



ENGLISH 205(H): SURVEY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE TO 1865

Whitworth University – Fall 2025

Professor: D. Berton Emerson, PhD Email: dbemerson@whitworth.edu Phone: 509.777.3267 Office: Westminster 228 Office Hours: Tues. 2:15-5:15pm; Wed. 9-11am	CLASS MEETINGS Term: 9.3.2025 – 12.12.2025 Days: M/W/F: 8:00-8:55am Room: Westminster 113 Websites: dbemerson.org ; Bookings
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course covering roughly two-and-a-half centuries of American literary production from the period of British colonization to the mid-19th century, we have a short amount of time to cover a lot of history. Since we cannot address every text and critical response, this course is designed to introduce you to a variety of literary works and to expose you to some of the more prominent conversations taking place in Early American Studies. (It's worth noting that texts, traditions, and critical inquiries not included in this survey are no less significant than those that are.)

Instead of taking a straightforward chronological approach, our readings have been organized to encounter three prominent themes addressed in current literary study: religion and secularity as they pertain to political formations (i.e. nation-states); the enlightenment dialectic of captivity/freedom; and memory/forgetting in the early U.S. nation. With the Revolutionary War serving as a pivot point in history, we grapple with various discourses holding sway in the colonial era, and then consider their evolution in a new and developing national context. Altogether, we hope to gain a stronger understanding not only of the texts and contexts of British America and U.S. literary history, but also various cultural texts that were competing in an ever-changing marketplace of tastes, material technologies, politics, and identities. We do so in order to develop a stronger grasp of the elements of literary studies, the earlier history of Anglo-American literatures, the intersection of aesthetic texts and history writ large, and the skills needed to articulate cogent critical insight.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Broadview Anthology of American Literature, Vols. A and B (978-1-55481-464-0 & 978-1-55481-465-7)
 Additional materials made available online and on Blackboard

COURSE POLICIES

OBJECTIVES AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: By the end of the course the student will have...

- [Diversity & History] explored a wide variety of voices and issues within American literary texts published before 1865 to consider the intersections of aesthetic effects and historical events;
- [Reading] developed strategies for reading with greater insight and curiosity; become more cognizant of the rhetorical, poetic, and narrative strategies used by writers in poetry, prose, and drama in a particular historical and cultural context (i.e. colonial America and the early United States)
- [Thinking] sharpened analytical skills in general and literary critical and historical skills in particular;
- [Writing] developed and used vocabulary for discussing literary works and cultural history; enhanced critical writing skills focused on close-reading analysis and the integration of textual evidence
- [Speaking & Community] played a role in a small community sharing and refining ideas about how the literary work; participated in discussions—in and out of class, in speech and writing—about course texts.

Per the Whitworth catalog, at the completion of lower-division coursework, English majors should have acquired a range of knowledge, skills, and understandings in a wide range of areas that fall broadly under categories of reading, writing, and critical thinking. For a full listing of student learning outcomes for English Department student learning outcomes, see <http://catalog.whitworth.edu/undergraduate/english/>.

GENERAL EDUCATION / SHARED CURRICULUM/ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

EL 205 is part of the Culture Inquiry Group and participates in its Explore A&B, Reflect A&B, and Apply A&B shared curriculum outcomes. Within the Culture Inquiry Group, EL 205 may satisfy the Culture & Diversity, Lit & Storytelling, or Historical Analysis requirements and earn the U tag. designation requirement. Descriptions of the inquiry groups, shared learning outcomes and specific designations and tags can be found at <http://catalog.whitworth.edu/undergraduate/>.

ATTENDANCE

Students should attend all class sessions throughout the term. Circumstances might cause absences, but students are responsible for all assignments that are due and material covered in any missed class. If a student misses a class, check the website and ask a classmate for details; the professor would also appreciate an email as expediently as possible, preferably before class.



WRITING SUPPORT

The Whitworth Composition

Commons (WCC) offers individual and small-group writing consultations to any person affiliated with Whitworth. You can visit the Commons for feedback on any aspect of writing, including getting started on an assignment, developing an argument, or final revising and editing. PowerPoint presentations, conference posters, and other multimodal compositions are also welcomed! Sessions are somewhat short (30-60 minutes), so come with some specific questions about your project. To make an appointment for a consultation, navigate to www.whitworth.edu/compositioncommons, click on the “Make an Appointment” button, and follow the instructions provided.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Please note the university's policy on academic honesty (available in the Whitworth Catalog and Student Handbook). Consequences for any form of dishonesty may range from a failing grade on a specific assignment to a failing grade in the course. Violations of academic honesty become part of your educational record.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES: In accord with SSB 5166, Whitworth University accommodates student absences, for up to two days per academic year, for reasons of faith or conscience, or for an organized activity conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or religious organization. Written notice and request for accommodation must be given within the first two weeks of the beginning of the course and provide specific dates the student requests accommodation. Faculty will work with such students to reach mutual agreement about the terms of the accommodation. Grievances about a failure to accommodate should be directed to the Associate Provost Stacy Hill, McEachran Hall 220, 509.777.4657, shill@whitworth.edu.

