

ENGL 359, Early American Literature, Spring 2014

Item Type	Syllabus
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Publisher	Memphis, Tenn. : Rhodes College
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Download date	2024-10-13 00:26:53
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/10267/20133

Early American Literature

Professor: Jason Richards
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 Email: richardsj@rhodes.edu (**see email policy**)

Course: ENGL 359.01
 Semester: Spring 2014
 Time: 11:00-12:15 TR
 Room: 304 Clough

Course Description

This course examines a variety of texts written in and about America from initial contact to 1800, a more than three-hundred-year period that witnessed a series of colonial and postcolonial struggles in the new world. We'll begin with narratives of discovery, exploration, and settlement, using the way colonization opened up contact zones—that is, shifting spaces wherein Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans encountered each other—as a framework for reading early America as a multilayered text, woven out of various cultural histories and centers. We'll also interrogate the inherent contradictions of Anglo-American settler culture, which, growing increasingly hostile to British dominance while developing its own imperial ambitions, became colonized and colonizing at once. More intimately, we'll examine classic writings of the Great Awakening, the Revolution, and the establishment of the early republic, with an eye to how the Puritan legacy and Enlightenment thinking shaped the nation's character and destiny. Then we'll turn to early American fiction, which began budding in the wake of the Revolution. As we explore the rise of the American novel alongside the birth of the nation, we'll notice how early republican authors competed against British cultural hegemony; how American literary nationalism went hand in hand with nation building; and how the novel's generic overlaps (sentimental, epistolary, historical, Gothic, autobiographical, picaresque) reflected the political instability and cultural hybridity of America in the postcolonial moment.

Required Texts

The Norton Anthology of American Literature (8th Edition, Vol. A)
Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts (3rd Edition)

Grading

Participation/Professionalism	15%
Short Paper 1 (5-6 pages)	25%
Short Paper 2 (5-6 pages)	25%
Research Paper (10-12 pages)	35%

A = 100-94; **A-** = 93-90; **B+** = 89-87; **B** = 86-84; **B-** = 83-80; **C+** = 79-77; **C** = 76-74;
C- = 73-70; **D+** = 69-67; **D** = 66-64; **D-** = 63-60; **F** < 60

Participation/Professionalism: While I will often begin class with a lecture, this course relies heavily on discussion. You are expected to have all the readings done for the day they are assigned and come prepared to discuss them, and you must always bring the text(s) we are discussing to class. Participation will be evaluated in terms of quantity and quality. Part of your participation grade includes quizzes, which are **unannounced** and given at the beginning of class. **If you are late or absent on a quiz day, you cannot make up the quiz. If you miss or perform poorly on a quiz, you can compensate for it by participating more in class.** Quizzes must be done on paper with clean edges. Finally, a lack of professionalism (e.g., not following course policies, rude behavior, and so on) will negatively affect this portion of your grade.

Electronic Devices: No laptops, cell phones, etc. allowed. **Texting is expressly forbidden.**

Email Policy: The best way to address questions about our class is by meeting in person. I am always happy to talk with you during my office hours, by appointment, or after class. That said, I am available by email for **simple and succinct** queries. I typically respond to email once a day between 9am-5pm Monday-Friday. If you do need to email, here are some rules to follow:

- Email is not the place to discuss grade concerns or negotiate any kind of special request
- Email is not the place to seek feedback on your writing or ideas; that must be done in person
- Do not email at the last minute (e.g., the night before an assignment is due) asking for help
- Do not email if you plan to visit during office hours; I'll be there, unless otherwise stated
- Do not email about your absences, unless you are missing two or more classes in a row

Appointments: If you cannot meet with me during my office hours or after class, we can set up an appointment at a time that is mutually convenient. If you need to make an appointment, please plan to do so **at least 24 hours in advance.**

Attendance: While I expect you to attend every class, you are allowed two absences during the semester. After two absences, every additional absence will lower your final grade by one percentage point (e.g., 80% becomes 79%, and so on). If you miss more than six classes, you will fail the course. **Note: If you miss class, please don't contact me to ask what you missed. Instead, you should exchange contact information with other classmates and ask them what we covered in class.**

Tardiness: Please do not come late to class. Tardiness disrupts the flow of class and distracts other students. If you have a scheduling conflict, you are advised to drop the class. Tardiness will lower your participation/professionalism grade.

Short Papers: For these two papers, you will use a concept or concepts from *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* to critically **analyze** one or more of our texts. You will receive a handout for each paper.

Research Paper: The final assignment asks you to compose a long paper (consisting of an argument, original analysis, and research) on one or more of the texts we have read this semester. Remember, this is a research paper, which means you must assemble a variety of scholarly perspectives to help build an original, argumentative analysis. You will receive a handout for this paper.

