

LITR215

Course Summary

Course: LITR215 **Title:** Literature of American Encounters, Revolution, and Rebellion

Length of Course: 8 Weeks

Prerequisites: [leave blank] **Credit Hours:** 3

Description

Course Description:

How does a young country develop a literature of its own? From explorers to frontiersmen, follow the search for freedom and new lands through early American literature, guided by the adventuresome spirit reflected in works from the Colonies to the advent of the Civil War. How do we rationalize reports from explorers and early settlers on the indigenous populations? What impact did religion have on early colonial writing and why did the focus shift to reason? How did American writing reflect and shape thought about rebellion and war? How did American women carve out space for themselves as writers of merit?

This course explores these questions and more through the writing of American history and the American character, deepening our understanding of a literature that came to be defined by courage, passion, idealism, and—yes—even objection and protest.

Course Scope:

In this course, we will explore American literature from the oral tradition of the native inhabitants and the first accounts of the European explorers through the start of the Civil War. We will consider a range of texts that work to define the history and literary movements beginning with the first nations; moving through the colonial era, the Enlightenment, and the Romantic era; and ending with the onset of American Realism. Our authors include explorers, revolutionaries, and rebels—voices that demand to be heard as we consider what is our national identity and who, exactly, does our literature represent?

Objectives

1. Articulate the relationship between American historical events and the literature produced during those periods
 2. Categorize major authors of America's literature written prior to the Civil War by both genre and movement
 3. Analyze literary genres including poetry, narratives, and biographical or historical accounts
 4. Distinguish the characteristics that make a literary work uniquely American
 5. Articulate an original opinion based on materials read
 6. Demonstrate knowledge of material covered throughout the term
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Outline

Week 1: First Nations and Exploration—Growing Pains

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify the earliest types of American literature and the historical events that precipitated them
2. Describe several texts classified as exploration literature
3. Discuss several themes that run through much early American literature
4. Explain several of the tensions and conflicts that arose among the earliest explorers and in the New World and show how these tensions and conflicts were reflected in literary works

Readings:

- Native American Oral Tradition
- Introduction: Explorers, Invaders, and Colonists
- Christopher Columbus: Introduction
- Christopher Columbus, "Letter of Columbus, Describing the Results of His First Voyage"
- Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca: Introduction
- Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, "The Character of the Country"
- Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, "The Assault from the Indians"
- John Smith: Biography
- John Smith, from *The General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles*, Chapter II: "What Happened Till the First Supply" and "The Building of James Towne"
- Samuel de Champlain: Biography
- Samuel de Champlain, from *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain: The Voyages of 1604-1607*

Assignments:

Introduction (Forum)

- Initial post and peer replies due Sunday

Revisionist History (Forum)

-Initial post and peer replies due Sunday

Week 2: Colonization and the Puritans—Growing Pains

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify the two groups of Puritans that came to the New World
2. Explain the six elements of Puritanism
3. Describe some of the Puritan beliefs that led to tensions and conflicts within the movement
4. Discuss several Puritan works by different authors
5. Describe the connections between the historical events and the literary works of the period
6. Identify the most common kinds of literary texts that were produced in this period
7. Be familiar with additional captivity narratives
8. Understand the views on Indians and witchcraft of the time

Readings:

-Introduction: Pilgrims, Puritans, and Opponents

-William Bradford: Biography

-William Bradford, from *Of Plymouth Plantation*, (9th Chapter)

-Anne Bradstreet: Introduction

-Anne Bradstreet, "To My Dear and Loving Husband," "The Author to Her Book," and "On the Burning of Our House"

-Mary Rowlandson: Biography

-Mary Rowlandson, from *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*

-Edward Taylor: Biography

-Edward Taylor, "Upon Wedlock, and Death of Children"

-Cotton Mather: Biography

-Cotton Mather, *Wonders of the Invisible World*: "The Author's Defence" and "The Trial of Martha Carrier"

-St. John de Crevecoeur: *Letters from an American Farmer*, "What is an American?"

