

American Literary Traditions 42.282.202

Fall 2013

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This is a sweeping survey that covers texts from the “beginnings” of American literature (which may seem not very “American” at all) through to the very recent past (the year 2000 or so). To be clear, this is pretty insane. We’ll do the best we can. Throughout the course, we’ll be thinking about why certain texts make it into the canon of American literature, and into this survey and other survey courses. We’ll read a variety of kinds of texts, including private diaries, poetry, sermons, oral tales, short stories, letters, and other genres. Why should we read these texts? What insights do they provide? What stories are we missing? Why and how do editors of anthologies choose which authors and texts to include and exclude? No one-semester survey of this literature could be complete; however, I have attempted to give you a breadth of authors, including both canonical works and voices from the margins that are equally interesting and informative. By the end of the semester, you should have an understanding of the major themes and currents in American literary history. And hopefully along the way, you’ll discover a few new writers that you will enjoy.

Class Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30 – 1:45

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11 - 12 and by appointment in O’Leary Library 461

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Required Text: *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: Shorter Eighth Edition*. ISBN: 978-0-393-91885-4

Course Goals:

- ⇒ To gain a working knowledge of major figures, texts, and movements in American literary history
- ⇒ To gain an understanding of canon formation – how and why works are included (or not) in our history
- ⇒ To develop skills of close and careful reading
- ⇒ To practice writing, both formally and informally, in response to texts
- ⇒ To enhance discussion skills by participating in classroom discussion

Your Course Goals:

This course relies upon a participatory, collaborative learning experience. While I have many goals for the course (specified above), hopefully you also have your own goals. Take a moment right here at the beginning of the semester to write down **at least 3 goals you have for yourself in this course:**

1.

2.

3.

Instructional Resources

The Centers for Learning and Academic Support Services provide many resources, including tutoring in writing: <http://class.uml.edu/>. I encourage you to seek assistance if you are struggling in this or any class here at UML. Their services are free to use (and paid for by your student fees!).

Disability Accommodations:

In accordance with University policy and the ADA, I will provide accommodation for students with documented disabilities. If you have a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible. Their office is on North campus, in Cumnock Hall C6, phone: 978-934-4574, e-mail: Disability@uml.edu. This documentation is confidential.

A note on classroom conduct:

In this class, and in all classes at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell, students are expected to exhibit professional and respectful behavior that is conducive to a mutually beneficial learning environment in the classroom. Examples of inappropriate behavior include: text messaging, listening to music, cell phone use (other than the campus alert system), late arrivals, early departures, use of laptops for other than class purposes, disrespectful comments or behavior, intentional disruptions, failure to follow faculty directives. Students in violation of these standards may be asked to leave class and/or be referred to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action.

University Cancellation Information: 978-934-2121, or check uml.edu. If the University closes, upon return to class, the items for both the missed class and the day of return class are due. In the case of an exam or paper due on a day the University closes, the exam or paper is due on the day we return to class.

Course Requirements:

This is a 3 credit course, as defined by federal regulation (I'm not kidding). You should expect to complete 6 hours of out of class work each week for approximately 15 weeks, for a total of 90 hours of outside-of-class work.

Attendance is required. This is not a correspondence course. You can fail the course for not attending class. You have two (2) "free" absences to use as you need. For every class beyond those two that you miss, your final grade for the class will be lowered one grade step. (I.e., if you have a "B" for the class, but have missed 4 classes, you will receive a "C+" for your final grade.) Excessive or habitual lateness can also count as an absence.

Good classroom citizenship is required. Good classroom citizenship goes beyond just "participation" in the sense of raising your hand a lot. It includes sharing your thoughts and actively listening to the thoughts and comments of your peers. We will have both full-class discussions and small group work. If you are not particularly comfortable speaking in the full-class discussion, be sure you are making up for it in the smaller group discussions. Please be considerate of your classmates and make the classroom a space where everyone can speak their mind. Also, as a courtesy to everyone in the room, please turn off your cell phone before class begins. If you must eat or drink during class, please be respectful of those around you, and of those who come after you by cleaning up after yourself.

