

ENGL 241.002
Fall 2012
TR 1-2:15
CKH-D 317

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American Literature I (Beginnings to 1865)

*The Heart is the Capital of the Mind—
The Mind is a single State—
The Heart and the Mind together make
A single Continent—*

*One—is the Population—
Numerous enough—
This ecstatic Nation
Seek—it is Yourself.
-Emily Dickinson*

Perhaps American literature can best be described not as the literature that continually tested itself until it found a voice against the literature of England but as the literature that was multi-vocal from the start.

*-Introduction to Heath Anthology of American Literature
(Volume 1, 2nd edition)*

This survey of early American literature considers the relationship between multi-vocal texts and the nation with which they are associated. We will approach this literature through a number of questions: who, for instance, has historically counted as “American”? How do these texts engage with the enduring themes of wilderness and civilization, freedom and slavery, self and spirit? Why have certain texts been designated as canonical American literature while others have been overlooked? By pairing conventional texts with those that are lesser known, we will consider the multitude of voices—and possibilities—that exist within American literature. Throughout the semester, we will engage in lively class discussions that challenge and broaden our perceptions of the early literature of what we now know as the United States. Seek—it is Yourself!

COURSE GOALS

By the end of the semester, you should be able to demonstrate:

- A heightened familiarity with the important literature and history of this period;
- A sharpened ability to compare, contrast, and draw connections between texts;
- An ability to ask analytical, original, and compelling questions about literary texts;
- Enhanced close reading and writing skills.

COURSE TEXTS AND MATERIALS

The following texts are available at the WVU Bookstore and the Book Exchange:

- *Heath Anthology of American Literature*, 6th ed., Volumes A and B (required)
- A writing handbook like the MLA Handbook (highly recommended)

REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance and Participation (20% of final grade)

In addition to prompt and regular attendance, this includes the following:

- Your participation grade will be based in part on the thoughtfulness of your responses and your **overall engagement in our discussions and writing activities**. We don't often think of listening as an element of participation, but a productive learning environment is characterized by participants who respect others' words even if they don't agree with them. I welcome debate that is balanced with mutual respect. Note that respectful, engaged participation in class discussion may boost your final grade, while a lack of positive participation may lower it.

More than five absences will result in an "F" for attendance and participation, which will make this portion of your grade, at best, 10 out of the possible 20 points. The only absences not included in this are religious holidays or those excused by the university.

2. Daily Responses (15% of final grade)

Starting next week, you need to turn in a one-page response to at least one of the day's readings on **either Tuesday or Thursday**. Each response is due at the beginning of class. It may be typed or hand-written (please write legibly, however). If you are not present to turn in the response, you must email it to me or turn it in by that Thursday at 1 p.m. No emails or hard copies will be accepted after that time each week.

Think of these responses as literary analyses rather than plot summary. What are some of the writing techniques the author is using, and to what end? Is there a quote or passage that deserves a close reading? How does this text connect stylistically or thematically to other things we have read?

Evaluation of responses

- Responses will earn a check plus, a check, or a check minus.
 - ✓+=excellent work; above and beyond the expectations
 - ✓=good; meets the expectations of the assignment
 - ✓-=some deficiency in content (e.g. more plot summary than critical analysis)
- You are allowed to miss two responses over the course of the semester.

Your grade will be lowered slightly for each of the responses you miss beyond these two, depending on the quality of the responses (see above).

- If you miss 6 or more responses, you will receive an “F” for this portion of the course.

3. First Word (5% of final grade)

At the beginning of most classes, a student will give a 5-minute presentation on a modern interpretation of (or reference to) a text and/or author assigned for that day. You may choose to share the interpretation/reference with the class, but please give some context for it. Indicate in your comments how the modern interpretation or reference enhances or changes your understanding of the original text. Let me know if you need a/v equipment (e.g. to show a film clip) 24 hours before the class. Please note that the content of these presentations will be incorporated into exams and thus should be treated as any other course material.

4. Three Exams (60% of final grade)

The first exam will be given during class; the second is a take-home test. The third exam, which will function as the final, will be given at the time of the university-scheduled final exam. Each of these exams will give you the opportunity to demonstrate close reading skills and facility with the assigned texts.

