

ENGL 2312: American Literature I

Class Meetings: 2 – 3:15 MW in Irby Hall 304

Instructor: Dr. Isiah Lavender, III

Office: 401 Irby Hall

Office Hours: MW 9-12; T 12:30-2:30 and by appointment

Phone, E-mail & **Facebook**: (501) 450-5118; lavender@uca.edu

BOOKS: Available at UCA Bookstore

Baym. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Vol. I. 7th edition. (Volumes A-B)

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course surveys the creation of an American literature. From its beginnings in the literatures of European encounters with new world peoples, we will explore the development of American literature from the invention of America itself to the early Puritanical writings through the American Romantics with attention to the cultural and social contexts in which all of these writings were produced. We will explore Puritan literary forms (the Captivity Narrative, the metaphysical poetry of Bradstreet and Taylor), touch on Revolutionary and Enlightenment ideas, while reflecting on how these forms and ideas were revised in during the American Renaissance by such authors as Poe, Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau, Douglass, and Whitman in light of antebellum engagements with questions of race, gender, and class.

Expectations: My expectations are very high, and you should demand the same from me, and especially from one another: if you come to class prepared to fully engage with the material, you should expect the same from everyone in the room. Every absence or withheld participation is palpable; I therefore expect regular attendance, consistent preparation, and active participation. Finally, I expect all of us to have fun because learning should be and can be fun. For my part, I will try to cultivate a lively discussion for each class.

Responsibilities and Behavior: Remember that you only have time for the activity that you put first, and by signing up for this course you are agreeing to put this class first during the specified time period. While I am always willing to work with a student in the event of a legitimate emergency such as the death of an immediate family member or a student's own emergency hospitalization, you should schedule dental appointments, elective surgery, court appearances, family celebrations, work, and any other non-emergency activity outside of class time. Keep a written record of your absences/tardies so that you know your precise status as I will be doing so.

It is your responsibility either to resolve potential conflicts well in advance of an exam in the exam's favor or to drop the course; never presume upon me to solve your conflict for you. Each absence after **four** absences lowers your final grade for the class by ten points. Any rare exceptions to this policy will be determined on a case-by-case basis; it is your responsibility to contact me immediately to inquire about an exception if such a situation occurs. If you have **four** consecutive absences, you will be dropped from the class with a **WF**. You paid your money to take your chances. If you miss class, you will get behind as well as miss important discussions which further understanding of the works being examined. You need to be here as well as your texts. *Late arrival* makes you ineligible for the class period's participation point. Repeated failure to bring the appropriate text(s) for discussion will also invalidate you for the days participation point. If you cannot attend regularly and arrive on time at **2 p.m.**, please do both of us a favor and enroll in a course which has more lenient attendance expectations.

As we are all adults here, and this is a university campus, it should be understood that respect for the instructor, fellow students, and the material itself is required. This means, **DO NOT COME TO CLASS LATE. DO NOT LEAVE CLASS EARLY. TURN ALL CELL PHONES OR ANY OTHER GADGETS THAT MAKE NOISE 'OFF' AT THE DOOR AND PLACE THEM OUT OF SIGHT.** Do not work on other assignments for other classes. Do not converse with others randomly during the lecture. Do not sleep (this is not nap-time). Do not **CHEAT. ANY BEHAVIOR** that inhibits the ability of students to learn **WILL NOT BE TOLERATED** and could result in **BEING DISMISSED FROM THE CLASS—PERMANENTLY.** Disruptive Behavior should not be a part of the classroom environment. You will get a warning for the first infraction of this rule. The first warning will be penalized as an absence; in addition to

forfeiting all credit on any graded assignment that day. The second instance will result in your being dropped from the class.

Academic Misconduct: Avoid even the appearance of possible impropriety during an exam or quiz; leave books and notebooks closed and out of sight; do not let your eyes stray to another's paper; do not leave the room while the exam is in progress; speak only to the instructor or the exam proctor. A grade of zero will be assigned to any quiz or exam the integrity of which has been opened to question in any way.

Late work: Outside work is due at the start of the specified period; I DO NOT ACCEPT late work with two exceptions—a death in the family accompanied by an obituary or funeral program and emergency hospitalization supplemented by admittance papers.