You are responsible for completing all reading assignments on the dates they are due. You need to have read (and have your book with you) so that you can join the discussion and participate in each class session's activities. I reserve the right to give reading quizzes as necessary to prod your reading, though I would rather not resort to such ploys.

You are responsible for completing all writing assignments on the dates they are due. I do not accept papers over e-mail or on electronic storage devices. If a paper is due, that means it is due in printed, hard-copy form, not electronically. Do not attach documents to e-mails that you send to me unless you check with me first.

Course Assignments:

Classroom Citizenship: Your completion of the reading assignments, scores on any reading quizzes, and in-class writing activities and assignments, along with my evaluation of your participation in classroom discussion and activities, will be included in the "Classroom Citizenship" portion of your grade.

One-pagers: To make sure that everyone keeps up with the required readings, and to encourage class participation in discussions, during every class session a group of students (approximately 1/4th of the class most days) will be responsible for writing up one page of thoughts and questions about the reading. I'll provide more details on the specifics on this assignment. The "one pagers" are due at the beginning of class. You will be responsible for writing four one-pagers.

Two Papers: There are two longer papers (4 to 5 pages each) due during the semester. I will provide more details on the paper requirements in separate handouts.

Mid-Term Exam: There is one in-class essay exam. I will provide more information about the exam format closer to the exam date.

Final Exam: There is a final exam, which will be administered during the final exam period, as scheduled by the registrar.

Evaluation and Grading:

Please keep in mind the attendance policy (already detailed in the “Course Requirements” section above). Absenteeism is the leading cause of poor grades in my courses. Excellent attendance and participation will have a positive effect on your grade, particularly if you end up on a “borderline” between two grades. Following is information on how final grades will be calculated:

Breakdown of points for the final grade:

Classroom Citizenship (attendance, participation, quizzes, in-class writing): 20%
One-pagers (all four combined): 10%
First Paper: 15%
Second Paper: 20%
Mid-Term Exam: 15%
Final Exam: 20%

Final grade ranges:

94-100=A: Superior work, *highest quality*
90-93=A-: High Honors Quality
87-89 = B+: High Quality
83-86= B: Basic Honors Quality
80-82=B-: Below Honors Quality
77-79=C+: Above Satisfactory Quality
73-76=C: Satisfactory
70-72=C-: Below Satisfactory
67-69=D+: Above Minimum Passing
60-66=D: Minimum Passing
below 60=F: Failed

If you have a concern about a grade or your standing in the class, I am quite happy to talk with you. This type of conversation is best suited to an individual conference. Please e-mail me to schedule an appointment.

*Please note: This much is **nonnegotiable**: you are not eligible for a passing grade of D unless you have attended at least 11 of 14 weeks worth of classes, and completed 90% of the assignments.*

Academic Integrity

Please review the Undergraduate Academic Integrity Policy:

http://www.uml.edu/catalog/undergraduate/policies/academic_dishonesty.htm

*If you plagiarize or cheat on an assignment in this course, you will receive an “F” for this course, and you are subject to other discipline (including expulsion from the University) at the discretion of the instructor and the University. Keep in mind that even if you write some part or even “most” of the paper, if some portion of the paper is copied from another source without proper attribution, (i.e., if you “only plagiarize a little”) **you will still get an “F” for the course.** Don’t plagiarize at all.*

Unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism. You must cite all sources that you use, including online sources. Also, remember that “using” a source includes directly quoting, paraphrasing, and using ideas from any source. There is nothing wrong with “getting help” from other writers, just be sure to acknowledge it by using quotation marks and author/page citation appropriately. Please take the time to give proper credit to the work of other authors. It is a matter of respect – for yourself, for other authors, for your classmates, and for me.

Don’t waste your time or mine by plagiarizing a paper. If you’re having difficulty with a writing assignment, talk to me before the day it is due.

Semester Schedule: If you miss a class, you are still responsible for what was due on the day(s) you missed and on the day you return. Please e-mail me if you have questions about assignments due for missed classes. Page numbers listed below are for *The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Shorter Eighth Edition*.

