ENG228

AMERICAN LITERATURE: BEFORE 1865

3 Credit Hours

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Revised Date: February 2005
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Arts and Science Education
Dr. Mindy Selsor, Dean
I. CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION

Prerequisite: none
3 semester credit hours

American Literature: Before 1865 examines American writers from pre-colonial and Puritan times through the Civil War era. Students will study the historical, philosophical, and cultural influences on American writers from our early explorers to Whitman. American Literature: Before 1865 will partially fulfill the humanities requirement for the associate degree. (F)

II. GENERAL COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students should:

A. examine a variety of approaches to literature by studying a work in relation to its historical and philosophical backgrounds, in relation to its author, and in relation to other literature.

B. learn to appreciate a literary work as an entity in itself.

C. examine the historical, social and political backgrounds which shaped American literature.

D. compare and contrast ideas, writers and styles to better understand the overall pattern of literary thought from the Colonial era to the Romantic era.

E. write critical analyses of literary works.

F. experience for themselves the relationship between text and context, expertise and interpretation.

G. analyze and develop an appreciation of the nature, limits and possibilities of literary expression.

III. COURSE OUTLINE
(Course content will be drawn from the following.)

A. The Literature of Colonial America

B. The Literature of Reason and Revolution
C. The Age of Romanticism

D. Native American Literature

IV. UNIT OBJECTIVES

A. **The Literature of Colonial America:** Captain John Smith, William Bradford, Thomas Morton, John Winthrop, Roger Williams, Anne Bradstreet, Michael Wigglesworth, Edward Taylor, Cotton Mather, Samuel Sewall, Mary Rowlandson, and Jonathan Edwards.

Students will

1. become familiar with the literature of settlement and colonization.

2. examine and compare/contrast the purposes and strategies of the theological rhetoric and the pragmatic rhetoric of colonial America.

3. define the genre of settlement histories and examine their purposes and intended audiences.

4. explore the literary expression of Puritan New England, examining the common experiences and perspectives that connect and differentiate Puritan writers.

5. reflect on the role of religion in colonial America as it compares to the role of religion in contemporary American society.

6. become familiar with the nature of doctrinal controversies and political controversies of colonial America.

7. examine the use of satire, hyperbole, allegory and other literary devices in the context of writing histories.

8. develop an understanding of the differences between utilitarian writing and aesthetic writing, the unclear boundaries between the two in Puritan writing, and the value of making such a distinction in interpreting texts.

9. examine how earlier colonial writers were closely tied to the larger British culture.

10. become familiar with the narrative (captivity, travel and discovery) as a popular and influential genre of the eighteenth century and compare this genre to our post-Enlightenment conception of narrative.
11. examine the psychological strategies and literary techniques of emotional persuasion in colonial America writing and compare to present-day American writing.

12. consider examples of Native American literary expression as a coherent body of material, the product of a diverse but related culture.

13. examine the use of figurative language, symbolism and metaphor in Native American literature in various literary forms: myth, ritual poetry, history, song and oratory.


Students will

1. contrast their expectations and knowledge about authors with primary texts, examining similarities and differences between the text and the legends; the text and historical realities.

2. discuss autobiography as a literary form, its fictionality and veracity.

3. compare the contemporary ideas that surround the revolution as our national myth of origin to the reality behind the myth.

4. examine the roots of American ideologies of freedom, independence and national identity as revealed in the writings of the time.

5. examine perspectives of people other than white forefathers to understand the diversity of experience and belief in eighteenth century America.

6. analyze how religion is conceived differently in pre- and post-Revolutionary writing.

7. examine the connection between literary style and political and social change.

8. increase awareness of the relationship between English and American literary culture.

9. become familiar with and analyze the themes and concerns of late eighteenth century writers: political independence, social unity and cultural identity, education and self improvement, gender identity.
10. discuss ways we read private correspondence (letters) compared to the way we read deliberately rhetorical, political and aesthetic texts.

11. examine the role that journalism and the popular press played in the Revolution.

12. compare the rhetoric of revolutionary America with current political language.

13. analyze poetry of eighteenth century America and examine its similarity in formal conventions to its English counterpart and ties to neoclassic tradition.

14. examine the relationship between art and politics and determine whether it works to cast political or ideological issues into aesthetic form.

15. examine the structure and purpose of the African-American slave narrative.


Students will

1. become familiar with the themes of early to middle nineteenth century America: the nature of political life and human rights in the new republic; the relationship between people and nature in an increasingly secularized and increasingly technological world; the role of home and family; the place and use of literature; the character and values of a newly emerging culture.

2. become aware that the fiction of the period makes use of and defines itself in relation to American character and values (even as it remains tied to English forms).

3. examine how American fiction writers of the time seemed compelled to invent new forms to contain their subjects.

4. examine the tensions in the conception of the American experience: social vs. psychological or spiritual; real vs. imaginary; useful vs. entertaining; comic vs. serious; foreign vs. native, etc.
5. compare/contrast explorations of universal truths about human nature in writings of this period.

6. compare abolitionist writings and examine context, audience and purpose.

7. examine connections between the economic and moral life of the culture and the writing of this period.

8. become familiar with the themes and concerns of Transcendentalist writers: the meaning and power of the natural world; the relationship between nature, God and human beings; human potentiality and the victory of good over evil; the centrality of the individual; the intuitive within individuals.

9. examine why we tend today to denigrate sentimentalism as an inferior mode and analyze the role of sentimental conventions in American literature.

D. Native American Literature--Myths and Tales: Seneca, Cherokee, Yakima, and Ogala Sioux tribes.

Students will

1. explore the nature of an oral vs. a written literature.

2. learn the various themes of Native Americans' myths and tales.

3. explore similarities between Native Americans' myths and tales and those of Judaeo-Christian culture.

4. discuss the role of myth and tale in Native Americans' religious/spiritual life.

5. identify and discuss the roles of various recurring characters in Native Americans' myths and tales.
E. **Native American Literature--Autobiography, Poetry, Oratory:** William Apess, Sam Blowsnake, Wolf Calf, Curly Chief, Hopi tribe, Navajo tribe, Owl Woman, Logan, Tecumseh, Black Hawk, Chief Joseph.

Students will

1. explore Native American viewpoint of their interaction with White culture.

2. compare and contrast oratory styles of Native Americans versus those of White culture.

3. discuss the nature of Native American poetry.

4. discuss what is lost and/or gained by putting Native American literature into the written words of the White culture.

V. **METHODS OF INSTRUCTION**

   A. Lecture/Discussion

   B. Reading of Text and Outside Readings

   C. Assigned Writing Responses

   D. Student Presentations

   E. Small Group Discussions/Analyses

   F. Research

VI. **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**


VII. **REQUIRED MATERIAL**

   A. Textbook

   B. Three-Ring Binder
VIII. SUPPLEMENTAL REFERENCES

A. Library's collection of American literature
B. Library's collection of American literary criticism
C. Periodicals and Journals
D. Videos
E. Audio Cassettes

IX. METHODS OF EVALUATION

A. Quizzes and tests
B. Class participation
C. Assigned reading responses
D. Analytical Paper
E. Final exam

The grading scale is as follows:

90-100 = A
80-89 = B
70-79 = C
60-69 = D
Below 60 = F