

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the great American literary tradition. To this end you will read novels, short stories, memoirs, speeches, essays, and poems by major American writers from colonial times to the end of the Civil War. By examining the works of authors from different cultural and historical backgrounds you will be asked to confront a variety of issues Americans have faced over the centuries, to contemplate the experiences of members of different segments of our society, and to discover the rich diversity that characterizes our culture and stems from its democratic principles. In the process, we will consider such questions as: How do we define our national identity? How do we strike a balance between individual freedom and social responsibility? What is the relationship between our purported ideal of liberty and our actual history of slavery? To what extent is American society patriarchal? To what extent are American values Christian values? How can a nation as ethnically and ideologically diverse as ours be unified? What is the relationship between American literature and American identity?

While these questions will orient our discussion of literary texts, most of our time will be spent contemplating the words written by some of the greatest American writers, thinkers, and historically significant figures from the 17th-19th centuries. Class will be run through a combination of lecture and discussion. Each week, I will post written lessons and short video lectures in the “Announcements” section. Then you and your classmates will participate in online discussion forums in the “Discussions” section. Sometimes these will be full-class discussions, and other times you will be working in small groups. These discussions will give you the chance to react to the texts we are reading, share your thoughts, try out ideas, and encounter alternative points of view presented by your classmates. In the process, we will be developing our critical reading, writing, and thinking skills, while gaining a love and appreciation of the literary arts. The main goals of the course are to teach you to write persuasive prose about literature and to help you enjoy and value the great body of American literature.

About Your Instructor

Professor: Dr. Siegel

Email: jsiegel@uwsp.edu

Best Way to Contact: General question? Try the ["Ask the Prof & Class" Discussion Board](#). Specific question? Email me.

Readings

Of Plymouth Plantation (excerpts), William Bradford
New English Canaan (excerpts), Thomas Morton
The Winnebago Trickster Cycle (excerpts), Ed. Paul Radin
The Journal of John Winthrop (excerpts), John Winthrop
Selected Poems, Anne Bradstreet
Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration, Mary Rowlandson
“King Phillip’s Speech,” Metacom
The Autobiography, Benjamin Franklin
Selected Poems, Phillis Wheatley
Nature, Ralph Waldo Emerson
“Resistance to Civil Government,” Henry David Thoreau
The Scarlet Letter and Selected Stories, Nathaniel Hawthorne
Selected Stories, Edgar Allan Poe
Narrative of the Life, Frederick Douglass
Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (excerpts), Harriet Jacobs
“Song of Myself,” Walt Whitman
Selected Poems, Emily Dickinson
Benito Cereno, Herman Melville

Required Texts

The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Ninth Edition, Package 1: Volumes A and B
(Referred to as “NA” in the course calendar)

Course Requirements

Essay 1 (20%)

3-4 pages

Essay 2 (25%)

5-6 pages

Midterm (15%)

Take-home exam

Participation (20%)

Based on regular participation in the online discussion threads assigned each week.

Final Exam (20%)

Take-home exam. The identification portion of the exam will deal only with material covered after the midterm, but the essay portion will draw on all of the course texts.

Grades

Grades are calculated based on the following percentages:

A+	98-100
A	93-97
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Required Software

- Adobe Acrobat Reader
- Microsoft Office or Google Docs
 - The most current edition of MS Office (containing MS Word, Excel and other valuable programs) is available to University of Wisconsin students

Policy on Academic Misconduct

Plagiarism, or taking credit for words or ideas not your own, is a serious offence and will lead to dire consequences. The penalty for plagiarism ranges from failing the course to expulsion from the university. See the *Student Rights and Regulations* handbook for more information about plagiarism and its consequences. If I think you have plagiarized, I will communicate with you and refer your name to a disciplinary committee responsible for overseeing the investigation of academic crimes. Except for acknowledged quotations, all of your work is to be written in your own words. You may not copy from a book, another student's paper, a webpage, or any other source. If you do so, you will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.