Date	Due in class (reading completed)
Thursday 5 September	First day Introductions; hand-outs
Tuesday 10 September	Iroquois Creation Story: 20 - 23 Christopher Columbus: 24 – 28 Cabeza de Vaca: 28 – 35 Also recommended: “Intro: Beginnings to 1700” 3 - 19
Thursday 12 September	John Smith: 57 - 59; “A Description of New England”: 69 - 72 William Bradford: 72 – 73 “Of Plymouth Plantation: 74 - 90 John Winthrop: 90 - 91; “A Model of Christian Charity,” 91 - 102 (FOCUS ON: first five paragraphs and Section II) GROUP 1 RESPONSE
Tuesday 17 September	Guest: Professor Christopher Hanlon (Note: we’re jumping out of order on the timeline here!) Emerson: 505 – 508 “Self-Reliance” 549 - 566 GROUP 2 RESPONSE
Thursday 19 September	Mary Rowlandson: 126 - 143 (plus poem Holladay -- handout) Anne Bradstreet: 110; “Author to her book,” 119 “Before the Birth” 120 “Dear and Loving Husband,” 120 “Here Follows Some ... Upon the Burning of Our House”: 122 - 123 GROUP 3 RESPONSE
Tuesday 24 September	Cotton Mather: 149 - 155 Jonathan Edwards: 177 - 178; “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” 209 - 220 (FOCUS ON: first five paragraphs, and “Application,” 98-205). Also recommended: “American Literature 1700 – 1820,” 157 - 169 GROUP 4 RESPONSE
Thursday 26 September	Benjamin Franklin: 234-236 “Way to Wealth” 236 – 242, “Remarks concerning savages” 244 – 247, plus handouts J Hector St. John de Crevecoeur: 308 – 323 GROUP 1 RESPONSE
Tuesday 1 October	Phillis Wheatley: 401 - 403; “On Being Brought” 403, “To the University of Cambridge, in New England,” 404 - 405 Olaudah Equiano: 354 - 355; from Olaudah Equiano 355 – 372 (stop mid-page @ break) GROUP 2 RESPONSE
Thursday 3 October	FIRST PAPER DUE IN CLASS TODAY Class session will be paper exchange and catch-up/review of materials so far.
Tuesday 8 October	“American Literature 1820 – 1865”: 445 - 466 Washington Irving: 467 – 468; “Rip Van Winkle” 470 - 482 GROUP 3 RESPONSE
Thursday 10 October	Nathaniel Hawthorne: 603 - 606; “Minister’s Black Veil” 636 - 645; “Birth-Mark” 645 - 656 GROUP 4 RESPONSE
Tuesday 15 October	Edgar Allan Poe: 683 - 687; “Raven” 688 - 691; “Tell-Tale Heart” 714 - 718; “The Black Cat” 718 - 724 GROUP 1 RESPONSE