GRADING: Course requirements include active participation in discussion, 3 reader responses, an essay, and a final comprehensive examination. All formal writing assignments must be typed in a **12 point Times New Roman font and also be uniformly double-spaced with 1-inch margins in addition to having a title.** Any assignment that does not meet these specific requirements **in addition to length obligations** will receive an X grade and no feedback; an X grade garners zero credit at the end of the semester unless you redo it to my satisfaction. You and you alone are responsible for the condition and submission of your assignments. DO NOT rely on spell check alone. **PROOFREAD** your papers and save them. However, I encourage you to seek me out and discuss your ideas or lack thereof and to bring drafts to me. Keep all graded assignments easily available for consultation until after the final grade has been recorded, both so that you may compute your average at any point in the semester, and so that any dispute over the final grade's computation may be efficiently resolved. Failure to complete any of the course requirements will result in an F for the semester. There are **100 points** for the semester.

Participation –This class is discussion oriented which makes your energetic participation essential in having a successful and productive semester. Thus, it is your obligation to read and prepare the assigned readings for class as well as to routinely bring the appropriate text(s) to class. I strongly encourage you to express your pleasure in as well as your frustration with the readings because this will stimulate and inspire discussion in the classroom. Attendance is crucial. Another avenue of earning participation points for students who are afraid of speaking in class is by making your opinion known to me via email exchange where you and I will have an electronic exchange of ideas and thoughts. Silent people receive zero points for each class that they are silent (live or internet). If you don't feel you can be an active participant in this class, please drop now. **(1 point per class meeting)**

Reader Responses – Ideally, these response papers will aid in your developing awareness of yourself as a critical reader throughout the semester. You can write on any material covered in class. For example, you could explain how and why a particular passage or line provokes a response from you or why the reading assignment is torturous to complete. I am interested in your response to the readings, but keep in mind that reading only succeeds if you gain “meaning,” and the meaning(s) that you gain are transmitted in your interpretations. This approach necessarily entails “close reading” of the material. The possibilities are seemingly endless. These papers should be based on your own reactions to the literature; it is **NOT** a research paper. You must do one response for each period division in the syllabus, and these responses can only be turned in during our time in the period itself (*Beginnings to 1700, American Literature 1700-1820, and American Literature 1820-1865*). Each response paper should be **no less than 2 full pages in length and no more than 3 pages.** You are responsible for 3 responses. **(10 points each)**

Quizzes – I reserve the right to quiz you during the class period at any time in any form I see fit from group and individual oral quizzes to silent discussions (**BEWARE**) and anything in between including traditional formats of the announced variety. Quizzes greatly depend on your participation.

Essay – Choose a work (story, poem, essay, sermon, or nonfiction) in either of the anthologies we are using that particularly appeals to you. Next, think about why you liked this piece, and let that perception guide you through the generation of a paper topic which is narrow in scope. For example: Does the way the author presents character intrigue you? If so, you could let that be your focus. Setting, point of view, tone, style, -- all these are possibilities as well. Your discussion will necessarily involve a consideration of other aspects of the text such as symbolism, imagery,

irony, or humor, for some or all of these and other elements may contribute to your particular topic. Be careful, however; don't stray too far from your focus as you illustrate subsidiary elements. Don't for instance, begin talking about how humor plays a role in the formation of the central character's personalities, and somehow wind up talking only about *humor*, when your real subject is character. Your particular focus, however, must be approved.

It is extremely important that you selected a focus for your paper before you begin your research. Papers that attempt to address every aspect of a text invariably become superficial. Once you've selected the topic, reread the work yet again, jotting down/underlining key passages, images, symbols, and so on that relate to your focus. You now have a clear idea of how you'll want the paper to develop, and you can proceed to the next step, critical research.