ACCOMMODATIONS (ADA/504): Whitworth University is committed to providing its students access to education. If you have a documented physical or mental/psychological impairment that impacts your ability to learn and perform to your potential in the classroom, contact the Office of Educational Support Services (ESS) to identify accommodations that can help mitigate barriers to your success. ESS also works with students with disabilities who seek housing or other accommodations at Whitworth for disability-related needs. Students must engage with the ESS portal each term in order for faculty/staff to be notified of your accommodations. Services are not retroactive.

To request accommodation, fill out an application on the ESS webpage: <https://www.whitworth.edu/ess/>

Contact Information: Phone: 509.777.3380 | Email: ess@whitworth.edu

TITLE IX: Whitworth University faculty members are committed to the well-being of each student. It is common for students to discuss non-course related issues with faculty and, when possible, faculty will keep such conversations strictly confidential. However, because federal law views faculty members as mandated reporters of any incidents of sexual misconduct, if a student informs a faculty member of an issue of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, or discrimination, the faculty member is required by federal law to bring it to the attention of Tim Caldwell, Interim Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator will make the student aware of all options and resources available to them under Whitworth University policies and under the law.

There are Whitworth University employees whom federal law does not view as mandatory reporters, to whom a student could speak without the conversation being reported to the Title IX Coordinator. These include counselors in Counseling Services, Health Services staff, and any of the university chaplains on the staff of Campus Ministries.

Contact Information: Tim Caldwell, Interim Title IX Coordinator

Phone: 509.777.3749 | Email: timohtycaldwell@whitworth.edu

Counseling Center: 509-777-3259; Schumacher Hall

Campus Ministries: 509-777-4345; Beeksma Family Theology Center

Health Services: 509-777-3259; Schumacher Hall

NON-DISCRIMINATION: Whitworth University is committed to delivering a mission-driven educational program that cultivates in students the capacity to engage effectively across myriad dimensions of diversity. Whitworth University is committed to the fair and equal treatment of all students in its educational programs and activities. The University does not discriminate against students based on race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, age, or disability and complies with all applicable federal or state non-discrimination laws in its instructional programs.

FAIR AND EQUITABLE TREATMENT: Whitworth University professors strive to treat all students fairly and equitably, applying the same rigorous standards and expectations to each of our students and working to invite students from all backgrounds into the challenges and rewards of our academic disciplines. Students who have concerns about classroom fairness should contact Associate Provost Stacy Hill, McEachran Hall 220, 509.777.4657, shill@whitworth.edu.

SAFETY INFORMATION: Whitworth University cares about your welfare in the event of an emergency. During the first week of this course, please familiarize yourself with safety information posted in this classroom. Please visit <https://www.whitworth.edu/generalinformation/health&safety/index.htm> if you have further questions.

GRADING AND ASSESSMENT

A	93-100	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	63-66
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62
B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69	F	59 & below

ASSESSMENT

Students will demonstrate their learning in the following areas:

1. DISCUSSION/PARTICIPATION (15%): This class is a learning community, and the quality of each class will in large part depend on your investment in it, your preparation for it, and your willingness to work as a team. I will provide some lecture, but I will expect you, individually, in groups, and as a class, to take responsibility in large part for classroom dynamics and discussion, both in person and online. I expect you to treat one another's ideas with seriousness and respect. Your participation on weekly journals, in class discussions, and constructive engagement with classmates is essential for cultivating an ideal learning community.

2. COMMON-PLACE BOOK (25%): This semester, you will create a commonplace book using our course readings as your set of texts. In keeping with the practices of early America, you should keep this book as a handwritten journal separate from your other notes (so that you can turn the book in). The goal of the exercise is two-fold. First, you will work to inhabit the worldview of early Americans by engaging in the same practices that they did (and with some of the same texts). There are, of course, barriers to thinking like a seventeenth-century Massachusetts colonist, not the least of which is the massive technological advantage that we have. Nonetheless, this assignment should give you some idea of what a life in the past was like. Second, this assignment is designed to encourage you to develop and hone your own notetaking skills. By working each week to identify important quotations, think about what inspired or frustrated you in readings or discussions, and engage with both readings and class, you will more effectively remember material as the semester goes along, and—if all goes well—create a collection of quotations that you can use when completing exams. More details on separate assignment sheet.