CLASS POLICIES

Punctual attendance is required. Poor attendance will adversely affect your final course grade. Please make every effort to arrive to class on time; important announcements will often be made in the first few minutes of class. Absences due to serious illness, religious holidays (Days of Special Concern), and personal emergencies will be excused. If a personal emergency or a serious health problem arises, please contact the Office of Student Life in E. Moore Hall (293-5611); the Dean of Student Life will then communicate with me about your situation. Remember that more than five absences will result in an “F” for attendance and participation, which will make your attendance and participation grade (at best) 10 out the 20 possible points.

Late work is not acceptable. Any assignment handed in after the class period in which it is due will be penalized for lateness (**reduced 1/2 letter grade each day it is late, including the day it is due**). If a personal emergency arises and you need an extension, speak to me as soon as possible about your situation. Please plan ahead for computer mishaps: always keep a back-up file of your work, and give yourself plenty of time to print.

I do not discuss grades over e-mail. Nor will I meet with a student to discuss the grade of a particular paper until 24 hours after that paper has been returned.

Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Your classmates and instructor deserve your respect and support just as you deserve theirs. Try not to dominate the discussion or get us off track; be patient with classmates who may need to ask a question even when the answer seems obvious to you. Likewise, avoid actions that are distracting or that prevent you from getting the most out of the class (e.g. **text messaging, holding side conversations, doing a crossword puzzle, etc.**) You want to signal that you are paying attention and that you respect others. Minimal disruptive behavior will result in a lowered attendance and participation grade; severe disruption can result in dismissal from the class.

Plagiarism, a form of theft, is illegal. Plagiarism is defined as the submission of work that contains ideas not fully your own: ideas taken from publications, other students, your professors, the Internet, etc. Remember that you are required to cite a source if you include a direct quotation *or* if you borrow an idea and put it in your own words. If you have questions about the fine line between being influenced by a text or person and plagiarizing its/his/her ideas, cite the source. For a more detailed description of plagiarism, as well as the correct form for citation of sources, see a writing handbook or ask me. **A proven case of plagiarism may result in an unforgivable “F” in the course.**

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. In accordance with that commitment I maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and nondiscrimination. WVU does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, disability, age, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Any suggestion as how to promote such a positive and open environment in this class is appreciated and given serious attention.

Any student with a disability who needs an accommodation or other assistance in this course should make an appointment to speak with me as soon as possible, and should make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services (293-6700 or Voice/TDD 293-7740).

SCHEDULE

Each piece should be read by the date on which it is listed. Unless otherwise indicated, all readings can be found in the Heath Anthology (volume and page numbers are included below). The biography of each author listed below, which precedes his or her texts, should also be read. This schedule is subject to change.

Beginnings

T Aug. 21 Introduction

Native American Oral Literatures

*Note that for Native American literatures, the name in parentheses is the tribe rather than the author.

R Aug. 23 “Native American Oral Literatures” and “Creation/ Emergence Accounts” (A 18-23); “The Origin of Stories” (*Seneca) (A 55-57); “Iroquois or Confederacy of the

Five Nations” (Haudenosaunee-Iroquois) (A 57-60); “Iktomi and the Dancing Ducks” (Oglala Sioux) (A 60-62); “Creation of the Whites” (Yuchi) (A 73)

Encounters

T Aug. 28 “Ritual Poetry, Song, and Ceremony” (A 80-82); “Sayatasha’s Night Chant” (Zuni) (A 83-102)

R Aug. 30 “Moved” (Uvavruk, Inglulik Eskimo-Inuit) (A 106); “Deer Hunting Song (Virsak Vai-I, O’odham) (A 111); War songs (A 114-115); “Formula to Attract a Woman” (Cherokee) (A 120-122)

T Sept. 4 Cluster: America in the World/The World in America” (A 124-126); “America, c. 1575” (A 128); Columbus, excerpt from *Journal of the First Voyage to America, 1492-1493* (A 138-149); Handsome Lake, biography (A 825), “How America Was Discovered” (A 825-827)

R Sept. 6 “New England” (A 314-318); Morton, excerpt from *New English Canaan* (A 321-331); Bradford, excerpts from *Of Plymouth Plantation* (A 350-367)

T Sept. 11 Bradstreet, “The Prologue [To Her Book]” (A 420-421); “The Author to Her Book” (A 426); “The Flesh and the Spirit” (A 427-429)

