

## English 220 – American Literature: Colonial to Romantic

**Eng-220L, online course, FA '13**

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**THIS IS NOT THE OFFICIAL SYLLABUS FOR THIS COURSE. THE OFFICIAL SYLLABUS WILL BE DISTRIBUTED VIA BLACKBOARD TO REGISTERED STUDENTS WHEN THE COURSE BEGINS. CHANGES WILL BE MADE.**

### Texts:

*The Norton Anthology of American Literature* 7<sup>th</sup> ed. General Ed. Nina Baym.

Volumes A and B. New York: Norton, 2007. (If you are unable to get the 7<sup>th</sup> edition, get the newer 8<sup>th</sup> edition).

### Course Description:

This course will explore early American literature until 1865 by examining a wide variety of genres: novels, short stories, poetry, autobiographies, and essays. The course will study Colonial, Enlightenment, and Romantic Literature, and learn the popular debates and common characteristics of literature from these periods. We will examine how early writers imagine America and the American. We will also explore how post-revolutionary texts both affirm and challenge many of these early ideas. The course will pay particular attention to ideas of citizenship and belonging, as we analyze how authors generate individual and national identity through literature.

### Course Objectives:

- To learn about early American history and culture through reading primary texts from the period.
- To compare literary texts from a given period or genre to learn how these authors responded to their cultural milieu through writing, noting the similarities, differences, and contradictions in these responses.
- To develop close reading skills.
- To learn how to use close reading skills to construct written arguments about literature.
- To learn how others have interpreted these texts over time. This includes generating your own interpretations as well as learning about your classmates readings of these texts.

### Instructor Information:

I started working as an Assistant Professor in the English department at Mary Baldwin College two years ago. Prior to this position, I worked at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, NY, where I taught courses in American Literature, Literature and the Environment, and writing. I have an interdisciplinary background, earning my doctorate in English at Loyola University Chicago, my M.A. in English from the State University

of New York (SUNY) at Cortland, and a B.S. in Biology from Le Moyne College. I specialize in nineteenth century American literature, focusing on issues of nature, race, and identity. My dissertation, *Infectious Agents: Race and Environment in Nineteenth-Century America*, examines the mutual constructions of space and race in America across the long nineteenth century. I recently published an article in *Women's Studies Quarterly* entitled "Conservation and Cleanliness: Racial and Environmental Purity in Ellen Richards and Charlotte Perkins Gilman."

### **Course Policies:**

**Assignments:** Papers should be submitted through Blackboard under the "Assignments" section. If you have trouble submitting the assignment through Blackboard, email it to me as a Word attachment (or embed the paper into the body of your email if absolutely necessary). Since you are submitting your work electronically, be sure to save your work before submitting it. All papers must be double-spaced, in 12 point font, with standard margins in Times New Roman. When saving your work, always insert your name in your file name. **Missing assignments receive zeros and will result in failure of the course.**

NOTE: Because of the nature of this course, **you CANNOT wait until the end of the semester to do the reading and written work.** Written assignments and discussion board postings have deadlines with penalties for lateness.

**Revision:** Students have the option to revise Paper #1. Response papers which receive an "unsat" (unsatisfactory) can also be revised, if they are turned in on time. Response paper revisions are due one week after the original has been returned to you.

**Late Work:** If you turn in a paper late, your grade for that paper will be lowered by 1/3 of a grade each week it is late (for example, a "C+" would become a "C"). While the deduction increases weekly, please note that the penalty is enacted the first day the assignment is late (there is no grace period). I will not grant last minute extensions; however, if you foresee a conflict with a paper deadline, speak to me ahead of time, and I might be able to grant you extension. If extenuating circumstances prevent you from turning in a paper on time, notify me immediately. While late work receives a deduction, it still receives credit. Missing assignments receive no credit (a zero) and will result in failure of the course.

NOTE: **I will only grant an ET (extended time) for extreme circumstances, and you must have 2/3 of the work completed.** (An extreme circumstance might include death of an immediate family member or extended hospitalization of the student).

**Expectations:** Students are expected to keep up with the reading, do all written assignments (three response papers, two formal papers), take a midterm and final exam, and post on Blackboard (one weekly comment). Since the class will be communicating through discussion boards, it is imperative that students treat each other respectfully. If personal issues arise or you get behind on your work for whatever reason, notify me immediately. I can only assist students who ask for help!

**Correspondence:** While you can certainly call my office or stop in and see me, email is the most efficient way to contact me. When emailing me, please put your course

and section number in the subject line (Eng. 220L). If you are asking a question that would benefit the class, then please ask it through Blackboard; there will be an “ask your professor” thread available every week on the discussion board.

