

San José State University

Fall 2012

Department of English & Comparative Literature

English 255:

SEMINAR IN THEMATIC STUDIES OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

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Office Hours:	M/W 1:30 – 2:45 PM & By Appointment
Class Days/Time:	Wednesdays 7:00 PM – 9:45 PM
Classroom:	SH 240

Course Description

For Fall 2012, the main theme to be explored in English 255 will be “Frontiers, Borders, Empire, and Global Communities: Transnational Dimensions of American Literature.” From the Puritan-Colonial period and the early years of the Republic to the early 21st century, a variety of texts will be selected to exemplify the ways in which American writers interact with cultural and ethnic *others* at the frontier(s), within and beyond the borders, and—by imperialistic and / or internationalistic means—authorize the incorporation of communities with American and “un-American” or “hetero-American” signatures.

MA Program Student Learning Objectives (effective 2012)

1. Students will demonstrate an appropriate level of expertise in literary history, literary theory, and rhetoric.
2. Students will demonstrate high-level proficiency in literary research and in the synthesis of research.
3. Students will demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts.

4. Students will demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to a) organize and present material in a cogent fashion, b) formulate and defend original arguments, c) employ effectively the language of their discipline and d) write under time constraints.
5. Students will demonstrate a reading knowledge of at least one foreign language.
6. Students preparing for teaching careers will receive the appropriate instruction.
7. Students will be prepared for further graduate study.

The MA SLOs articulated above will be exemplified throughout the course; in particular, MA SLOs 1-4 are explicitly addressed in the Course Goals and Student Learning specified below:

Course Goals and Student Learning

SLO 1: Students will demonstrate an appropriate level of expertise in literary history, literary theory, and rhetoric. **This objective will be met by means of intensive examinations of a broad range of materials selected from American literary history to determine their thematic connections and implications, as inseedinated in this seminar, in the contexts of social history, political thought, and American culture.**

SLO 2: Students will demonstrate high-level proficiency in literary research and in the synthesis of research. **This objective will be met by means of student-centered activities, such as investigations, presentations, discussions, interactions with peers and experts, and academic inquiries, that lead to the formulation of research questions and the completion of scholarly papers conducive to advancing the knowledge and understanding of the field.**

SLO 3: Students will demonstrate critical and analytical skills in the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts. **This objective will be met as students of the seminar regularly exchange ideas, share expertise, and conduct informed and critical analysis and evaluation of the course materials.**

SLO 4: Students will demonstrate a command of written academic English, including the abilities to a) organize and present material in a cogent fashion, b) formulate and defend original arguments, c) employ effectively the language of their discipline and d) write under time constraints. **Student success in achieving this objective will be assessed by means of their written assignments, esp. the research paper.**

Required Texts/Readings

Some of the following texts are available online as shown; others may be available from Amazon in print/as Kindle books.

[1] William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/24950/24950-h/24950-h.htm>

(Selections: Chapters 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11/AD 1620, 12/AD 1621, 14/AD 1623, 19/AD 1628, 24/AD 1633, 28/AD 1637, 36/AD 1646)

[2] Thomas Morton, *The New English Canaan*

<http://archive.org/stream/newenglishcanaan00mort#page/n11/mode/2up>

(Selections: Book II, Chapters 14 - 17 / pp. 276-296)

See also: Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The May-Pole of Merry Mount"

<http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/HawMayp.html>

[3] *Life of Black Hawk* <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/7097> or GoogleBooks version: http://books.google.com/books/about/Life_of_Black_Hawk.html?id=tX1HAAAAIAAJ

[4] *Captivity Narrative of Rowlandson*

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/851/851-h/851-h.htm> or GoogleBooks version:

http://books.google.com/books/about/A_narrative_of_the_captivity_sufferings.html?id=IIVlnMU3snwC

[5] Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

<http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/Mel2Mob.html> or print version:

Moby Dick, World's Classics Paperback edition, Oxford UP (ISBN 0192817809)

[6] Liliuokalani, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen*

<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/liliuokalani/hawaii/hawaii.html>

See also *The Kumulipo* trans. By Liliuokalani

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/pac/lku/index.htm>

[7] William Shroder, *Cousins of Color*

[8] Barbara Kingsolver, *Poisonwood Bible*

[9] Le Ly Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*

[10] Le Ly Hayslip, *Child of War, Woman of Peace*

[11] Abraham Verghese, *Cutting for Stone*

Recommended Resource: Netflix

Seminar Presentations (Three Presentations + Documentation)

A seminar involves seminal ideas that are developed, tested, and applied over a period of time. Ideally, all participants are involved in the insemination, exploration, research, analysis, interpretation, critique, and application of the ideas generated in the seminar. The findings are, eventually, disseminated, shared, and studied further or applied.

