

American Literature to 1865

Fall 2012

MWF 12:30-1:30

Professor Bross

Office Hours: W 1:30-3:30 and by appointment

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Description: This course explores American voices from the time of English settlement of the eastern edge of this continent until the mid-nineteenth century. We will look at the ways diverse speakers wrote themselves into history and we will search for connections among their representations of the land, themselves, and the others with whom they came in contact. We will proceed both chronologically and thematically and attempt to knit together the various threads that made up the warp and weft of American cultural, intellectual, historical and literary life.

Texts (all books available at Von's. I've specified required editions; please don't substitute other editions, since a) I want us all to be referring to the same pages of the text when we talk and b) I will be assigned introductory and other materials from these particular editions.)

- Mary Rowlandson, *Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, ed. Neal Salisbury (Bedford Press)
- Phillis Wheatley, *Complete Works*, ed. Vincent Carretta (Penguin)
- Susanna Rowson, *The Coquette*, ed. Cathy Davidson (Oxford)
- Royall Tyler, *The Contrast*, ed. Cynthia A. Kierner (NYU Press)
- Washington Irving, *Sketchbook*, ed. Susan Manning (Oxford)
- Herman Melville, *Benito Cereno*, ed Wyn Kelly (Bedford)
- Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (any edition is OK. **NOTE: we will not be discussing the novel in class directly, but you should have read it by the time we read its dramatic adaptation, *The Christian Slave* in December. I will expect that you can make comparisons and contrasts between the play and the novel.**)

August 20 Introduction: American Literature before 1865 at Purdue

Unit 1: Early American Poetry (in reverse)

August 22

- Walt Whitman, “O Captain,” found here: <http://whitmanarchive.org/published/periodical/poems/per.00076>. Please look at its context in the facsimile image as well.
- “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d,” found in a clean etext here: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/174748>. If you find poetry difficult to read, or you don’t mind “spoilers,” you might want to read through this essay by R. W. French explicating the poem before you read it (in any case, make sure you’ve read it before we meet today): http://whitmanarchive.org/criticism/current/encyclopedia/entry_67.html.
- Read “Lincoln Discovery” and follow the link to the facsimiles of the letter in NHPRC News: <http://www.archives.gov/nhprc/newsletter/2012/june/>. For more on the discover, check out the NPR report, here: <http://www.npr.org/2012/06/06/154456416/new-document-sheds-light-on-lincolns-last-hours>

August 24

- Whitman, “Beat! Beat! Drums!” (Look at the poem itself and its setting in the newspaper. Facsimiles can be found here: <http://whitmanarchive.org/published/periodical/poems/per.00055>
- “Cavalry Crossing a Ford,” “A Sight in Camp,” and “Dresser,” both in Whitman’s 1865 edition of *Drum-Taps*, which can be found here: <http://www.whitmanarchive.org/published/other/DrumTaps.html#leaf006v1>
- Martin G. Murray, “Traveling with the Wounded,” <http://www.whitmanarchive.org/criticism/current/anc.00156.html>

Essay #1 due at the start of class

August 27 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Read his biography at The Poetry Foundation: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/henry-wadsworth-longfellow>. Read these poems, found on the same website: “Jewish Cemetery at Newport”; “A Psalm of Life”; “Children’s Hour”; “Excelsior”; <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/search/?q=longfellow>.

August 29 Longfellow, continued: “The Landlord’s Tale: Paul Revere’s Ride,” found at The Poetry Foundation (see link above), and “Hiawatha’s Departure” (and feel free to read all you want from *Song of Hiawatha*): <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/LonHiaw.html>

Essay #2 due; and see description of portfolio essays for Extra Credit assignment #2.2

August 31 Phillis Wheatley, readings TBD from our print edition

September 3 LABOR DAY

September 5 Wheatley, continued

September 7 Wheatley, continued

Essay #3 due

September 10 Anne Bradstreet, introduction and selected poetry (Blackboard)

September 12 Bradstreet, continued

September 13, Vincent Carretta talk, 4:30

September 14 Bay Psalm Book: title page, preface and psalm xxiii. You can access this book through the online database “Early American Imprints” available through the Purdue Libraries. If you type “Bay Psalm Book” into the search box of the db, the 1640 edition should be your first hit. I’ve asked you to look at the BPB’s version of Psalm 23. If you are unfamiliar with the King James Bible version of this psalm, please check it out. You can find an online KJB here:

<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/k/kjv/>

Essay #4 due

Unit 2: Puritan New England

September 17 John Winthrop, *A Modell of Christian Charity*, found here:

<http://religiousfreedom.lib.virginia.edu/sacred/charity.html>

Extra Credit assignment #4.2 due

See prompt for essay #5

September 19 Winthrop, journal (Blackboard)

September 21 Mary Rowlandson, *Sovereignty and Goodness of God* from our print edition. Read Salisbury’s edition and *Per Amicum*’s preface.

