

**V41.0230: American Literature, From the Beginnings to the Civil War
Fall 2003**

Monday, Wednesday 9:30 a.m.–10:45 p.m., Silver 408

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Course Description

This course is a survey of American literature and literary history, from the early colonial period to the eve of the Civil War. Our goal will be to acquire a grasp of the expanding canon of American literature by reading both established, canonical masterpieces and texts that have traditionally been considered to be marginal.

Topics

Topics to be considered include: the rise of “literature” as a discipline unto itself; the meaning of American individualism; the conflict between liberty and equality in American social thought; the mythology of American exceptionalism; the relation between history and cultural mythology; the dialectic of freedom and slavery in American rhetoric; the American obsession with race; the ideology of domesticity and its link to the sentimental; the aesthetics of American romance; the role of biography in literary criticism and historiography; the nature of the “American Renaissance”; what it means to say “NO in thunder!” and why so many American writers seem to say it.

Course requirements

Section attendance and participation (10%); two 750–word analyses on topics to be distributed in class; list of examples of tropes; contributions to course hypertexts (25%); midterm (15%); 2,500–3000-word final essay or a hypertext project (30%); final exam (20%). **No extensions will be given on assignments or papers.** If, for example, an assignment is due on a Friday and you cannot be on campus on that day, then you must turn it in earlier.

Sections

Discussion sections (“recitations”) meet once per week. You must enroll in a section when you enroll in the course. Attendance is required. The following sections times are scheduled:

002 Wed. 12:30–1:45 p.m. – 194 Mercer 203	Matthew Gourlay
003 Wed. 12:30–1:45 p.m. – Silver 518	Carmelo Larose
004 Wed. 12:30–1:45 p.m. – 25 W4 C-1	Jonathan Shaw
005 Fri. 11:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m. – Silver 710	Matthew Gourlay
006 Fri. 11:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m. – Silver 712	Carmelo Larose
007 Fri. 11:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m. – Tisch LC-4	Jonathan Shaw

Hypertext Projects

Students may apply to the professor to work on a hypertext project in lieu of writing a final paper. The project requires students to design and assemble the materials needed to create web-based hypertext versions of short texts drawn from the syllabus. The goal is both to introduce students to the concept of intertextuality by having them determine what links to outside sources would enhance their ability to read their designated text and to create a set of hypertexts that will be posted to the American Literature I web page for use by future students in the course. Examples of student hypertext projects can be found on the course web-site. Students who would like to do the hypertext project must have an NYU personal web page and will be required to upload their first writing assignment to this page no later than **October 18**. Students who do not do the hypertext project will be asked to contribute a “link” to a group-authored hypertext during the term. Further information about these projects will be distributed in class.

Texts and Course Materials

The following texts for the class are available at the NYU Book Center on Washington Place.

The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Sixth Edition, Volumes A & B
 Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly* (Penguin)
 Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (Norton, 2d. ed.)
 Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Penguin)

A **course reader** is also required; it is available from New University Copy on Waverly Place (corner of Greene Street). Students are also responsible for all materials distributed during lectures. Please do not discard handouts; you will need them to study for your exams. Additional course materials are available on the course **Blackboard** site, which is available to you in the "Academics" tab of your NYUHome page.

SYLLABUS

Page numbers refer to *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, Sixth Edition, Volumes A & B. Introductory sections are included in the required reading.

- Wed. Sept. 3 Introduction
- Mon. Sept. 8 **The Literature of Settlement:** Andrew Delbanco, “Life, Literature, and the Pursuit of Happiness” (reader); Stephen Greenblatt, “Culture” (reader); Herman Melville, “Hawthorne and His Mosses” (Norton *Moby Dick* 517-532 or Norton B 2292–2304); “Literature to 1700” (Norton A 3–18); Native American creation stories (A 19–33); Columbus, “Letters” (34–37); Bartolomé de las Casas, “Devastation of the Indies” (38–42); Sacvan Bercovitch, “The Puritan Vision of the New World” (reader); Bruce Kuklick, “Calvinism in America” (reader). *Recommended:* Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, “English Literature at the American Moment” (reader).
- Wed. Sept. 10 **American Puritanism (I):** Excerpt from *Mourt’s Relation* (reader); William Bradford, Introduction (A 156–57), *Of Plymouth Plantation*, Bk. I, Ch. 1 (157–59), excerpt from Ch. 3 (reader), Ch. 4 (159–62), Ch. 9–10 (166–73), excerpts from Bk. II (174–190); John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity” (205–17).
- Mon. Sept. 15 **American Puritanism (II):** Excerpts from “The Journal of John Winthrop” (A 219–23, concerning Anne Hutchinson); Mary Rowlandson, “A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson” (308–40); Anne Bradstreet, Introduction, “The Prologue” (238–40), “The Author to Her Book,” “To My Dear and Loving Husband,” “A Letter to Her Husband, Absent Upon Public Employment” (262-64), “Here Follows Some Verses Upon the Burning of Our House,” “As Weary Pilgrim” (269-71).
- Wed. Sept. 17 **American Puritanism (III):** Michael Wigglesworth, Introduction and “The Day of Doom” (292-308); Edward Taylor, Introduction (341), “Prologue” to *Preparatory Meditations*, “Meditation 8,” (343–45), “The Preface” to *God’s Determinations* (351–52), “Upon a Wasp Chilled with Cold,” “Huswifery” (359-60).
- Mon. Sept. 22 **Edwards and the Transition to Enlightenment:** “American Literature, 1700–1820” (A 425–29, through the section entitled “The Great Awakening”); Leonard Marsak, “The Enlightenment” (reader); John Locke, *Excerpts from An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (reader); Jonathan Edwards, Introduction (464–66), “Personal Narrative” (466-76), “A Divine and Supernatural Light,”