Apart from the close analysis and critical discussions revolving around the texts selected, this seminar will involve students in **THREE** specific kinds of activities, each to be exemplified by presentations and written documentations.

The first kind of activity will be **EXPLORATION**, which entails preliminary inquiries, research, and collection of bibliographical materials related to the theme of the course. **You will give an exploratory presentation (about 20 minutes) during the first five weeks of the seminar** about facts, ideas, concepts, texts, and topics that shed light on the seminar's main ideas. Tell us what you have been able to discover that may lead to fruitful further investigations. Provide a few pages of documentation (e.g., working bibliography) as well as a summary of your explorations.

The second kind of activity will be **CRITICAL INVESTIGATION**. This involves a deepening understanding of the materials, ideas, concepts, issues, and implications of your explorations. **You will give a critical/investigative presentation (about 20 minutes) during the next five weeks of the seminar** about a topic that gets you hooked; you may wish to pursue an in-depth investigation of something not well understood, or you may wish to theorize/speculate on the possibility of something significant being revealed in the light of the evidence you have at hand. Again, provide a few pages of documentation, and add a statement about your research proposal.

The third kind of activity will be **DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH**, which will be done toward the end of the seminar as various threads provided by different members of the seminar begin to work together and get woven into some sort of textile pattern. **You will give a conference paper presentation (about 20 minutes) during the last five weeks of the seminar based on the paper you have written or are about to finish writing.** Expect to engage the seminar's audience intellectually and academically, and be ready to deal with their professional challenges like a mature scholar. Provide an abstract of your paper and incorporate questions and responses generated in your presentation.

Assignments and Grading Policy*

Course Grading Guidelines**

Students are graded on the following matrix of credits involving their critical thinking, reading, writing, research, discussions and presentations, quizzes/tests and exams, group projects, and overall performance:

3 Seminar Presentations <i>100 for the presentation; 50 for the documentation</i>	3 X 150 points	= 450 points
Research Paper (15+ pages)	1 X 400 points	= 400 points
Weekly Performance	15 X 10 points	= 150 points

TOTAL = 1000 points

* For numerical score and grade equivalents see the following tables:

Table One: Essays

A- = 90 – 93; A = 94 – 96; A+ = 97 – 99

B- = 80 – 83; B = 84 – 86; B+ = 87 - 89

C- = 70 – 73; C = 74 – 76; C+ = 77 – 79

D- = 60 – 63; D = 64 – 66; D+ = 67 – 69

F or below = 0 for essays.

Table Two: Course Grade

A- = 900 – 933; A = 934 – 966; A+ = 967 – 999

B- = 800 – 833; B = 834 – 866; B+ = 867 -- 899

C- = 700 – 733; C = 734 – 766; C+ = 767 – 799

D- = 600 – 633; D = 634 – 666; D+ = 667 – 669

F = 559 or below.

** Students are advised to take note of the following policy statement mandated by the Department of English with regard to grading (effective May 17, 1994):

“The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined in the official SJSU Catalog ("The Grading System"). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance:

A=Excellent;

B=Above Average;

C=Average;

D=Below Average;

F=Failure.

Courses graded according to the A, B, C, No Credit system shall follow the same pattern, except that NC, for No Credit, shall replace D or F. In A, B, C, No Credit courses NC shall also substitute for W (for Withdrawal) because neither NC nor W affects students' grade point averages. This statement shall be included in all Department of English syllabi or greensheets."

In addition, in English Department courses, "instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs."

Departmental Policy on Grading Written Assignments

"In English Department Courses, instructors will comment on and grade the quality of student writing as well as the quality of ideas being conveyed. All student writing should be distinguished by correct grammar and punctuation, appropriate diction and syntax, and well-organized paragraphs. *Grades issued will represent a full range of student performance and will adhere to the following SJSU academic standards of assessment:*

The "A" essay will be well organized and well developed, demonstrating a clear understanding and fulfillment of the assignment. It will show the student's ability to use language effectively and construct sentences distinguished by syntactic complexity and variety. Such essays will be essentially free of grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors.

The "B" essay will demonstrate competence in the same categories as the "A" essay. The chief difference is that the "B" essay will show some slight weaknesses in one of those categories. It may slight one of the assigned tasks, show less facility of expression, or contain some minor grammatical, mechanical, or usage flaws.

