

# English 241.002

## American Literature: Beginnings to 1865

TR 2:30-3:45 pm – CRN 80329 – Clark 320

**Instructor:** Dr. Michael Buso ([mbuso@mix.wvu.edu](mailto:mbuso@mix.wvu.edu))

**Office:** 317 Colson Hall

**Office Hours:** MW 10:30 – 11:15 am, or by appointment



“If there is any period one would desire to be born in,—is it not the age of Revolution; when the old and the new stand side by side, and admit of being compared; when the energies of all men are searched by fear and by hope; when the historic glories of the old, can be compensated by the rich possibilities of the new era? This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it.” ~Emerson

### Required Texts

- ***The Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1820 to 1865, Volume B, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition.*** ISBN: 978-0-393264470
- ***Kindred: A Graphic Novel Adaptation,*** by Damian Duffy, et al.  
ISBN: 978-1419728556
- **Selected PDFs,** available on our course eCampus page

\*You must have the required textbooks for this course, as you will have assigned readings for almost every class period. Please bring your book to class every day, unless I indicate otherwise. You are responsible for printing and reading any assigned PDFs prior to class-time, I strongly suggest also having a folder and notebook that you bring to class every day. Keep all materials for this course (quizzes, responses, exams, etc...) until the course is over.

# Course Policies & Procedures

## Course Overview & Goals

Welcome to English 241, focusing on American Literature from its beginnings through 1865. We will explore the ways that America became a definitive “nation” and the ways that “Americans” came to define and identify themselves through literature. This period in history was characterized by complex changes in the socio-political atmosphere; issues arose regarding the applicability of foreign and domestic rule in America, the crisis facing indigenous populations, and issues relating to slavery, race, and gender. In this class, we will explore how literature reflects and challenges the ways that we imagine the past and present. Additionally, we will pay close attention to literary periods, trends, themes, genres, and approaches to studying literature. Of course, we can’t read *everything* written during this vast period and I don’t want to define American literature--doing so would be almost impossible. I do, however, want us to engage in the complexities and messiness of culture through the lens of literature while giving you a strong foundation for your future interests in this subject. I am looking forward to a great semester.

## Attendance Policies

This class is primarily discussion-based, and is one that encourages collaborative learning through critical discussion of the assigned readings. Because the course depends on your active participation for every class and your active involvement during every class meeting, regular and on-time attendance and active participation are critical to your success in this class. Each student is allowed up to **THREE absences** without a drop in the final grade. **A fourth absence will reduce your grade one full letter grade.** Each additional absence will continue to lower your final grade by a full letter grade. Thus, six or more absences necessarily results in a failing grade for this course.

Please note: All absences (*including excused absences*) will count toward the total number, and this policy starts from the moment you are registered in the course. You are responsible for making up any work you may miss by failing to attend class, even if the absence is necessitated by illness or personal emergency. If you are absent (or even if you are just late to class), any quizzes missed cannot be made-up. Additionally, I do not accept late response papers (I will take them early though!). Tests may be made-up based on specific medical concerns, on a case-by-case basis. If illness or personal emergency requires you to miss multiple class periods, I will probably advise you to drop the course and take it again in a semester when you can be present to do your best work. Multiple absences will necessarily limit your academic success in this class.

## Excessive Lateness

I mark late students every day. If you are more than 5 minutes late three times, those marks for lateness will count as one absence, and so on. If you are excessively late (more than 15 minutes), that may also count as an absence. If some unusual circumstance makes you late on any given day, please be sure that you talk to me after class. Please keep track of your own attendance, and if you notice it is becoming a problem, please visit me during my office hours, or send me an email and we discuss it further. Note that quizzes take place at the beginning of class and cannot be made up.

## Social Justice & Accommodation

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>.