Thursday 17 October	Sojourner Truth: 775; “Speech to the Women’s Rights Convention” 775 -776 Harriet Beecher Stowe: 779 – 781 <i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin</i> (excerpt) 781 – 802 Amiri Baraka: (note: this is out of order with the course timeline, but Baraka will be coming to campus on Friday the 18th for a reading): 2640 – 2641, “An Agony. As Now.” 2641 – 2642. GROUP 2 RESPONSE
Tuesday 22 October	Harriet Jacobs: 818 - 819; from <i>Incidents</i> : “Childhood” 819 – 822; “The Lover,” 822 - 826 Frederick Douglass: 934 – 938; excerpt from <i>Narrative of the Life</i> 938 - 957 GROUP 3 RESPONSE
Thursday 24 October	Emily Dickinson: 1189 - 1193 & selected poems as assigned (see assignment handout) GROUP 4 RESPONSE
Tuesday 29 October	In-class exam today
Thursday 31 October	Rebecca Harding Davis: 1219 – 1220 “Life in the Iron Mills” 1221 - 1246 GROUP 1 RESPONSE
Tuesday 5 November	“American Literature 1865 – 1914”: 1265 - 1281 W.D. Howells: 1489 – 1491 “Editha” 1491 – 1501 (note text is interrupted by image section) Kate Chopin: 1604 – 1605; “Desiree’s Baby” 1605 - 1609 GROUP 2 RESPONSE
Thursday 7 November	Abraham Cahan: 1657 – 1659 “A Sweatshop Romance” 1659 - 1667 Charlotte Perkins-Gilman: 1668 – 1669 “The Yellow Wallpaper” 1669 - 1681 GROUP 3 RESPONSE
Tuesday 12 November	“American Literature 1914 – 1945” 1837 - 1856 Willa Cather: 1861 - 1863; “Neighbor Rosicky” 1863 - 1883 GROUP 4 RESPONSE
Thursday 14 November	Robert Frost: 1911 - 1912; “The Pasture” 1912; “Mowing” 1912 - 1913; “Out Out” 1921 - 22. Susan Glaspell: 1926 – 1927, Trifles 1927 - 1936
Tuesday 19 November	William Faulkner: 2178 – 2181; “A Rose for Emily,” 2182-2188
Thursday 21 November	“American Literature Since 1945” 2255 – 2271 Robert Hayden: 2370 – 2372, “Homage to the Empress of the Blues” 2377, “Those Winter Sundays” 2377 Elizabeth Bishop: 2287 – 2289 “In the Waiting Room” 2294 - 2296 Gwendolyn Brooks: 2493 - 2494; “the mother, 2494 – 2495, “The White Troops” 2495 – 2494, “We Real Cool” 2496
Tuesday 26 November	NO CLASS: Online Assignment Due Today (see handout for details) Jack Kerouac: 2497 – 2498, from Big Sur 2499 - 2506 Flannery O’Connor: 2523 – 2524, “Good Country People” 2524 – 2537 Gloria Anzaldua: 2704 – 2705, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” 2705 – 2713
Thursday 28 November	NO Class: Thanksgiving Break
Tuesday 3 December	SECOND PAPER DUE TODAY
Thursday 5 December	Billy Collins: 2700 – 2701; “Forgetfulness” 2701, “I Chop some Parsley” 2702-2703 Li-Young Lee: 2797; “Persimmons” 2798 - 2800 Dorothy Allison: 2812 – 2813, “From Stubborn Girls” 2813 – 2816
FINAL EXAM	As scheduled by the registrar

General Advice to Students:

Check your UML e-mail regularly for important updates from the University and from me.

Come to class prepared to work. This means several things:

- 1) You should have completed the assigned readings, and any associated writing. You might even have notes in your book, underlined passages, or page markers for interesting spots in the reading.
- 2) You should have your textbook with you every day. You should buy, rent, or borrow a copy of the required textbook so that you can read the assignments, write the papers, and participate in class discussion.
- 3) You should be prepared to listen and talk in discussion. This means you shouldn't use our class time to take a nap, or sit sullenly, or complete your calculus homework.
- 4) You should avoid distractions during class. Distractions include things like small pets, cell phones and text messaging devices, notes to classmates, i-pods, or any other gadget that will engage your brain in something other than the academic discussion in the classroom. While you may think I don't notice, I do, and so do your classmates. It's distracting for you, but also for those around you.

When you don't come to class (for whatever reason) it is your responsibility to find out the work that was missed, including any handouts, in-class activities, or changes to the syllabus. If you can do this via e-mail before the next class meeting, that's great. If you can't, you should definitely come speak with me before class, after class, or in my office hours. In any case, don't try to avoid me, hoping that I didn't notice you were absent.

If you need extra time for an assignment, for whatever reason, ask (preferably early). I do not automatically give extensions; however, I am a reasonable person, and you should ask for help or time if you need it. An "extension" is something you ask for before a paper is due. When you ask for extra time on the day a paper is due (or in the days after it was due), that is called "late." Late papers are subject to a grade reduction at my discretion, and I do not provide comments on late papers. In general, I would rather have a late paper than no paper at all; I would rather have no paper at all than a plagiarized paper.