

Fighting Words: Literature and Violence in America

English 657

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Class meets Tuesday, Thursday 10:30-11:45
Office hours: Wednesdays 10-noon and by appointment

Description: Ethnic others vilified as preaching a religion of violence; debates over the use of torture to obtain crucial intelligence; declarations of war predicated on God's favor; national identity linked to military action: despite the contemporary ring of this litany, this class turns not to recent concerns, but to colonial American events and writings. This course examines and critiques themes of violence and identity in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century American literature.

Texts (available at Von's Books):

David Hall *The Antinomian Controversy*

Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence*

Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, ed. Neal Salisbury (Bedford edition)

Bartolomé de Las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (Penguin edition)

Suggested Texts: Cotton Mather, *Wonders of the Invisible World* (although this book is available on-line, I find it convenient to have a hard copy. Please tell me if you'd like a copy of this facsimile, and I will place an order with Von's Books.)

Also, there will be a substantial amount of material drawn from electronic databases or excerpted from longer works. I will put works not available on-line on our class Blackboard site.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

January 10-12

Introductions

Tuesday	Introduction to the course and close-reading exercise
Thursday	Studying Violence in Colonial New England: Approaches and Methods Readings, TBA Introduction to Puritan studies and the Black Legend

January 17-19

Imperial Violence, Imperial Competition

Tuesday	Las Casas, from <i>Brevísima Relación</i> (CP) Las Casas, from “Tears of the Indians,” trans. John Phillips (EEBO) Irene Silverblatt, “The Black Legend and Global Conspiracies” in Mignolo et al, <i>Rereading the Black Legend</i> (CP)
Thursday	De Bry images (Handout in class) Tom Conly, “DeBry’s Las Casas” (CP)

January 24-26

City on a Hill: Puritan Theology and Violence

Tuesday	John Winthrop, “Modell of Christian Charity” (CP) Thomas Hooker, “Danger of Desertion” (CP) Emory Elliott, “The Jeremiad,” (CP)
Thursday	Richard Slotkin, <i>Regeneration through Violence</i> , Chapters 2-3 Increase Mather, “The Day of Trouble is Near” (Early American Imprints) Sacvan Bercovitch, “Genetics of Salvation” from <i>The American Jeremiad</i> (CP)

January 31-February 2

Key Concepts in Studying Violence

This week, I'd like to find a 3-hour block during which we meet, as the discussion can't be truncated or interrupted easily. We will conduct the class as a roundtable discussion. Everyone will read the excerpts from various theorists listed below, but you will be responsible in teams of two to help the rest of the class better understand the key concept of your theorist and suggest how it might be a useful tool for understanding any of our primary texts to date.

Terms: Mimetic violence; homo sacer; grievable life; social death; fiction of power; witness

Readings, all part of the coursepack:
Rene Girard, from *The Girard Reader*, Part I, "Overview of the mimetic Theory" and from Part IV, "The Scapegoat as Historical Referent"
Giorgio Agamben, from *Homo Sacer*
Judith Butler, from *Frames of War*, "Precarious Life, Grievable Life"
Orlando Patterson, from *Slavery and Social Death*, Chapter 2
Elaine Scarry, from *The Body in Pain*, "Structure of Torture"
Susan Sontag, from *Regarding the Pain of Others*

Recommended: Peter Imbusch, "The Concept of Violence"

February 7-9

Pequot War

Tuesday	Alfred Cave, "Introduction" from <i>The Pequot War</i> (CP) John Underhill, <i>Newes from America</i> (http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/37/) Francis Jennings, "We Must Burn Them" from <i>Invasion of America</i> (CP) Laurence M. Hauptman, "The Pequot War and Its Legacies" (CP) Due: Key Concepts paper
Thursday	Lion Gardiner, "Relation of the Pequot War," <i>Early American Studies</i> , 9.2 Andrea Cremer, "Possession," <i>Early American Studies</i> , 6.2

February 14-16

Pequot War

Tuesday	Introduction to <i>Antinomian Controversy</i> John Wheelwright, "A Fast-Day Sermon" (Hall, AC) Mary Beth Norton, "Husband, Preacher, Magistrate" (CP)
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Thursday	Anne Hutchinson trials (Hall, AC)
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Week 7, February 21-24

Antinomians

Tuesday	John Winthrop, <i>The Short Story</i> (Hall, AC) Jonathan Beecher Field, "The Antinomian Controversy Did Not Take Place," in <i>Early American Studies</i> , 6.2 (Fall 2008): 448-463.
Thursday	Anne Schutte, "'Such Monstrous Births': A Neglected Aspect of the Antinomian Controversy." <i>Renaissance Quarterly</i> , 38.1 (Spring, 1985): 85-106. Johan Winsser, "Mary Dyer and the 'Monster' Story." <i>Quaker History</i> , 79.1 (Spring 1990). Bryce Traister, "Anne Hutchinson's 'monstrous birth' and the feminization of antinomianism." <i>Canadian Review of American Studies</i> , 27.2 (1997): 133-158. Bethany Reid. "'Unfit for light': Anne Bradstreet's monstrous birth." <i>New England Quarterly</i> , 71.4 (December, 1998): 517-43. Karyn Valerius, "So Manifest a Signe from Heaven": Monstrosity and Heresy in the Antinomian Controversy." <i>New England Quarterly</i> , 83.2 (June 2010): 179-199.