Mode of Submission: Papers are due at the beginning of class. All papers must be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double spaced, with 1-inch margins on the top and bottom and **1.25-inch margins on the sides**. Please use printer ink that produces a copy dark enough to be easily legible. Place your name, instructor's name, course number, and date in the upper left-hand corner of the first page. Your last name and page number should appear in the upper right-hand corner of all pages. Do not include a title page. Place your title above the text on page one and double space above and beneath it. Your title should not be underlined. Be sure to staple your paper. You may lose points for not following these guidelines. **Note: I do not accept papers by email.**

Submission of All Work: All major assignments are integral to the goals of the course. Failure to complete any major assignment will result in a grade of F for the course.

Intellectual honesty: All work is assumed to be the student's own and produced exclusively for the course in which it is submitted. Papers written for one course, even if revised, are not to be submitted in another without the instructor's prior approval. Borrowing of ideas or language from other sources (including published material, other student papers, the internet or other electronic resources, etc.) must be carefully documented. Students are advised against posting their work on the internet since doing so may lead to suspicion of plagiarism. Students are advised to maintain drafts of their work to verify its originality. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, and the student if convicted will receive a grade of F in the course in addition to sanctions assigned by the Council. Clear evidence of plagiarism (failure to use quotation marks around verbatim or copied language, failure to adequately paraphrase, and failure to cite the source of quoted, paraphrased, or borrowed text and ideas), regardless of the Council hearing outcome, may likewise result in failure of the course. Carelessness in documenting sources, even if not technically plagiarism, will be penalized as the instructor deems appropriate. If you are uncertain about how or whether to document sources, consult me.

Disability Issues: Students with documented disabilities should meet with me at the beginning of the semester to discuss appropriate accommodations. Please contact the office of Student Disability Services for more information. In all cases, it is your responsibility to provide me with an official letter from SDS.

Schedule (subject to change)

NA = *Norton Anthology of American Literature*

KC = *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*

Note: Read the headnote for each reading in our anthology

Week 1

Jan 9: Introduction

Week 2

Jan 14: “Discourse” and “Eurocentrism” (KC); Christopher Columbus, All Selections (NA);
“Savage/Civilized” (KC); Bartolomé De Las Casas, All Selections (NA)

Jan 16: “Contact Zone” and “Going Native” (KC); Álvaro Núñez Cabeza De Vaca, All
Selections (NA)

Week 3

Jan 21: “Colonial Desire” and “Manicheanism” (KC); John Smith, All Selections (NA)

Jan 23: “Agency” and “Double Colonization” (KC); John Winthrop, from *The Journal of John
Winthrop* (NA); “Palimpsest” (KC); Thomas Morton, All Selections (NA)

Week 4

Jan 28: “Ambivalence” and “Cannibal” (KC); Mary Rowlandson, 256-71 (NA)

Jan 30: “Hybridity” (KC); Rowlandson, 271-88 (NA)

Week 5

Feb 4: Anne Bradstreet, “The Author to Her Book,” “Before the Birth of One of Her Children,”
“Here Follows Some Verses upon the Burning of Our House” (NA); Edward Taylor,
“Meditation 8,” (First Series) and “Meditation 26” (Second Series) (NA)

Feb 6: “Other” (KC); Cotton Mather, from *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (NA)

Week 6

Feb 11: “Mimicry” (KC); Native Americans: Contact and Conflict (NA)

Feb 13: “Exploration and Travel” (KC); Sarah Kemble Knight, All Selections (NA);

Paper 1 Due

Week 7

Feb 18: “Frontier” (KC); J. Hector St. John De Crèvecoeur, 604-614 (NA)

Feb 20: “Slave/Slavery” (KC); Crèvecoeur, 614-25 (NA)

Week 8

Feb 25: Benjamin Franklin, “The Way to Wealth” and *The Autobiography* Part Two (NA)

Feb 27: “Hegemony” (KC); John Adams and Abigail Adams, All Selections (NA)

Week 9

Mar 4: “Anti-Colonialism” (KC); Thomas Paine, All Selections (NA)

Mar 6: Thomas Jefferson, All Selections (NA)

Week 10

Mar 11: Spring Break

Mar 13: Spring Break

Week 11

Mar 18: “Decolonization” (KC); Royall Tyler, *The Contrast*, 775-94 (NA)

Mar 20: *The Contrast*, 794-816 (NA); **Paper 2 Due**

Week 12

Mar 25: Philip Freneau, "The Indian Burying Ground" and "To Sir Toby" (NA); Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America" and "To His Excellency General Washington" (NA)

Mar 27: No Class

Week 13

Apr 1: "Black Atlantic" and "Diaspora" (KC); Olaudah Equiano, 687-701 (NA)

Apr 3: Equiano, 702-721 (NA)

Week 14

Apr 8: Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette*, 817-51 (NA)

Apr 10: *The Coquette*, 852-83 (NA)

Week 15

Apr 15: *The Coquette*, 883-916 (NA)

Apr 17: Easter Recess

Week 16

Apr 22: Washington Irving, "Rip Van Winkle" (handout)

Apr 24: No Class: Optional Conferences from 8:30-11:30am

Apr 25: **Research Paper Due by Noon (leave in my office mailbox: 311 Palmer)**