Essay #6 due

September 24 Rowlandson, continued

September 26 Rowlandson, continued

September 28 Jonathan Edwards, from *Images and Shadows of Divine Things* (Blackboard)

Essay #7 due

Full portfolios handed back in preparation for Midterm.

Unit 3: 18th Century and the Early U.S.

October 1 Benjamin Franklin, the Silence Dogood essays. An introduction to the essays and links to all 14, here: http://www.masshist.org/online/silence_dogood/essay.php?entry_id=202

October 3 Franklin, continued

October 5 **Midterm Portfolio due at start of class**

October 8 *BREAK*

October 10 End of Franklin; discussion of Oct. 5 in-class writing

October 12 *Coquette*, from our print edition. DON'T read the introduction until next week.

Essay #8 due

October 15 *Coquette*, continued

October 17 *Coquette*, continued be sure to have the intro read by this point.

Essay #9 due

October 19 *Contrast*: The whole play should be read by this point. We'll meet to distribute parts and set up our "reader's theatre" for next the next three sessions. After today, we'll meet to read for a bit (dramatically); then break periodically for discussion.

October 22 *Contrast* **Class meets in south tower, Union**

October 24 *Contrast* **Class meets in south tower, Union**

October 26 *Contrast* **Class meets in south tower, Union**

Essay #10 due

Unit 4: The New Republic

October 29 Washington Irving, *Sketchbook*, from our print edition. Over this week, we'll be reading together the Introduction, "The Author's Account of Himself"; "Rip Van Winkle"; "Traits of Indian Character"; "Philip of Pokanoket" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow."

October 31 Irving, contd.

November 2 Irving, contd.

Essay #11 due

November 5 Apess, "Eulogy on King Philip." See the version online here (along with supporting materials): <http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/deliberative-topics/civil-rights/william-apess-eulogy-on-king-philip-26-january-1836/>

See prompt for essay #12

November 7 Apess, "Eulogy on King Philip"

Essay #13 due

November 9 Richard Emmons, *Tecumseh or, The Battle of the Thames* (online through the Purdue Libraries)

November 12 *Tecumseh*, continued

November 14 *Tecumseh*, continued; other Prophetstown readings, TBD

See portfolio essay prompts for Extra Credit assignment #13.2

November 16 Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" (Blackboard)

Essay #16 due

Full portfolios handed back in preparation for Final Portfolio.

Unit 5: Antebellum Literature

November 19 "Young Goodman Brown, continued

November 21 THANKSGIVING

November 23 THANKSGIVING

November 26 Melville, *Benito Cereno* our printed text

November 28 *Benito Cereno*

November 30 *Benito Cereno*

Final Portfolios due

December 3 *The Christian Slave*; **Class meets in south tower, Union**

December 5 *Christian Slave*, continued; **Class meets in south tower, Union**

December 7 *Christian Slave*, continued; **Class meets in south tower, Union**

December 10-15 exams

Description of Assignments

Participation

Grade: 15 points total (includes verbal participation and any in-class quizzes or writings)

To earn an A in participation, you must make regular, prepared contributions to class discussion. I expect that you will come to class with the appropriate text in hand, having read and digested the assigned reading for the day. I expect that you will have both thoughtful queries and thoughtful responses to the readings. If you are a shy participant, please come to talk with me about strategies for participation.

A warning about electronics in class: since we'll be using digital primary texts, some of you may choose to bring in laptops or other readers. (I myself usually print out hard copies of the texts, since they are easier to consult and discuss in a group setting.) If you are using such readers in lieu of hard copies for assigned texts, you may bring them to class. But beware! It is painfully obvious in classes of this size when students are Googling, Facebooking, Twittering (ye gods), etc. Such diversions will lower your participation grade, naturally.

You **MUST** attend class. Since we are covering so much, so fast, you need to be involved in the daily process of developing and analyzing our conclusions about the works of early American literature considered in this class. You will be responsible for everything covered in class and any announcements I make whether or not you are present. If you have to miss class, be sure that you arrange beforehand with someone in the class to provide you with notes and announcements. I don't plan to have a formal attendance policy in this class (though I reserve the right to institute one mid-way through), but you will not get credit for participation if you are regularly absent, and I will not accept make up quizzes or in-class writings for any reason. Moreover, I will not accept response essays late—you must be in class on time to get full credit for them. It is your responsibility to contact me as soon as possible, preferably in advance, if you have a legitimate reason (illness, for instance) for missing class on the day an assignment is due. Also, I place an extra emphasis on informed participation in the last couple of weeks in the semester.

Directed essays and exercises

Length: 2-3 pages for each usual and customary essay; 3-5 pages for cover essays.

