

San José State University
English Department
English 162, Studies in American Literature, Fall 2017

Instructor: Susan Shillinglaw
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Office Hours: T/TH: 1:30-2:30
Class Days/Time: T/TH: 3:00-4:15
Classroom: BBC 130

Course Format:

This is a discussion/lecture course.

Course Description

This course considers American literature, history and culture from the colonial era to the Civil War. How did these writers describe the country, the citizen, “others,” the environment? Why are these writers relevant today? And how do they help us understand our American roots?

Readings are varied, including sermons, captivity narratives, slave narratives, poetry, autobiographies, novels and stories,

Course Learning Outcomes

The goals of this course are, first, to introduce students to a variety of genres that characterize American literature in the early period: letters, sermons, histories, tracts, poetry, memoir, fiction, short stories. Furthermore, each student will come to appreciate the range of American writing from its roots to 1865.

- a. Recognize and appreciate various genres of American literature.
- b. Appreciate longer works of fiction
- c. Write with flexibility: essays, short responses, journals.
- d. Improve writing by working on clarify, precision, interest, voice, etc. Satisfied by an essay, midterm/final and reader responses written throughout the semester.

Required texts

The Norton Anthology of American Literature, 9th edition

- A. Beginnings to 1820
- B. 1820-1865

Course Requirements and Assignments

Because this is a 4-unit course, students can expect to spend a minimum of twelve hours per week preparing for and attending classes and completing course assignments. This course will have integrated into the syllabus the following 1-unit enhancement:

- a. Increased course content: two complete novels
- b. Cultural enrichment through reports on Native American contributions to American/ CA literature.

I. Book groups and cultural presentations: 20%. The class will be divided into groups of 5-6 people, and each group will read, discuss, present orally, and write an analytical essay on the historical, cultural and literary importance of Native American literature/literature **OR** the anti-slavery movement/slave narratives **OR** literature of the women's rights movement. Each group will read assigned excerpts from the two anthologies as well as additional material. During the first week of class, assignments will be made for each group. A few times throughout the semester, groups will be given class time to discuss presentations and the reading (30 minutes on days indicated), although each group will need to meet outside class to complete oral presentations/projects.

- a. **Close reading:** For group sessions, members of each group will focus on posing good questions about their assigned reading.

b. Group projects/presentations: After reading selections carefully, each group will create and present a project that incorporates factual/historical background with an appreciation of individual readings. Presentations are expected to have a creative component—powerpoint, historical images, music, artifacts, video clips.

c. Essay: Each group member will write 2-page essay, **due 1 week *AFTER*** each the group presents to the class. These essays will connect a major theme from readings in Native American/African American/women's literature with the readings of other American writers. Consider why a comparative approach helps deepen your understanding of American writing.

II. Reading Notebook: 20% In the second ½ of the semester—after the midterm--you will keep a reading notebook, with 2 page responses composed each week. I will collect the reading responses on Thursdays and return on Tuesday. Place all a reading notebook, which will be handed in at the end of the semester.

III. Quizzes (10%)

Reading quizzes will be given throughout the semester (5 questions based on close reading of texts) and each is graded on a 1-10 scale. At the end of the semester, reading quizzes will be averaged and will count 10% of the final grade.

IV. Midterm and final exams. 25% each.

The midterm and final exams include both short answer responses (3-5 sentences) and one or two essays.

Grading information

a. Reading responses, the essay, the midterm and the final exam are graded on clarity, originality, specificity (do not include long quoted passages, but refer to specific scenes in texts), and precision. Major grammatical errors will lower your final grade (comma splices, incomplete sentences, misuse of subordination, subject/verb agreement).

A and A-: A superior piece of writing. The topic focused, the language sharp, and the writing free of grammatical errors. The piece has originality and style, is elegant, thoughtful and persuasive. If research is included, it is relevant and clearly cited.

B+ and B: A good piece of writing, solid and clear. But it may lack the innovation and sharpness of the top category. The point is clear but could be

supported with additional details. There may be minor spelling, typographic, and/or grammatical errors. But it is interesting enough to hold a reader's attention. If research is included, it is mostly solid and the paper draws from the research.

B- and C+: This response may be too broad or unsupported. Examples may be general rather than specific. There may be grammatical errors. The central idea may not be fresh. The writing may be wordy and vague. If research is included, scholarship might not be relevant, fresh or focused on the topic and hand. Citations may be infrequent, general.

C and below: These essays are unfocused, without a sharp thesis. Examples are general or the essay lacks examples. Research is not thorough. There may be serious grammatical errors. If research is included, sources may be general, unfocused, not cited properly.

b. Late essays receive lower grades, 1/3 grade per day assignment is late.