**Plagiarism:** Stealing someone else’s ideas or words without proper acknowledgment is unacceptable. All work written for this course (including the discussion board), must be generated for this class exclusively. Sources must be properly documented in MLA format. Plagiarism is defined as follows:

- Using the exact words of another person’s work/writing without acknowledgement of your source through the use of quotation marks and correct citation/documentation;
- Rephrasing a passage by another writer without giving proper credit;
- Using someone else’s facts or ideas without acknowledgement;
- Using a piece of writing for one course that was already used in a previous course (or in courses in which you are simultaneously enrolled) without express permission from both instructors to do so; and
- Presenting fabricated or falsified citations or materials.

Cheating on exams is also an affront to the principle of academic honesty and the Mary Baldwin College Honor Code. They are serious offences and will be punished accordingly.

**Suspected plagiarism/cheating may result in a failing grade for this course.**

**Special Needs:** If you have a disability (physical or leaning) that may prevent you from meeting course requirements, contact me and Bev Askegaard, Director of the Learning Skills Center, [baskegae@mbc.edu](mailto:baskegae@mbc.edu) (x7250) as soon as possible. Course requirements will not be waived but reasonable accommodations can be developed. If you think you may have an undiagnosed disability, contact Bev Askegaard.

### **Using Blackboard:**

- You should check Blackboard multiple times a week, paying particular attention to the “**Announcements**” section, which is where I will announce changes.
- If I have any notes, links, pictures, etc. regarding the weekly reading, I will post them under “**Content**,” which is another section you should be checking regularly.
- Writing Assignments – including response paper topics, formal paper topics, and exams – will be posted under the “**Assignments**” section of Blackboard, and you will submit assignments here.
- You need to look at the “**Discussions**” section of Blackboard multiple times a week because you will need to do weekly postings.
  - What is a posting? – You need to write at least **one posting per week**. I will drop the two lowest posting grades. (So, if you have a bad week and fail to post by Sunday, the zero you would receive for that would hopefully be dropped). Your posting must respond to the reading by attempting to answer at least one of the discussion questions I have posted under “Discussions.” You should also respond to your fellow classmates

within your posting if possible. Your comment should be at least 100 words or more.

Within the “Discussion” section of Blackboard, each week will have its own “forum” simply labeled by week (i.e. “Week 1”). I will post the discussion question(s) as “threads” on the discussion board, and you can choose which question(s) you wish to answer and do so accordingly. (You do not have to answer every discussion question within the forum to meet the minimum requirement for postings, but *feel free to do more than one weekly comment to improve your grade*).

Keep in mind that the point of the discussion board is to discuss; hence, constant repetition isn’t that fruitful. Feel free to *ask questions* within this medium, as well as make comments. Try to respond to your classmates comments. It can be particularly helpful when a posting cites a text (giving the page number) to prove its point.

- When are postings due? – Your weekly posting is always due by the end of the week (Sunday at midnight).
- How are they graded? – Your discussion board postings will collectively yield your “participation” grade for the semester (worth 15% of your total grade). When evaluating your participation grade, I will consider the following questions. *Did the student complete the minimum requirement? Did the student go beyond the minimum requirement? Did the student show interest, thought, and/or originality in his/her posts?* I will not be giving you a weekly grade for your postings. If you are wondering where you stand, contact me.
- I do expect you to ***read everything on the discussion board***, including questions which you did not respond to and postings that might have been made after you posted. Keep in mind that many students will post over the weekend, and I will make my comments after the discussion board closes (by Tuesday night). **I often post very important notes this way.** *Therefore, you will need to revisit the discussion board after the Sunday due date to make sure you have read everyone’s comments including mine.*
- I plan on “closing” each weekly discussion board the Tuesday after the reading is due (again, readings and postings are always due by Sunday night). When I say “close,” I mean that I will have responded to the discussion board at this point and noted who posted and how the student did in my personal grade book (not the Blackboard grade book). The discussion will still be visible, but anyone who posts past the due date will not receive credit. This means that **if you do not keep up with your weekly postings, you will lose your opportunity to post which will negatively affect your participation grade.**
- If you have any technical problems contact Beverly Riddell: [briddell@mbc.edu](mailto:briddell@mbc.edu).

**Grading:**

Paper #1 (5-8 pages)	- 20% (1 <sup>st</sup> version 10%, optional revision 10%)
Paper #2 (5-8 pages)	- 20%
Response papers (3)	- 15% (each response paper is worth 5%)
Midterm exam	- 15%
Final exam	- 15%
Participation	- 15% (Discussion Board Postings)

**Tentative Course Schedule:** (Instructor holds the right to change the schedule at any time). Reading and writing assignments are written under the week they are *due*. You are not required to read the biographies of the authors and/or the historical background provided by your book, but I recommend reading them.