The "C" essay will complete all tasks set by the assignment, but show weakness in fundamentals (usually development), with barely enough specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. The sentence construction may be less mature, and the use of language less effective and correct than the "B" essay.

The "D" essay will neglect one of the assigned tasks and be noticeably superficial in its treatment of the assignment—that is, too simplistic or short. The essay may reveal some problems in development, with insufficient specific information to illustrate the experience or support generalizations. It will contain grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

The "F" essay will demonstrate a striking underdevelopment of ideas and insufficient or unfocused organization. It will contain serious grammatical, mechanical, and usage errors that render some sentences incomprehensible.

Class Policy on Late Assignments and Incompletes

1. Assignments shall be turned in when due. Penalty applies to late take-home assignments at the rate of –10%/day overdue of the actual grade earned; maximum penalty up to 100% deduction of grade earned for the work assigned. There will be no make-up for in-class assignments and quizzes. Exams must be taken at the times and dates scheduled, unless an alternative arrangement is granted by the professor.
2. Essay assignments and research papers must be printed to receive credit.
3. Incomplete course work will result in actual grade earned based on points accumulated; an "I" course grade will not be given without signing a contract with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the last instruction day.

Class Policy on Record Keeping

Keep a record of all assignments you have completed. In particular, save backup copies of your essays/papers. For future portfolio purposes, students—ESPECIALLY MAJORS in English & Comparative Literature--are advised to preserve essays/papers graded and returned to them until graduation.

Classroom Protocol

1. Participation is understood to be an essential aspect of learning in this class. Absence without leave, late arrival, unauthorized breaks, early departure, and inattentiveness will be considered in my evaluation of your participation.
2. The use of cell phones is prohibited.
3. The use of laptops for purposes inconsistent with class activities is prohibited.
4. Ingestion of food inside the classroom is prohibited.

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester's [Catalog Policies](http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html) section at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the [current academic calendar](http://www.sjsu.edu/academic_programs/calendars/academic_calendar/) web page located at http://www.sjsu.edu/academic_programs/calendars/academic_calendar/. The [Late Drop Policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/>. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the [Advising Hub](http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/>.

University Policies

Academic integrity

Students should know that the University's [Academic Integrity Policy](http://sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/faculty_and_staff/academic_integrity/index.html) is available at http://sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/faculty_and_staff/academic_integrity/index.html. Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University's integrity policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The [Student Conduct and Ethical Development website](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html) is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html.

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of instructors.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Disability Resource Center](http://www.drc.sjsu.edu/) (DRC) at <http://www.drc.sjsu.edu/> to establish a record of their disability.

Student Technology Resources

Computer labs for student use are available in the Academic Success Center located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Additional computer labs may be available in your department/college. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library.

A wide variety of audio-visual equipment is available for student checkout from Media Services located in IRC 112. These items include digital and VHS camcorders, VHS and Beta video players, 16 mm, slide, overhead, DVD, CD, and audiotape players, sound systems, wireless microphones, projection screens and monitors.

SJSU Writing Center

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Room 126 in Clark Hall. It is staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists from each of the seven SJSU colleges. Our writing specialists have met a rigorous GPA requirement, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. The [Writing Center website](http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/) is located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/>.

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	8/22	Introduction to the course; presentation project; research paper; supplementary materials – films
2	8/29	Seminal Idea(s) from Hawthorne’s “May-Pole of Merrymount” Seminal Idea(s) from William Bradford & Thomas Morton
3	9/5	Location of the Frontier: Mary Rowlandson’s Captivity Narrative
4	9/12	Geography of the Borders: Life of Black Hawk
5	9/19	Allegories of Empire: Moby Dick
6	9/26	Poetics of Encyclopedia: Moby Dick
7	10/3	Annexation, Inc.: Hawaii’s Story by Hawaii’s Queen
8	10/10	Colonialism to the Rescue: Cousins of Color
9	10/17	Missionary Positions: Poisonwood Bible
10	10/24	Mission Impossible: Poisonwood Bible
11	10/31	Sleeping with the Enemy: When Heaven and Earth Changed Places
12	11/7	Romancing the Ethnic Other: Child of War, Woman of Peace
13	11/14	The Brown Man’s Burden: Cutting for Stone
14	11/21	Transnational Identities: Cutting for Stone
15	11/28	Global Communities: The Next Chapter?
16	12/5	Conclusion to the course; Research paper due

**The instructor reserves the right to revise this greensheet.
Updates will be provided in class or by email in a timely manner
or as soon as possible.**