Determination of final grade will depend on completion of work noted under "Course Requirements and Assignments"—ie, reading group projects, notebook, quizzes and final. Failure to complete any of the assignments will result in a 0 earned for that part of the course, thus significantly lowering the final grade.

The Department of English reaffirms its commitment to the differential grading scale as defined by the SJSU Catalog (Grades-Letter Grading). Grades issued must represent a full range of student performance: *A+/A/A-* = excellent; *B+/B/B-* = above average; *C+/C/C-* = average; *D+/D/D-* = below average; F = failure. *Within any of the letter grade ranges (e.g. B+/B/B-), the assignment of a + or - grade will reflect stronger (+) or weaker (-) completion of the goals of the assignment.*

Classroom Protocol

Students are expected to attend each class and engage actively in discussions and to read assigned texts carefully. Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class, and students arriving late will miss quizzes. Use of computers is permitted only when students are reading Steinbeck's books electronically, and I ask that those students sit in the front. Otherwise, no computers or cell phones in class.

University Policies

Please see syllabus information web page at
<http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo>

English 162, Studies in American Literature, Fall 2017 Course Schedule

August 24: Introduction: Considering America

WEEK 1: Explorations and Encounters

August 29: Columbus, 58-66; Cortez, 82-87; Bradford and Winslow, 106-110; Smith, 110-128.

August 31: Bradford, 129-158 and 162-66; Morton, 167-176.

WEEK 2: Puritan Voices

September 5: Winthrop, 176-195; Bradstreet, 217 and selected poems: “The Prologue,” “To the Memory...” “Contemplations,” “The Flesh and the Spirit,” “The Author to Her Book,” “Before the Birth of One of her Children,” “To My Dear and Loving Husband,” “Here Follows Some Verses upon the Burning of Our House...”

September 7: Rowlandson, 267-301; Taylor, 301-308. **Group work on presentations.**

WEEK 3: 18th Century Enlightenments

September 12. Edwards, “A Divine and Supernatural Light,” “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” 356-57; 377- 402. Franklin, 338-48.

September 14: : Presentation #1: Native American voices: Franklin, “Autobiography,” Part I, 467-514.

WEEK 4: What is an American?

September 19: Franklin, Part II, 514-530 and Part III, 531-538. Crèvecoeur, 634-648; John and Abigail Adams, 664-676.

September 21: Foster, *The Coquette*, 841-940. **Group work on presentations.**

WEEK 5: 19th Century: American Vistas

September 26: Presentation #2: Native American Voices: Irving, 25-27 and 29-62.

September 28: Cooper, 65-79 and Chapter 1, handout.

WEEK 6: Expansive visions

October 3: Presentation #3: Anti Slavery movement: Emerson, “Nature,” 178-210. “Each and All,” “The Snow-Storm” 300-301

October 5: Emerson, “The American Scholar,” “The Divinity School Address,” “Self Reliance.” **Group work on presentations.**

WEEK 7: Resistance

October 10: Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government” and *Walden* 950-1022.

October 12: *Walden*, 1060-1102.

WEEK 8: Other voices

October 17: Presentation #4 Native Americans. Presentation #4, Slave narratives.

October 19: Frederick Douglas, 1159-1229

WEEK 9: Other voices

October 24: Jacobs, 909-931. **Group work on presentations and midterm prep.**

October 26: Midterm exam

WEEK 10: The Power of Blackness

October 31: Hawthorne, “The May-Pole of Merry Mount” and “The Minister’s Black Veil”; *The Scarlet Letter*, “The Custom House.” 360-377 and 425-451.

November 2: Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, 451-506. **Reading response on Hawthorne due.**

WEEK 11: New England revisited

November 7: Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, 506-569.

November 9: Presentation #5: Women's rights. Melville, "Bartleby," 1469-1495. **Reading response on Melville due.**

WEEK 12: Enslaved and untrammelled

November 14: Melville, "Benito Cereno," 1511-1568

November 16: Whitman, "Song of Myself," 1294-1356. **Reading response on Whitman due.**

WEEK 13: Bard of inclusiveness

November 21: Whitman, 1357-1362; 1364-1373. **Reading response #2 on Whitman due.**

November 23: THANKSGIVING

WEEK 14: The public and the private: Two poets

November 28: Whitman, 1379-1388; 1406-1410.

November 30: Dickinson, 1654-1673. **Reading response on Dickinson due.**

WEEK 15: America and Americans: Where are we?

December 5: Dickinson, 1674-1696

December 7: Review and discussion of final exam. **Reading response #2 on Dickinson due.**

Final Exam, Thursday Dec. 14, 14:45-1700