Due: almost weekly

Grade: 60 points total—30 for the first set and 30 for the second. Each essay, including the cover essay, is worth 5 points.

These short essays are designed to lead into class discussion each week. They are most successful when they are focused on a narrow topic or short passage. Do not try to squeeze a size 13 essay into a size 7 shoe. They are meant to be “essays” in the dictionary sense, that is, to

be writings in which you try out new or risky ideas within the parameters of the prompt. However, they are *not* journal entries, which are often stream-of-consciousness, first-draft kinds of writing. You should take the time to reflect on the readings and the prompt, and the prose should be fairly polished, certainly free of grammar, punctuation or other mechanical errors. The essays will be evaluated in two groups—two essay portfolios—but each essay will be collected as it comes due, and I will keep them in a folder for you. Your folders of essays will be returned to you one week before the midterm and the final due dates so that you can write the introductory essays. One additional point: I often pose several interrelated questions in each prompt. I don't expect that you will answer each of them separately, but rather that you will use them to help pose and then answer your own questions about our readings.

Note 1: each essay portfolio should include 5 pieces—only the first essay and the cover essays are required; you can choose to pass on two weeks' assignments for the Midterm Portfolio and one for the Final Portfolio.

Note 2: please read the prompts for these essays in advance; a couple of them require that you work ahead of the scheduled due date (see #3, #5, #8, #11 and #12 especially).

Extra Credit: there are several extra credit portfolio option essays scattered throughout the term. These essays will be averaged into the midterm and the final portfolio, weighted at 50% of a regularly assigned essay.

Final Project (25 points). Choose one of the following two options:

- 1) Final exam: consists of two parts: a take-home essay asking you to synthesize the work of the semester and extend your analysis of early American literature outside of the assigned readings, and an in-class, short-essay exam that asks you to comment on specific works that we have covered in class. I will give you the prompts for the take-home part of the final on the Monday of the last week of class.
- 2) Analytical/Research Essay (8-10 pages; due at the start of the class's scheduled final exam): if you choose this option, I will ask you to propose a topic when you turn in your midterm portfolio. This paper can build on one of the short portfolio essays or can tackle a new topic related to early American literature. This option is especially good for students who wish to improve their writing skills or who wish to create a polished essay for literary awards, graduate school applications, etc., or who just enjoy a bigger scale for exploring their ideas. If you choose this option, I will arrange extra office hours to consult with you at least two times along the way to the due date. If you know immediately that you'd rather work on an essay than take the exam, let's make an appointment to talk ASAP to plan strategy for the term.

Course Policy on Honesty and Plagiarism: As the Purdue Student Code of Conduct states, “our foremost interest is toward achieving noble educational goals” (http://www.purdue.edu/usp/acad_policies/student_code.shtml). I believe that striving to understand and appreciate (with fair-minded criticism) our early American forebears through their written and cultural expression is a noble enterprise. I believe that you will best achieve such understanding and appreciation by reading regularly (even doggedly) through the assigned texts, participating in open discussions inside and outside of class and—perhaps most importantly—by wrestling with early American language and ideas in written work created expressly for this class (that is, you are writing new assignments within the context of this English class rather than recycling material written at other times or for other classes), using your own intuition, building on your own textual observations for proof, and sometimes, relying on other peoples’ ideas as scaffolding, building blocks, skeletons, frames, etc. When you turn to this latter strategy, which is itself a perfectly respectable and noble academic practice, you should give these other people credit for having gone before you and made your ideas possible.

The problem is, of course, that not everyone has had the kind of introduction to research and citation practices that I assume. How many of us take the time to read through Purdue’s Code of Conduct or to wade through a standard handbook’s explanation of plagiarism and proper citation? (If you lack such a handbook, see the OWL’s nifty page: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/ResearchW/plag.html>).

As a professor, I routinely direct students to these sources for information about staying on the side of truth and light for assignments in my class—I hope you’ll take the time to remind yourself of their contents up front. I assume that you’ve had an introduction to basic research and citation techniques. I evaluate assignments and grade accordingly. If I find plagiarized material in your work, I will forward the details of the problem to the Dean’s Office, no matter what the circumstances, and I will assign penalties ranging from a redo on the assignment, a grade of F on the assignment, to an F in the class. Please come and see me if you are a) unsure about how to make proper citations—bring in a past paper if you like, and we can work through it—or b) overwhelmed by an assignment and are starting to get panicky about its completion; the temptation to plagiarize can be overwhelming at such times. While I most likely will not be setting aside time in class to talk about research approaches and citation issues, I am very happy to help you figure these things out on your own, in small groups, or in office hours.

Campus Emergencies

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. Here are ways to get information about changes in this course: my website (<http://kristinabross.weebly.com/>), our Blackboard site or Dropbox folder (as appropriate), my email address: kbross@purdue.edu.