## **Academic Integrity**

You are responsible for the integrity of your work. This means that all of your work for this course must be your own and must be created specifically for this course. Failing to maintain the integrity of your work will have serious consequences. We will discuss academic integrity as part of our course, but here are a few things you need to know right away: \*Submitting someone else's paper, including papers you obtain online, as your own writing is fraud. It will result in a failing grade for the course and may result in additional action by the Office of Student Conduct. \*Copying paragraphs or other passages of someone else's writing without properly citing them is plagiarism. It may result in a grade reduction or failing the course. It, too, may result in additional action by the Office of Student Conduct.

The Eberly College of Arts and Sciences provides a helpful online resource for undergraduate students on understanding and avoiding plagiarism (<http://eberly.wvu.edu/undergraduate/ug-studies/preventing-plagiarism>). If you have any questions about when and how to document sources, or any other question that will help you avoid unintentional plagiarism, please talk with your instructor, a librarian, or one of the Writing Studio tutors in Colson Hall.

## **The Eberly Writing Studio**

The Eberly Writing Studio is a free resource that can support you in all aspects of the writing process. It is located in Colson G02. For more information about the Eberly Writing Studio visit [speakwrite.wvu.edu/writing-studio](http://speakwrite.wvu.edu/writing-studio).

## **Computers and Cell Phones**

Classroom activities require your full attention, so please turn off your cell phones, put them out of sight, and refrain from texting in class. I should not see or hear your cell phone during class time. If you are ever using technology (including phones, laptops, tablets, watches, etc.) in a way that is distracting or unrelated to the work of the class, you will be asked to put away the device. If you have to be asked more than once, you will be counted as absent for that day, and you may even be asked to leave. If there is an unusual circumstance where you must leave your phone on, please just speak to me privately *before* class. **Use of electronic or weblinked devices during a quiz or exam will result in failure of the course.**

# **Assignment & Grading Overview**

## **Comprehensive Tests (30% each)**

You have two tests in this course: a mid-semester test (30%) and one towards the end of the semester (30%). Each test contains multiple choice questions, short answer questions, true/false questions, and an essay component. We will review in class for each major test. Your quizzes, any handouts, and class notes will also be valuable study sources for these tests.

## **Short Responses (15%)**

Throughout the semester you must complete 3 short written responses (5% each) to the texts that we have read in that specific section. Each response should be 3 pages in length, typed, and directly engage a specific reading. The best responses will draw a connection between the text and something else: perhaps another text we have read in class, or perhaps something going on in our current society, political system, or popular culture. These should not be summaries, nor should they re-hash our class discussions. Responses should be printed and brought to class on or before the due-date listed on the syllabus. They should not be emailed. Late responses will not be accepted.

### **Quizzes (10%)**

Expect reading quizzes often. They are unscheduled and will generally occur at the start of class. The purpose of reading quizzes is two-fold. First, the quizzes ensure that you are reading the required material. Secondly, the quizzes will help you gauge your reading practices. Are you reading critically and closely? Your quiz grades will be averaged at the end of the semester and comprise 10% of your overall grade. Please note that there are no “trick” questions on these quizzes. Put simply, if you read *carefully*, you should pass the quiz. If you find that you are having trouble with this aspect of the course, despite reading the assigned materials, come talk to me. We can go over strategies for reading critically and retaining what you read. Quizzes cannot be made-up if you are absent or late to class.

### **Author Presentation (5%)**

Each student will sign up (during the second week of class) for an author presentation that will be delivered the first time we read an author’s work. You may be paired up with another student and together will need to prepare a brief presentation on your specific author (no more than 5 minutes in length). Presentations should be informative and engaging and cover more than just the author material given in the textbook. Visual aids and/or handouts are not required but the technology podium will be made available to you should you require it. Although you will be presenting together, each student should deliver a fair share of the presentation in order to receive the best grade possible.

### **Participation (10%)**

Participation is assessed based not only on attendance, but also on your investment in class activities and discussion and your ability to respect and work well with others. You are welcome to talk to me if you have questions about your progress in the class.