3. THREE EXAMS (10%, 20%, & 30%): Each exam will test for a third of the term, with some cumulative material in the essay section on the final examination. Exams will include identification of notable quotations, short response questions on context, a short application essay on an unencountered text, and a take-home essay. Take-home essays will be assigned one week prior to the exams and should help to prepare students for exams. We will determine logistics for the other portions together.

*HONORS COMPONENT:

For students taking this course for Honors credit, in lieu of the final exam, students will work in groups to contribute items to the [Locating Slavery's Legacies website](#). Groups will seek out primary texts, explore relevant secondary materials, and contribute to the LSL database in order to demonstrate a novel sense of scholarly remembering and forgetting. Further instructions on separate assignment sheet.

CALENDAR

UNIT I – RELIGION AND SECULARISM

Week 1 – Labor & Contingency

9.3 – Introductions; Syllabus Review; Wheatley, “On Being Brought from Africa to America”

9.5 – Gustafson, “Literature” (pdf on Canvas)

Week 2 – Seventeenth-Century Preoccupations

9.8 – Winthrop, “A Model for Christian Charity” (A, 219-228); Bradford, from *Of Plymouth Plantation*, excerpts from Chapters 1, 11, and 12 (A, 171-173; 179-182)

9.10 – Hutchinson, from *Examination of Mrs. Ann Hutchinson* (A, 231-235)

9.12 – Poetry of Bay Psalm Book (A, 848-851); Bradstreet (A, 251-252, 259-260); and Taylor (A, 324-325)

Week 3 – Eighteenth-Century Awakenings, Great Ones and Revolutionary Ones

9.15 – Mather, from *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (A, 338-342); Edwards, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (A, 354-363)

9.17 – Washington, “Letter to Hebrew Congregation” (pdf); Jefferson, “Letter to the Danbury Baptists” (pdf)

9.19 – Paine, from *The Age of Reason* (pdf)

Week 4 – C19 – Wall of Separation Between Church and State?

9.22 – Walker, from David Walker’s *Appeal* (B, 443-455)

9.24 – Stowe, from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Chapter 1, 5, 7 (B, 559-576)

9.26 – Stowe, from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Chapters 9, 11 (B, 576-592)

Week 5 – Good and Bad Belief

9.29 – Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown” (B, 274-281)

10.1 – O’Sullivan, “Annexation” (184-188)

~~10.3 – EXAM 1~~

UNIT II – CAPTIVITY / FREEDOM

Week 6 – Framings

10.6 – EXAM 1

Indigenous Oral and Visual Literatures Intro, Wampanoags (A, 1-4);

10.8 – Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (A, 285-298)

10.10 – Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (A, 285-299)

Week 7 – A Most Famous American

10.13 – Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (A, 299-312)

10.15 – Franklin, *Autobiography*, Part One (A, 404-441)

10.17 – Franklin, *Autobiography* Part Two (A, 441-454); from *Letters from an American Farmer*, Letter III (“What is an American?”) (A, 475-483)

Week 8 – Self-Determination

10.20 – Equiano, from *An Interesting Narrative* (A, 601-640)

10.22 – Wheatley, Poems (719-725)

10.24 – NO CLASS – FALL BREAK

Week 9 – Liberation

10.27 – NO CLASS – FALL BREAK

10.29 – Emerson, “Self-Reliance” (B, 211-225)

10.31 – Jacobs, from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (B, 622-657); Truth, “Speech to the Women’s Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio” (B, 503-04)

Week 10 – Self-Emancipation11.3 – Douglass, from *Narrative of the Life*, Chapter 10 (B, 813-828)

11.5 – Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July” (B, 848-863)

11.7 – EXAM #2

UNIT III – REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING**Week 11 – Revolutions?**11.10 – Tyler, *The Contrast* (pdf on Canvas)11.12 – Foster, *The Coquette* (A, 774-785, 834-847)

11.14 – Irving, “Rip Van Winkle” (A, 881-891)

Week 12 – What Do We Do With These Guys? ...

11.17 – Poe, “The Man of the Crowd” (B, 344-349)

11.19 – Fern, all selections (B, 613-619)

11.21 – Melville, “Bartleby the Scrivener” (B, 1033-1052)

Week 13 – ... and these guys?11.24 – Brown, from *Clotel*, (B, 668-91)11.26 – **NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING**11.28 – **NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING****Week 14 – Poetry**12.1 – Whitman, “Song of Myself” (B, 925-972); **Final Common-Place Book due**

12.3 – Dickinson, read any 5 (B, 1253-1296)

12.5 – Harper, poems (B, 1163-1169)

Week 15 – Review

12.7 – Review Day

HONORS SHOWCASE – MONDAY, 8 DECEMBER – 5:30-7:00pm
AND/OR
EXAM #3 – TUESDAY, 9 DECEMBER – 8:00-10:00am