Assignments:

Course Notes (Forum)

-Initial post due Wednesday, peer replies due Sunday

Quiz 1

-due Sunday

Week 3: Reason and Revolution—Civil Disobedience and Discontent

Learning Objectives:

1. Compare and contrast the goals of writers in this era with those of earlier writers
2. Discuss the most important political authors and foundational works that were written in America
3. Understand the ideas behind the Age of Enlightenment and the Spirit of Rationalism
4. Discuss the influence of key African American writers of the age

Readings:

- Introduction: Nationalism in the Age of Enlightenment
- Benjamin Franklin: Biography
- Benjamin Franklin, "Aphorisms"
- Benjamin Franklin, "Plan for Attaining Moral Perfection"
- Benjamin Franklin, "Information to Those Who Would Remove to America"
- Thomas Paine: Introduction
- Thomas Paine, from *Common Sense*
- Thomas Jefferson: Introduction
- Thomas Jefferson, The Declaration of Independence
- Olaudah Equiano: Biography
- Olaudah Equiano, Chapter II from *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*
- Phillis Wheatley: Biography
- Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America"
- Phillis Wheatley, "On the Death of a Young Lady of Five Years of Age"

Assignments:

Course Notes (Forum)

- Initial post due Wednesday, peer replies due Sunday

Essay 1

- due Sunday
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Week 4: Transcendentalism—Civil Disobedience and Discontent

Learning Objectives:

1. Define Transcendentalism
2. Understand the philosophical underpinnings of Transcendentalist philosophy
3. Identify the important Transcendentalist writers and their works

Readings:

- Introduction: Transcendental Theory and Practice

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- Ralph Waldo Emerson: Introduction
 - Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance"
 - Henry David Thoreau: Introduction
 - Henry David Thoreau, "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience"
 - Margaret Fuller: Author Bio
 - Margaret Fuller, "The Wrongs of American Women. The Duties of American Women." (from *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*)
 - Margaret Fuller, "Educate Men and Women as Souls." (from *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*)
 - Margaret Fuller, "Household Nobleness." (from *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*)

Assignments:

Course Notes (Forum)

- Initial post due Wednesday, peer replies due Sunday

Quiz 2

- due Sunday
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Week 5: The Romantics—Individualism and Imagination

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe the relationship between Romanticism and the historical events in America during this period
2. Identify the general characteristics of Romantic literature and thought
3. Explain how Irving and Hawthorne's literary works represented and influenced the Romantic movement
4. Identify and discuss the themes and literary devices in several of Irving and Hawthorne's shorter works
5. Summarize the human weaknesses that Herman Melville portrayed in his shorter works
6. Identify several of the important cultural elements that existed during this period
7. Explain how and why the reigning Romanticism gave way to new ways of thinking and writing

Readings:

- Introduction: The New Nation and Its Literature
- Washington Irving: Introduction
- Washington Irving, "Rip Van Winkle"
- Introduction: Nathaniel Hawthorne and the American Gothic
- Nathaniel Hawthorne: Introduction
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"
- Nathaniel Hawthorne: "The Birth-Mark"
- Herman Melville: Introduction (2017)
- Herman Melville, "Bartleby, A Story of Wall-Street"

Assignments:

Course Notes (Forum)

-Initial post due Wednesday, peer replies due Sunday

Week 6: The Romantics (II)—Individualism and Imagination

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify the aspects of Edgar Allan Poe's works that are both similar to and different from other writers of the time
2. Identify the themes, plots, and literary devices found in several of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories
3. Discuss the goals and works of the Fireside Poets
4. Identify several of the important cultural elements that existed during this period

Readings:

-Edgar Allan Poe: Introduction
-Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher"
-Edgar Allan Poe, "The Masque of the Red Death"
-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: Biography
-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: "My Lost Youth"
-Oliver Wendell Holmes: Biography
-Oliver Wendell Holmes: "Old Ironsides"
-Oliver Wendell Holmes: "My Aunt"