**\*Please Note\*:** The best way to be successful in this course is to do the readings, participate and attend class regularly, and to complete ALL of the course assignments. Failure to complete any of the course requirements will result in the failure of the course.

## **Course Schedule**

Please note that the schedule is subject to change throughout the semester. In the event of a class cancellation (for any reason), please continue to follow the readings on the schedule unless otherwise indicated by me. All assignments are in the Norton anthology, unless otherwise noted. **\*Readings are due on the day they are listed on the schedule. All readings in the Norton include the author biography at the beginning of the section.\*** PDFs are provided on eCampus for you to print and read.

Tuesday	Thursday
	Aug 16 Introductions Discuss syllabus
21 Discussion of the Literary Canon and early American history Read: "Beginnings..." PDF	23 John Cotton PDF: "God's Promise to His Plantations" Jonathan Edwards PDF: "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"
28 Thomas Jefferson PDF: <i>Selected Writings</i> The Federalist Papers PDF: #1 – Alexander Hamilton #10 – James Madison	30 Benjamin Franklin PDF: <i>Selected Writings</i>
Sept 4 Norton Introduction to American Literature 3-24	6 Washington Irving: "Rip Van Winkle" 29-41 "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" 41-62
11 Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Nature" 178-210	13 Emerson continued: "American Scholar" 210-223 "Self-Reliance" 236-254
18 Herman Melville: <i>Billy Budd</i> Chapters 1-13 1573-1598	20 Melville continued: <i>Billy Budd</i> Chapters 14-end 1598-1629

Tuesday	Thursday
<p>25</p> <p>Henry David Thoreau: <i>Walden-- Chapter 2: Where I Lived, and What I Lived For</i> 1012-1022 "Slavery in Massachusetts" 1144-1155</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Test 1 Review</p> <p><b>Short Response #1 Due</b></p>
<p>Oct 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Test One</b></p>	<p>4</p> <p>Walt Whitman: <i>Leaves of Grass</i> "Preface" 1297-1312 "Calamus" 1362-1364 "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" 1364-1368</p>
<p>9</p> <p>Whitman continued: <i>Leaves of Grass</i> "Song of Myself" 1312-1357</p> <p>Emerson to Whitman 307</p> <p>Fanny Fern: "Leaves of Grass" 896-899</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Margaret Fuller: "The Great Lawsuit" 725-760</p>
<p>16</p> <p>Slavery, Race, and the Making of American Literature 769-792</p> <p>Abraham Lincoln: 712-722</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Lydia Marie Child: "The Quadroons" 149-157</p> <p>Frances Ellen Watkins Harper: 1630-1638</p>

Tuesday	Thursday
<p>23</p> <p>Frederick Douglass: <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, An American Slave, Written by Himself</i> 1163-1197</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Douglass continued: <i>Narrative...</i> 1197-1228</p> <p>Margaret Fuller: "Review of <i>Narrative...</i>" 760-762</p> <p><b>Short Response #2 Due</b></p>
<p>30</p> <p>Edgar Allen Poe: "Annabel Lee" 618-619 "The Raven" 612-615 "The Philosophy of Composition" 701-710</p>	<p>Nov 1</p> <p>Poe continued: "The Fall of the House of Usher" 629-642 "The Cask of Amontillado" 696-701</p>
<p>6</p> <p><b>NO CLASS</b></p> <p><b>ELECTION DAY</b></p>	<p>8</p> <p>Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: Poems 571-583</p> <p>William Cullen Bryant: Poems 116-124</p> <p>John Greenleaf Whittier: Poems 583-604</p>
<p>13</p> <p>Emily Dickinson: Poems 1654-1674</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Dickinson continued: Poems 1674-1696</p>
<p>27</p> <p><i>Kindred</i>: 1-167</p>	<p>29</p> <p><i>Kindred</i> continued: 168-end</p>
<p>Dec 4</p> <p>Test 2 Review</p> <p><b>Short Response #3 Due</b></p>	<p>6</p> <p><b>Test Two</b></p>