**Week 1 (Mon. 9/2 – Sun. 9/8)**

Iroquois Creation Story (18-21), Bradford, from *Of Plymouth Plantation* (114-138)

**Week 2 (Mon. 9/9 – Sun. 9/15)**

Winthrop, from *A Model of Christian Charity* (147-58), Bradstreet, poetry and letters starting w/ “The Flesh and the Spirit” (202-217), Wheatley “On Being Brought from Africa to America” (752-3), Rowlandson, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (235-67), **Response Paper #1 due** (Sun. 9/15 @ midnight)

**Week 3 (Mon. 9/16 – Sun. 9/22)**

Mather, from *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (308-13), Calef, from *More Wonders of the Invisible World* (334-42), Crèvecoeur, from *Letters from an American Farmer* (595-616), Franklin, “The Way to Wealth” (451-57) and “Information to Those Who Would Remove to America” (463-68), Jefferson, from *Notes on the State of Virginia* (657-65), Paine, from *The Age of Reason* (643-49), distribute paper 1 prompts

**Week 4 (Mon. 9/23 – Sun. 9/29)**

Foster, *The Coquette; or, the History of Eliza Wharton* (806-904), **Response Paper #2 due** (Sun. 9/29 @ midnight)

**Week 5 (Mon. 9/30 – Sun. 10/6)**

Irving, “Rip Van Winkle” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (951-85), **Thesis approval due for Paper #1** (Sun. 10/6 @ midnight)

**Week 6 (Mon. 10/7 – Sun. 10/13)**

**MIDTERM EXAM** (Sun. 10/13 @ midnight)

**Week 7 (Mon. 10/14 – Sun. 10/20)**

Bryant poetry (1045-51), Longfellow poetry (1497-1507), Hawthorne, “The Minister’s Black Veil” (1311-20), “The Birth-Mark” (1320-32), **PAPER #1 DUE** (Sun. 10/20 @ midnight)

**Week 8 (Mon. 10/21 – Sun. 10/27)**

Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1553-66), Emerson, “Nature” (1110-38)

**Week 9 (Mon. 10/28 – Sun. 11/3)**

Thoreau, *Walden* chap. 1 & 2 (1872-1924), Whitman, from “Song of Myself” #1-10 (2210-17), #52 (2254), “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” (2263-7) (FYI – deadline to withdraw or change to P/NC is TBA)

**Week 10 (Mon. 11/4 – Sun. 11/10)**

Dickinson, “I Taste a Liquor Never Brewed” (2562), “Because I Could Not Stop for Death” (2578), “This is My Letter to the World” (2578), “I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died” (2579), “Much Madness is Divinest Sense” (2581), “Publication – is the Auction” (2585), “A Narrow Fellow in the Grass” (2588), Melville, *Benito Cereno* (2405-2430), **PAPER #1 Optional Revision DUE** (Sun. 11/10 @ midnight)

**Week 11 (Mon. 11/11 – Sun. 11/17)**

Melville, *Benito Cereno* (2430-61), Stowe, from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1698-1732), **Response Paper #3 due** (Sun. 11/17 @ midnight)

**Week 12 (Mon. 11/18 – Sun. 11/24)**

Stowe, from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1732-92)

**Week 13 (Mon. 11/25 – Sun. 12/1)**

Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” (2140-43), Thanksgiving Break (no classes 11/23-11/27)

**Week 14 (Mon. 12/2 – Sun. 12/8)**

Jacobs, from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1809-1829), **PAPER #2 DUE** (Sun. 12/8 @ midnight)

\* **FINAL EXAM** – details TBA (exam week is from Dec. 9<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>)

ALL Late work for this course must be turned in by Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>.

The course emphasizes multi-media literacy, design and presentation skills. Bonus points will be available for attendance during live lecture recordings and labs. Students are expected to complete and present a portfolio of their multimedia projects. The materials in this course available online or via a website link are for the exclusive use of registered students currently enrolled in this course and may not be further distributed. In addition to legal sanctions, violation of these copyright prohibitions may result in University disciplinary action. This Syllabus and set of guidelines may be changed by the instructor at any time during the semester. A tentative course schedule is appended to this syllabus. The official/current course schedule is always posted online in MyASUCourses/Blackboard and Google. Please keep abreast of current class topics so that you may always be prepared for class. Assignment due dates are also posted on the course schedule. Student Learning Outcomes. Most assignments will be submitted via Blackboard. Assignment submission links in Blackboard are set to automatically disappear when the deadline passes. After the deadline, late assignments will only be accepted through a "Late Work" submission link in Blackboard. There are only three such links in Blackboard therefore any late assignments beyond those three, will not be accepted at all. Example Syllabus. Meeting Times & Required Materials. The course is entirely online-based. There are no formal/official meeting times and there are no required textbooks or other materials to purchase for this course. All required materials will be provided online and accessible through Blackboard and the World Wide Web. Important course information is distributed via email, and failure to read that email in a timely fashion may result in missed opportunities or instructions that could lead to earning a failing grade in this course. [The same is true for any course at VCU, so you should always check your email daily while you are enrolled at VCU.] Further Information. For further information, please check the other areas of this site and in the HUMS 202 area in Blackboard.