

**FALL 2007 SEMESTER
ENGLISH 360 — SECTION
TIME: M-W-F
RM:**

Course Title: Survey of American Literature, Beginning to 1865
Instructor: Drew Lopenzina
Office: Evans 463
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Office Hours:

Texts:

Castaways, Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca
Metamora, John Augustus Stone
Heath Anthology of American Literature vols. A & B, fifth edition, ed. Paul Lauter
(Books are available at SHSU Bookstore)

*Our Revolution commenced on . . . favorable ground. It presented us an album on which we were
free to write what we pleased.*

Thomas Jefferson

*The Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, and without asking liberty from anyone they possessed
themselves of a portion of the country, and built themselves houses, and then made a treaty and
commanded them to sign it. This, if now done, it would be called an insult, and every white man
would be called to go out and act the part of patriot to defend their country's rights.*

William Apess

Course Description:

Our second president, John Adams, once said that the Revolution began in the minds of Americans long before any shots were fired or blood was shed. If so, then America was most certainly an idea before it was a country. But whose idea was it? When was this notion of *America* formed and when did it solidify into a reality? Is it something set in stone, carved like the giant heads of presidents on Mt. Rushmore, or is it something we continue to redefine with each generation and each election cycle? Is it something we carry inside of us, or is it pressed upon us from without? Although we are often reminded of our diverse heritage, we tend to think of American values and American traditions as the result of a conscious mode of thought that beat its determined way through the untamed wilderness of the past to finally emerge victorious in a clear and cohesive civilized present. But America must also be the result of countless conflicts and compromises between diverse peoples whose successes and failures converged in unpredictable ways to shape the country we live in today. In this class we will explore the literatures produced amidst the convergence of these many forces. We will read narratives, journals, poems and political treatises penned by indigenous peoples, Africans, Europeans (and Americans). These varied documents, at times strangely remote to our modern day sensibilities, and yet, at other times surprisingly intimate in the common humanity revealed, will hopefully allow us a sense of how America came to be amidst all these swirling forces of hope, resistance, oppression, and struggle. We will see how the literature of each generation strove to firm up a

sense of cultural and national identity, and how the best and the worst get filtered together to form enduring traditions that resonate strongly with our contemporary sense of identity as a nation and a people.

Assignments:

Reading - Because this is a survey class of a lengthy historical period (we will cover over three hundred years worth of literary production), we will need to move thoroughly but quickly through a great deal of material. Obviously we cannot comprehensively cover all the important texts of Early American literature, but we will visit a sampling that is hopefully representative of the many different voices contending to be heard during this era. So be prepared to devote a heavy amount of reading time to this class. Always look ahead to see what the work load will be for upcoming classes. I advise you to take notes, write in the margins of your anthology, highlight important passages—in other words, do all those things necessary to help you to recall what you've read so that you may speak intelligently about the readings in class and contribute to the overall shape of this journey. These practices will also help you to retain information for the two major exams.

Writing - There are two major writing assignments on the syllabus, of 5-7 pages, each accounting for roughly 15% of your grade. These assignments should be thesis driven, showcasing your original interpretation of selected works from the class. Understand from the onset that a thesis driven paper does not involve plot summaries. Nor is it a review in which you declare whether you liked or disliked the piece in question. Rather it should be something like an attempt to identify tendencies, recurring themes, or structural elements within a text that speak to larger cultural concerns, political issues, or, perhaps, issues of identity. Your original thesis should be clearly stated early on in the paper (this is known as the “thesis statement”). A small amount of research will be required. These papers, concentrating on two or three texts of your own choosing, will help you to process the materials we read and to develop your own line of thinking concerning these texts and the tradition to which they belong. Papers should be double spaced, 12 point font, with one inch margins. You are also expected to hand in your work on time. Failure to do so will result in a grade reduction.

Participation - Class participation is essential in terms of the grade you will receive and in terms of your own understanding of the works we encounter. I hardly know, myself, what I think about a literary work until I've discussed it with someone, or written about it. I understand that we all have different comfort levels in terms of getting involved in group discussions. But the ability to speak in an informed manner about a text, even if reluctantly, is one of the skills I expect you to develop in this class. Hopefully the environment we create will be conducive to open discussions where everyone feels free to express their thoughts. Be aware, however, that your comments should be related to materials that we read in class. You should be able to back up your insights with textual evidence if called upon to do so. In other words, this should be a free exchange of informed ideas and opinions on the readings. I will come into class with strong ideas and opinions of my own. Often we will disagree. I expect this and hope to be challenged, enlightened, and entertained by the views you bring to the table. The quality of your overall participation will be reflected in your final grade.

Midterm and Final - Exams will require essay type responses. I will provide a number of passages that you will be asked to identify and place in some kind of historical/literary context. You will explicate the passages and demonstrate a working knowledge of the tradition from which they emerged. You will also be expected to provide publication dates of the materials read.

Attendance:

The rule of thumb is, **anything more than three absences will be sure to effect your grade.** As you are expected to show up to class on time, three lates will count as a missed class. If for some reason you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to contact me about missed assignments or any materials handed out in class during your absence.