Assignments:

Course Notes (Forum)

-Initial post due Wednesday, peer replies due Sunday

Essay 2

-due Sunday

Week 7: Anti-Slavery and Slave Narratives—Justice and Values

Learning Objectives:

1. Discuss the literary devices Harriet Beecher Stowe used in Uncle Tom's Cabin that succeeded in making the slavery issue clear to the reader
2. Explain how literary works of this period both reflected and influenced the cultural, political, and social currents of the time

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3. Explain the genre of slave narratives and give several examples of writers and their works from this genre
 4. Describe Harriet Jacobs' struggles

Readings:

- Writing Slavery Introduction
- Harriet Beecher Stowe: Introduction (2017)
- Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* — Chapter VII: "The Mother's Struggle"
- Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* — Chapter XIX: "Miss Ophelia's Experiences and Opinions, Continued"
- Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* — Chapter XL: "The Martyr"
- Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* — Chapter XLI: "The Young Master"
- Harriet Jacobs: Biography
- Harriet Jacobs, from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, "The Trials of Girlhood" (Chap. V) and "The Jealous Mistress" (Chap. VI)

Assignments:

Course Notes (Forum)

- Initial post due Wednesday, peer replies due Sunday
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Week 8: Anti-Slavery and Slave Narratives (II)—Justice and Values

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand and tell of Frederick Douglass' success as a self-made man
2. Explain how literary works of this period both reflected and influenced the cultural, political, and social currents of the time
3. Explain the genre of slave narratives and give several examples of writers and their works from this genre

Readings:

- Frederick Douglass: Introduction
- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*: Chapter I
- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*: Chapter VI
- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*: Chapter VII
- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*: Chapter XI

Assignments:

Final Thoughts/Course Wrap-up (Forum)

- Initial post due Wednesday, peer replies due Sunday

Evaluation

Reading Assignments:

The readings for the course were chosen for the variety of information presented. Please see the course outline for specific reading sections as well as the weekly lessons, which include directions for each week's readings.

Supplemental Readings:

Throughout the weekly lessons, you may see suggested additional readings. These are optional but provide related, helpful information.

Forum Assignments:

Forums are a great way for us to interact as a class and discuss the week's readings, ask questions, and provide feedback. All forums require an initial post that will address the question or assignment. Two additional responses (minimum) to other students' posts (in threads other than your own) are required.

Quizzes:

Students will complete two quizzes based on the assigned readings. These are automatically scored.

Writing Assignments/Final Presentation:

Students will write two essays and complete one final (podcast) assignment during the session.

Written assignments should be completed in Microsoft Word using Times-New Roman, 12-point font, and double spacing. This is standard MLA manuscript formatting.

All written assignments should be submitted as MS Word documents. Give your assignments filenames consisting of your last name and the assignment name: "Harvey-Character Study."

Your instructor will insert comments directly in your assignments using the Track Changes and Insert Comments features, and then return them to you. Your instructor will expect you to review comments on your work prior to submitting the next assignments.

Upload all assignments for grading by 11:55 PM (EST) on the dates assigned. In the event an assignment will be late, please notify your instructor by e-mail in advance.

Based on a percentage system, your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Forums	30%
Quizzes	10%
Essays	30%
Final Assignment (Podcast)	30%

Total 100%

Materials

Open Web Readings

*All text readings linked in course

Digital American Literature Anthology. Michael O’Conner, ed. Version 1.5. <http://digitalamlit.com>.

The Open Anthology of Earlier American Literature. Abby Goode, ed.

<https://www.oercommons.org/courses/the-open-anthology-of-earlier-american-literature-a-psu-based-project/view>

Course Guidelines

Please refer to the following sub-sections within the Course Overview and Introduction area of our classroom:

- Course Guidelines and Resources
- Discussion Participation Guidelines
- Late Policy