Week 8, February 28-March 1

Quakers

Tuesday	Mary Dyer, letters (CP). You can find links to her letters (and that of her husband) here: http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nwa/dyer.html . Anne Myles, "From Monster to Martyr." <i>Early American Literature</i> . 36.1 (2001):1-30. Michele Lise Tarter, "Quaking in the Light" (CP)
Thursday	John Norton, <i>The Heart of New England Rent</i> , excerpt (EEBO) Humphrey Norton, <i>New England's Bloody Ensigne</i> , excerpt (EEBO) Carla Pestana, "The Quaker Executions as Myth and History," <i>Journal of American History</i> 80.2 (1983). Due: Either Bibliographic essay or Close-reading paper

Week 9, March 6-8

King Philip's War

Tuesday	Neal Salisbury, "Introduction," to <i>Sovereignty and Goodness</i> Mary Rowlandson, <i>Sovereignty and Goodness of God.</i> " Be sure to read Per Amicum's original preface. You may want to read her husband's sermon as well. Jill Lepore, "The Story of it Printed" (CP).
Thursday	Rowlandson, contd. Slotkin, <i>Regeneration Through Violence</i> , Chapters 4-6.

SPRING BREAK

Week 10, March 20-22

Captivity

Tuesday	From our Rowlandson edition, read "Related Documents," 1-9." James Drake, "Restraining Atrocity," <i>New England Quarterly</i> , 70.1 (1997): 33-56. We may also get a jump on Benjamin Church, <i>Entertaining Passages in So Dreadfull a Judgment</i> , so please have at least half of it prepared for discussion.
Thursday	Benjamin Church, <i>Entertaining Passages</i> Philip Gould, "Reinventing Benjamin Church: Virtue, Citizenship and the History of King Philip's War in Early National America," <i>Journal of the Early Republic</i> , 1996 16(4): 645-657 (online) Due: Either Bibliographic essay or Close-reading paper

Week 11, March 27-29

Witchcraft

Tuesday	Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, "Prologue" from <i>Salem Possessed</i> (CP) Elizabeth Reis, "The Devil, the Body, and the Feminine Soul in Puritan New England," <i>Journal of American History</i> , 82.1 (1995): 15-36. Emory Elliot, "The Language of Witchcraft" (CP) Selected Salem trials, on-line through http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/ .
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Thursday	Trials, continued
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Week 12, April 3-5

Witchcraft

Tuesday	<p>Cotton Mather, <i>Wonders of the Invisible World</i> Robert Calef, from <i>More Wonders of the Invisible World</i> (Virginia etext) Albert Cook, "Damaging the Mathers," <i>New England Quarterly</i>, 65.2 (1992): 302-308.</p> <p>Due: one-page abstract of seminar paper (may be submitted electronically)</p>
Thursday	Letter of Thomas Brattle (Virginia etext)

EARG symposium, April 6-7. Times, places TBA.

Week 13, April 10-12

Slavery

Tuesday	<p>Cotton Mather, <i>The Negro Christianized</i>" (<i>Early American Imprints</i>). I recommend that you read all of the text, but we will focus on pp. 14-18; 21-23. John Sewall, <i>The Selling of Joseph</i> (available here: http://www.masshist.org/objects/2004september.cfm).</p>
Thursday	<p>John Saffin, "A Brief and Candid Answer" in George Henry Moore, <i>Notes on the History of Slavery in Massachusetts</i>. New York, c1866, beginning on p. 251. You can get a copy on-line through the library (take good notes) or on reserve. Abner Goodell, "John Saffin and His Slave Adam" (CP) Albert J. Von Frank "John Saffin: Slavery and Racism" (CP)</p>

American Studies symposium, April 19-20

Week 14, April 17-19

Conference

Mock conference: presentations of research. Please prepare a 10-minute formal presentation for these class meetings. If possible, I would like to have us meet for a 3-hour session.

Due, April 19: Seminar papers

Week 15, April 24-26

Small Pox

Tuesday	Primary texts, TBA Christobal Silva, "Technologies of Inoculation" (CP) Recommended: Axel Schmidt, "Historic Aspects and Early Smallpox Management Approaches in the New World" (CP)
Thursday	Cotton Mather, from <i>Angel of Bethesda</i> (CP) Kelly Wisecup, "African Medical Knowledge, the Plain Style, and Satire in the 1721 Boston Inoculation Controversy." <i>Early American Literature</i> , 46.1 (2011): 25-50.

