

ENGLISH 2308E -- AMERICAN LITERATURE -- ONLINE
Summer 2014

Instructor: Professor Ross Bullen

DESCRIPTION:

This course offers a survey of important texts and authors from the Puritan and Revolutionary periods to the present. It addresses not only the major movements and styles of American literature associated with such authors as Poe, Dickinson, Twain, Hemingway, and Morrison, but also the innovative work of less familiar Indigenous and ethnic authors.

Antirequisite(s): English 2341E, 2342F/G, 2343F/G, 2344E, 2345F/G, 2346F/G, and 3664E.
Prerequisite(s): At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020E or 1022E or 1024E or 1035E or 1036E or both English 1027F/G and 1028F/G, or permission of the Department.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- DeLillo, Don. *White Noise*. Penguin Books.
- Ellison, Ralph.

1. Trace the imagery of nurturance and provision in Anne Bradstreet's lyrics (do not use the poems on the reading list) and examine with particular attention the maternal and paternal imagery and references.
2. Crèvecoeur was one of the first writers to see America as a place where dogmatic disputes and sectarian violence could be permanently overcome--not by other idea systems but by the landscape and life within it. Describe this argument.
3. Melville considered Hawthorne's work to be marked by a "blackness," an ambiguity and darkness that was difficult to clearly determine. How is this "blackness" reflected in *The Scarlet Letter*?
4. Identify the contradictions implied in Dr. Flint's promise to Linda in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* that if she moves into the house he built for her, he will "make her a lady."
5. Choose one of the following quotations from *Song of Myself* and discuss it by suggesting how it describes what Whitman is attempting in the poem: (1) "I know I am solid and sound, / To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow, / All are written to me, and I must get what the writing means;" and (2) "I am the acme of things accomplished, and I am an encloser of things to be."

WEEK 3: J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (read the selections from Letters III, IX, X, and XII) and Benjamin Franklin, "The Way to Wealth" and *The Autobiography* (Part I).

WEEK 4: Edgar Allan Poe, "The Man of the Crowd" and Nathaniel Hawthorne, "My

WEEK 5: Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (selections from chapter I, VII, X, XIV, XXI, and XLI) and Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature," and "Self-Reliance."

WEEK 6: Melville, *Moby-Dick*.

WEEK 7: Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" and *Song of Myself* and Emily Dickinson, poetry selections (see Study Notes for assigned poems please note that some of the poems in the lectures are not in the new *Norton Anthology*, but you can find these poems in the library or on the web).

WEEK 8: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wall-Paper" and Henry James, *Daisy Miller: A Study*.

WEEK 9: William Carlos Williams poetry ("The Red Wheelbarrow," "Portrait of a Lady," "Spring and All," "To Elsie," and "The Dance,") and Wallace Stevens poetry ("Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," "Anecdote of a Jar," "The Snow Man," "The Emperor of Ice Cream," "A High-Toned Old Christian Woman," and "Sunday Morning.")

WEEK 10: Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*.

WEEK 11: Morrison, *Beloved*.

WEEK 12: Don DeLillo *White Noise*.

NOTE: EXCEPT FOR THE FOLLOWING NOVELS--MOBY DICK, INVISIBLE MAN, BELOVED, AND WHITE NOISE--ALL READINGS ARE IN THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE.

Reading and working with these specific editions is preferred, especially for essays. If you already have some or all of the texts in different editions, then inform me what edition you will be using on your essays. The UWO Bookstore will have these texts in stock, and you can order them on-line from the Bookstore. You may also find the books at a local bookseller. During the course, you are expected to read the online lectures in combination with the texts.

COURSE WORK AND EXAM

STUDENTS MUST PASS THE COURSE WORK AND THE EXAM TO PASS THE COURSE.

SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS

Submit your essays via the Web drop off box for the course, or if you have difficulties email your paper to my UWO address.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Essays submitted late will receive a penalty of 1% per day, including weekends.

PLAGIARISM

There is **ZERO** tolerance for plagiarism in this course.

Plagiarism: The penalties regarding **PLAGIARISM** (the unacknowledged use of another

WEBSITES

There are many **websites** dedicated to literature and American literature. Unfortunately, the majority of websites associated with American literature can be general, misleading, or inaccurate. Though the biographical information is generally accurate, most do not move beyond plot summary. Hence, you need to be careful when using a website. First, if you consult a website you need to document it correctly. Second, most criticism on websites tends to be naïve and lacking in analysis

ESSAY FORMAT AND CITATION

Your essays must follow MLA (Modern Language Association) format, as detailed in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. I strongly suggest consulting a copy of the *MLA Handbook* while writing your essays, as it contains important information regarding essay format and the citation of sources (you can also consult a style guide like *The Little Brown Handbook* that includes the MLA model).

Regarding citations and avoiding plagiarism, the basic rule to follow is that you must indicate the source of any idea and any words that are not your own whether you are quoting directly or paraphrasing. As well, your Works Cited list should include all sources that you cite in and consulted for your essay, including footnotes/endnotes, dictionaries, and internet material (for citing sources, you will need to look at the *MLA Handbook* or a style guide like *The Little Brown Handbook* that includes the MLA model).

ESSAY WRITING

As an Honor's English literature course, you will be evaluated based on your ability to write clear, well-argued essays. Elements such as grammar, organization, argumentation, citation, and editing are all important and will affect your grade.

While planning and writing your essays, as always, feel free to get in touch with me for any questions you might have. I recommend the following handbook that has sections devoted to MLA essay and citation format.

* *The Little Brown College Handbook*. (most recent edition). Canadian Edition (Fowler et al. Pearson).

Below are directions for writing effective essays.

* Your essay must have a clear **thesis**. A thesis is a statement of what you are trying to prove in the essay your argument, your point, your stance or position. It should be something with which your reader can potentially agree or disagree; it should not be a statement of fact or general knowledge. In general, your thesis is most effective near the end of your introductory paragraph.

* Your essay must have a clear **structure**. This means that you need definite introductory and concluding paragraphs. As well, your body paragraphs should follow a logical order of argument, covering specific points and/or ideas that support and work to support your thesis. Make sure that each paragraph has a topic and concluding statement, and that you establish smooth transitions between paragraphs. Attention to good structure helps your reader follow your argument, and helps you keep your thoughts and evidence organized.

* Always be **specific**

(think of a theoretical reader who may be familiar with the topic or the text in question, but needs specific information in order to engage fully with your argument). Quoting from or at least citing the primary text – the novel or short story, for instance – is always a good idea to give your reader a definite context for what you are saying.

* Take time to **plan and outline**. Before writing the first words of your essay, spend time planning and outlining it. Gather your evidence and look for patterns, similarities, and differences. Remind yourself what it is that you want to discuss and prove, then think about the best way to organize your essay accordingly. What is your point? What is your argument or position? What evidence will you need to support your thesis? What is the most effective way to structure the essay – what argument should come first and what is your most important evidence? Essentially, when you sit down to write, you should have a firm idea of what you want to do in your essay and how the parts will fit together. Good planning and outlining will save you tension and frustration.

* Write about **what interests and excites you**. When considering a topic, think of what you liked most in the texts on the course – issues, ideas, themes, passages, and so forth. What would you like to explore further? What would you find interesting to write about for six or eight pages? If any of the suggested topics do not appeal to you, you can devise your own topic in consultation with me? If you enjoy what you are writing about, your essay will show it.

* Finally, **reread and edit**. Before submitting your paper, reread it and revise it as necessary, looking for everything from typos to potentially unclear sentences to improper essay format. Having someone else look at a draft is always a good idea,

essay to a reader cannot be underestimated, for it shows that you care about your