R Sept. 13 Rowlandson, excerpt from *A Narrative of the Captivity...* (A 464-480)

T Sept. 18 Rowlandson, *A Narrative* (A 480-492); Mather, excerpt from *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (A 533-538)

R Sept. 20 **Exam One**

T Sept. 25 “Eighteenth Century” (A 589-605); Edwards, “A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God” (A 675-679); “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (A 690-701)

R Sept. 27 Franklin, excerpt from *The Autobiography* (A 861-879; 909-919)

T Oct. 2 de Crèvecoeur, “What Is an American?” (A 961-965); “Description of Charles Town...” (967-974); Paine, excerpt from *Common Sense* (A 992-997)

Whose American Revolution?

R Oct. 4 “Cluster: E Pluribus Unum--On the Discourse of Liberty” (A 1081-1082); Adams, “Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, March 31, 1776” (A 1011); Jefferson, “The Declaration of Independence” (A 1089-1093); Stanton, “Declaration of Sentiments” (B 2270-2271)

T Oct. 9 “The Female Patriots” (A 1087); “Burrowing Yankees” (A 1115); Prince Hall, “To the Honorable Council...” (A 1093-1094); Wheatley, “Letter to Samson Occom” (A

1088), “On Being Brought from Africa to America” (A 1306), “A Farewell to America” (A 1307-1308), “To the University of Cambridge, in New England” (A 1308-1309)

Take-home exam distributed

R Oct. 11 NO CLASS

T Oct. 16 Rowson, excerpts from *Charlotte Temple* (A 1415-1427)

Exam 2 (Take-home) due

R Oct. 18 “Native America” (B 1474-1476); Boudinot, “An Address to the Whites” (B 1489-1497); Apess, “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man” (B 1515-1519)

T Oct. 23 “Spanish America” (B 1606-1607); “Tales from the Hispanic Southwest” (B 1608-1609); “Los tres hermanos” (B 1611-1615); “La Llorona, La Malinche, and Guadalupe” (B 1617-1618); **see handout**

Soul, Spirit, and Nature: The Transcendentalists

R Oct. 25 Emerson, excerpt from “Nature” (Chapter I, Chapter III, Chapter VIII: B 1708-1710; 1711-1714; 1729-1734); Thoreau, excerpt from *Walden* (B 1877-1886, 1893-1903)

F Oct. 26 Last day to drop a class

T Oct. 30 Emerson, excerpt from “Self-Reliance” (B 1746-1762); Thoreau, biography (1859-1862), “Resistance to Civil Government” (B 1862-1876)

R Nov. 1 Fuller, excerpt from *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (B 1821-1843)

Revolutions: Slavery and Slave Narratives

T Nov. 6 Election Day; NO CLASS

R Nov. 8 Douglass, excerpt from *Narrative of the Life...* (B 2045-2101)

T Nov. 13 Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (B 2187-2210)

R Nov. 15 Truth, “Sojourner Truth’s Speech...” (B 2252) and “Address to the First Annual Meeting...” (B 2254-2255); S.M. Grimké, “The Condition of Women in the United States” (B 2238-2241); A. Grimké, “Human Rights Not Founded on Sex” (B 2246-2247); Fern, “Hints to Young Wives” (B 2257-2258)

Nov. 17-25: Thanksgiving Break

Revolutions: The Development of Narrative

T Nov. 27 “The Development of Narrative” (B 2272-2275); Irving, “Rip Van Winkle” (B 2309-2321); Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown” (B 2422-2430)

R Nov. 29 Poe, “The Tell-Tale Heart” (B 2517-2520) and “Ligeia” (B 2487-2497);
Melville, “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids” (B 2677-2694)

T Dec. 4 Whitman, “Song of Myself” (B 3010-3021)

R Dec. 6 Dickinson, [“I Felt a Funeral, in my Brain”] (B 3134-3135), [“A Bird came
down the Walk”] (B 3140); [“After great pain, a formal feeling comes”] (B 3141);
[“Much Madness is divinest Sense”] (B 3142-3143); [“Because I could not stop for
Death”] (B 3154-3155)

Last Day of Class

F Dec. 14 (3:00 p.m.) Final Exam