Grading:

The midterm and the final exam will each count towards 25% of your grade. As stated before, the papers each count towards 15% of your grade. There will be an oral exam, to be elaborated upon later, which will count for 10%. The remainder of your grade will be based upon your attendance, how well you project a comprehension of the materials worked on in class, and the general spirit of your participation. Keep in mind that according to SHSU grading procedures:

A= Excellent Work. This is work that stands out above the rest, fulfilling all the required criteria for a given assignment in a cogent and original manner and, perhaps, moving a step beyond.

B= Superior Work. Demonstrates a strong grasp of the materials covered in class and an ability to articulate ideas effectively and efficiently. Academic achievement of high quality.

C= Satisfactory Work. Not bad, meets requirements, but maybe lacking in original interpretation of materials or stylistic fluidity.

D= Unsatisfactory. Does not meet the most basic demands required of the assignment.

F= Failure. Naturally any attempt at plagiarism will result in immediate failure of the course.

Schedule

Aug.	20	Introductions: Who Wants to be an American?
	22	Contact Lenses: —Handsome Lake, “How America Was Discovered.” (<i>Heath A 803-804</i>) —Christopher Columbus (<i>Heath A 120-128</i>)
	24	Picturing Amerigo: —Vespucci (handout)
	27	Founding Narratives: —Arthur Parker, “How the World Began” and “Origins of the Long house”
	29	—Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, <i>Castaways</i>
	31	— Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, <i>Castaways</i>
Sept.	3	Labor Day, No Class
	5	— Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, <i>Castaways</i>
	7	—John Smith, <i>General History of Virginia and the Summer Isles</i> (<i>Heath A 258-263</i>)

- 10 **Upon This Rock:**
 —William Bradford, excerpts from *Of Plymouth Plantation* (Heath A 334-340)
- 12 —Thomas Morton, from *New English Canaan* (Heath A 298-307)
- 17 —Roger Williams, from *A Key into the Language of America* (Heath A 349-367)
- 19 —John Winthrop, from journal (Heath A 317-324)
- 21 —Anne Bradstreet’s Poems (read all of them) and Letter (Heath A 396-413)
- 24 **Black Robes and Birch Bark:**
 First Paper Due (5 pages)
 Jesuit Relations/Black Robe
- 26 Jesuit Relations/Black Robe
- 28 Jesuit Relations/Black Robe
- Oct. 1 **Desperate Goodwives:**
 —Mary Rowlandson’s *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mary Rowlandson* (Heath A 440-468)
- 3 —Mary Rowlandson’s *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mary Rowlandson* (cont.)
- 5 —Mary Rowlandson’s *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mary Rowlandson* (cont.)
 —Cotton Mather “A Notable Exploit: Hannah Dustan’s Captivity” (Heath A 524-526)
- 8 **Inventing the Self-Made Man:**
 —*The Autobiography of Ben Franklin*. (Heath A 828-872)
- 10 —*The Autobiography of Ben Franklin*. (Heath A 872-890)
- 12 —Samson Occom “A Short Narrative of My Life” (Heath A 1116-1121)
- 15 **Midterm Exam**
- 17 **Declaring Independence** (no reading)
- 19 —Phillis Wheatley “On Being Brought From Africa to America” (Heath A 1247), “A Farewell to America” (Heath A 1248)
- 22 —Philip Freneau “The Indian Burying Ground” (Heath A 1223-1224)
- 24 **Democracy Inaction:**
 —Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Heath A 1003-1010)

- 26 —Daniel Coker “A Dialogue Between a Virginian and an African Minister”
(handout)
- 29 **The Return of the Native:**
—Last of the Mohicans and other vanishing acts (no reading)
- 31 —John Augustus Stone’s *Metamora*
- Nov. 2 **Note that you will need the second volume of the anthology for this class.**
—John Ross “letter to Andrew Jackson” (*Heath B* 1457-1458)
—William Apess, “An Indian’s Looking Glass for the White Man” (*Heath B* 1460-1465)
- 5 **Transcendental Meditations:**
—Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Nature,” (*Heath B* 1582-1589)
- 7 —Henry David Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government,” (*Heath B* 1739-1752)
- 9 —Fanny Fern, “Hints to Young Wives” and Other Readings (*Heath B* 2101-2109)
- 12 **Second Paper Due (5-7 pages)**
New Frontiers:
—Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown” (*Heath B* 2258-2267)
- 14 —Walt Whitman, selected poems
- 16 **The Blood-Stained Gate**
—Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (*Heath B* 1882-1914)
- 19 —Douglass’ *Narrative* continued and finished.
- 21-23 **Happy Thanksgiving**
- 26 —Emily Dickinson, selected writings (to be announced)
- 28 —Emily Dickinson, selected writings (to be announced)
- 30 —William Wells Brown, from *Clotel* (*Heath B* 2612-2621)
- Dec. 3 —Mary Boykin Chestnut, from *Mary Chestnut’s Civil War* (*Heath B* 2058-2065)
- 5 **Final Class**
—Walt Whitman, from *Drumtaps* (*Heath B* 3008-3013)