week 9: MWF Gothicized Slavery

Jacobs, Incidents, 914-52.

Team research.

Week 10: MWF Radical Individualism


Team research.

3: Race, War, and Industry
Week 11: MWF Race, War and Industry
Exam 2 (includes some material from Exam 1)

Melville, 1103-06; "Bartleby, the Scrivener," 1114-47.

Team research.

Week 12: MWF
Melville, "Benito Creon," 1147-1204.

Melville, "Benito Creon," 1205-1218.

Team research.

Week 13: MWF
Douglass, 1009-12, Narrative, 1022-51.

Douglass, Narrative, 1051-79; "Letter to His Former Master," 1095-1102.
5/2 Davis, "Life in the Iron Mills," 1323-57.

Week 14: MWF Whitman & the Poetry of War
Whitman, 1221-25; "Song of Myself," 1225-1278.

Team research. Review final.

COMPREHENSIVE FINAL EXAM: On the final students will be expected to answer a short question in which they will have to demonstrate how key insights from the course have helped broaden their understanding of the way differing histories, cultures and philosophical outlooks shape the development of a literary tradition, including their own.

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The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, in Cain Hall, Room B118, or call 845-1637. For additional information visit http://disability.tamu.edu.

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