Assignments

Despite the fact that you have five opportunities to earn points this semester, there are really only two assignments: the roundtable on key concepts in the study of violence and the seminar paper. However, I am treating the seminar paper developmentally, so I am asking you to submit work at several stages before you turn in the final draft, as detailed below. Each of the various assignments that contribute to your work on your seminar paper is meant either to showcase your analytical skills or to approximate a common genre in the profession

Parameters: Unless otherwise indicated, written work should be double-spaced in a reasonable, 12-point font. Please, please, please: please, I'm begging you, insert page numbers. Avoid separate title pages, but seek out pithy titles. Feel free to use the citation style of your choice. I myself favor the Chicago style. Unless I specifically state otherwise in the syllabus, I'll ask you to turn in hard copies. Double-sided printing is OK, but not necessary.

Key Concepts Roundtable (15%)

This assignment is in two parts: an in-class presentation, made by teams of 2-3 students, and an individual, 4-6 page paper. For the presentation, each team will focus on one theorist and read more widely around and from the source text. In a presentation of about 10 minutes (no more than 15), each team will give a working definition of the key concept and apply it to one of the primary texts we have discussed. Each team should also pose one or two questions for the class to consider. Especially welcome will be questions that connect up to the other theorists being discussed during the roundtable.

Following the discussion, each member of the team will write an individual, 4-6 page paper in which the same format as the presentation is followed (that is, the paper will provide an extended definition and exploration of the term and apply it to a primary text), but I will expect the paper to reflect the issues and questions that the roundtable discussion raised for you. There will surely be overlap among team members' papers, which is fine, but the papers should inscribe your individual point of view, at least to some extent.

Seminar Paper and Supporting Assignments:

The due dates of the final draft of your seminar paper and the presentation derived from it are set (the week of April 17). The two interim assignments have flexible due dates, as I recognize that everyone's research unfolds differently. I expect to see *either* the close reading exercise *or* the bibliographic essay by March 1 and the other assignment by March 22. Either order is fine, and I'm happy to take them early.

Bibliographic essay (20%) For this assignment, imagine a fuller treatment of the issues in one unit of the class or imagine a new unit reflecting the major themes/interests of the class. Possible topics include corporal punishment; execution narratives; crime reports; rape; witchcraft pre-Salem; infanticide; domestic violence; slavery in other colonies; even the concept of peace or justice/the justice system. Create a bibliography of primary and secondary materials (these should be listed separately) that you would include in a graduate-level class such as ours, if only we had the time. Write an accompanying critical essay in which you explain the argument that is inherent in your choices of texts, both primary and secondary. I imagine the length of the essay in

the 4-7 page range, depending on what you uncover. You'll want to consider an angle to the essay—it's not just a listing of sources but an argument or analysis of them. You can find close examples of the form I have in mind by searching for published review essays (that is, reviews of several books considered together). See me if you need inspiration. My goal is that we "publish" these essays for the class on a password-protected website or even just by using Googledocs. They should prove valuable resources!

Close reading exercise (15%): Show me your chops! Choose a passage, character, or formal element of primary text that is key to your seminar paper, and in a 5-6 page paper, closely analyze its significance. You might think about our discussion of the Josselyn text, the Salem witchcraft trials (through the lens of Elliott Emory's essay), or Las Casas as models. A good way to approach this paper is to think about a moment or a text that you know you'll be discussing in the final paper, even if you're not entirely sure yet how it fits into a larger argument. This is your chance to explore that text without having to make it support a seminar-paper length thesis. You may, of course, analyze it in terms of a wider historical or cultural context, but you can also analyze its place and significance within and to the text in which it appears, with less of an emphasis on its broader context.

Seminar Paper (40%): 25-30 page seminar paper on a topic related to the major themes/issues of the class. A one-page, formal proposal for the paper is due April 3.

****NOTE: although I am hoping that the close-reading exercise and the bibliographic essay will lead into this assignment, I recognize that you may stumble on something after writing those pieces that really excites. You may, after consultation with me, shift your focus.

Presentation (10%)

During our mock conference in class, you'll have 10-15 minutes to present the major findings of your research toward the conference paper. We'll discuss best approaches and practices as the day approaches.

Participation: I am not assigning a formal grade to participation, because it should be a given in a graduate seminar that you will attend every class and participate in the class discussion actively. You cannot earn an A in the class without consistent attendance and active contributions to the class discussions. Please talk with me if you know you have a conflict with a class meeting time, and contact me as soon as possible in case of illness or emergency.

Plagiarism and honesty policies: The submission of plagiarized work in whole or in part is a violation of University policy and will result in penalties up to failure in the course and referral to the dean of the college. See me if you have any concerns about proper citation style. Also, I will only accept original work produced specifically for this class in fulfillment of course requirements. Again, please see me if you have questions.

Campus-wide emergencies: in case of campus closure or other disruption to our schedule, I will contact you by email with arrangements/revised syllabus.