“Letter to Rev. Dr. Benjamin Colman,” “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” “The Beauty of the World” (477–511)

Wed. Sept. 24 **The American Enlightenment:** “American Literature, 1700–1820” (A 429–33); Benjamin Franklin, Introduction (515–16), *The Autobiography*, parts one and two (538–99); Thomas Jefferson, Introduction and “The Declaration of Independence” from the *Autobiography* (725–32).

Fri. Sept. 26 **Analysis #1 due.**

Mon. Sept. 29 **American Neoclassicism:** Francis Scott Key, “The Defense of Fort McHenry” (reader); Phillis Wheatley, Introduction (824–25), “On Being Brought from Africa to America,” “To the University of Cambridge, in New England,” “On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield” (828–29); “To S.M.,” “To His Excellency General Washington” (833–35), “Letter to Samson Occom” (838–39); Philip Freneau, Introduction (791–92), “On the Emigration to America and Peopling the Western Country,” “The Wild Honeysuckle,” “The Indian Burying Ground,” (799–802), “On Mr. Paine’s Rights of Man” (804-5), “To a New England Poet” (807); Joel Barlow, Introduction, “The Hasty Pudding” (reader).

Wed. Oct. 1 **American Gothic (I):** Thomas Gray, “Elegy Upon a Country Churchyard” (reader); Joel Barlow, “Advice to a Raven in Russia” (reader); William Cullen Bryant, Introduction and “Thanatopsis” (B 1071–74); Edgar Allan Poe, Introduction (1507–10), “The Raven” (1518–21).

Mon. Oct. 6 **American Gothic (II):** Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly*; excerpt from Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* (reader); Poe, “The Imp of the Perverse” (1588–92).

Wed. Oct. 8 **American Gothic (III):** “American Literature, 1820–1865” (B 957–77); Washington Irving, Introduction (978–80), *A History of New York* Bk. I, Chs. 1 & 5 (reader), “Rip Van Winkle,” “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (980–1013).

Mon. Oct. 13 **Review session.**

Wed. Oct. 15 **MIDTERM. List of Tropes Due.**

Mon. Oct. 20 Edgar Allan Poe, “The Black Cat” (reader); Frederick Douglass, Introduction and *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (B 2029–97).

Wed. Oct. 22 Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (Chapters 1–22).

- Fri. Oct. 24 **Analysis #2 due.**
- Mon. Oct. 27 Ralph Waldo Emerson, Introduction, *Nature*, and “The American Scholar” (B 1103–48), “Self-Reliance” (1160–77); John Locke, Excerpts from the *Second Treatise on Government* (reader).
- Wed. Oct. 29 Emerson, “The Poet,” and “Experience” (B 1177–1207).
- Mon. Nov. 3 Henry David Thoreau, Introduction, “Resistance to Civil Government,” *Walden*: “Economy,” “Where I Lived, and What I Lived For” (B 1788–1859), “The Pond in Winter,” “Spring,” “Conclusion” (1954–82).
- Wed. Nov. 5 Walt Whitman, Introduction (B 2127-31), “[Song of Myself]” (2146–89).
- Mon. Nov.10 Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Chapters 1–18).
- Wed. Nov. 12 Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Chapters 19–28).
- Mon. Nov. 17 Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Chapter 29 to end).
- Wed. Nov. 19 Nathaniel Hawthorne, Introduction (B 1247–50), “Young Goodman Brown” (1263–73), “The Celestial Railroad” (1300-13), “Preface to *The House of Seven Gables*” (1474–7). **Proposals for Final Paper or Hypertext Due.**
- Mon. Nov. 24 Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (B 1333–1474).
- Wed. Nov. 26 Melville, *Moby-Dick* (Chapters 23-42); review “Hawthorne and His Mosses” (Norton *Moby Dick* 517-532 or Norton B 2292–2304).
- THANKSGIVING BREAK
- Mon. Dec. 1 Melville, *Moby-Dick* (Chapters 43–89).
- Wed. Dec. 3 Melville, *Moby-Dick* (Chapters 90–99).
- Mon. Dec. 8 Melville, *Moby-Dick* (Chapters 100–Epilogue).
- Wed. Dec. 10 **Final Essay or Hypertext Project Due.**
- Mon. Dec. 15 **FINAL EXAM.** 10:00 a.m. Location to be announced.