This component of the essay requires you to engage in dialogue with other critics who have examined the work in question. Torreyson Library has many books, edited collections, and essays dealing with the formative years of American literature as does Bailey Library at Hendrix College. You will of course want to consult bibliographies, books, and articles specifically on your chosen writer as well. This research project means a bit of legwork. Starting your search for books, essays, and articles on the internet is fine, but internet sources are strictly prohibited (*F for the assignment*). You will discover that journal articles tend to be more specific in their interests than books. You may desire to use sources that have nothing to do with your writer; for instance, if sections dealing with religion, slavery, transcendentalism, philosophy, feminism, or some other subject of interest to you, you might want to focus on the author's consideration of this area, utilizing appropriate studies. In any event you will need at least THREE outside sources. Remember, however, that the main voice in your paper must be yours. Don't in effect say "Critic A says this, critic B says otherwise, while critic C says thus-and-so. I agree with Critic B." Instead, use the "experts" to support or contrast with your views. Don't fail to ask a reference librarian for help if you run into difficulty. The length requirement for this essay is **5 full pages to 7 pages** excluding the bibliography. The paper is due at my office by **2 p.m.** on **Friday, April 15, 2011**. Any paper that does not meet the length requirement will receive a letter grade deduction or worse. 30 points

Plagiarism -- the act of passing off the ideas or words of another as your own without crediting the source -- is not acceptable and will be severely penalized, meaning an F for the course. Of course, you can use outside sources as long as you cite them properly using MLA style. Please do not hesitate to ask whether something should be cited if you are unsure.

Final Exam – The format of the comprehensive final examination will be identification and explanation.

Grade Scale: A 91 and above; B 90-80; C 79-70; D 69-60; F 59 and Below

Participation: 1 point per class – 26 points

Writing Responses: (3 x 10 points each) – 30 points

Research Paper: 30 points

Quizzes: ?

Final: 14 points

UNIVERSITY POLICIES: If you have questions about the university's academic policies, guidelines regarding sexual harassment, or any other matters, please consult the relevant sections of the UCA Student Handbook. UCA adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this act due to a disability, contact the UCA Office of Disability Services at 450-3135.

The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, **a failing grade in the course**, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

THIS SYLLABUS IS A TENTATIVE OUTLINE—IT IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

CLASS SCHEDULE:

1/19: Course introduction; personal intros; Bibliography Quiz

Beginnings to 1700 pp. 1-16 (recommended reading)

1/24: Iroquois and Pima Creation Stories 17-31; Winnebago trickster cycle 72-83

1/26: William Bradford: *Of Plymouth Plantation* 104-138; John Winthrop: "A Model of Christian Charity" 147-158

1/31: Anne Bradstreet selections: 204-206, 210-211

2/2: Mary Rowlandson: *Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* 235-267

2/7: Edward Taylor: selections from *Preparatory Meditations* 269, 272, 276; **last chance for first reader response**

American Literature 1700-1820 pp. 357-367 (recommended reading)

2/9: Jonathan Edwards: "Personal Narrative," 386-396 "A Divine and Supernatural Light," 404-417; "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" 425-437

2/14: Benjamin Franklin: *The Autobiography* [Parts I and II] 472-534

2/16: Benjamin Franklin: *The Autobiography* [Part III] 534-587

2/21: J. Hector St. Jean de Crevecoeur: "What is an American" 596-605

2/23: Phillis Wheatley selections: 751-752, 755-756, 760-763; **last chance for first second response**

American Literature 1820-1865 pp. 929-950 (recommended reading)

2/28: Washington Irving: "Rip Van Winkle" 951-965; James Fenimore Cooper: *The Pioneers* 985-1002

3/2: Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Nature" 1110-1138

3/7: Ralph Waldo Emerson: "The American Scholar" 1138-1151; "The Divinity School Address" 1151-1163

3/9: Nathaniel Hawthorne: "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" 1276-1289; "Young Goodman Brown" 1289-1298; "The Minister's Black Veil" 1311-1320

3/14: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow selections: 1495-1497, 1501-1506

3/16: Edgar Allen Poe: poetry selections 1532-1534, 1536-1539

3/21 & 3/23 Spring Break

3/28: Edgar Allen Poe: "The Fall of the House of Usher" 1553-1566; "The Black Cat" 1593-1599;

3/30: Edgar Allen Poe: "The Cask of Amontillado" 1612-1617; "The Philosophy of Composition" 1617-1625

4/4: Harriet Jacobs: *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* 1808-1829; Frederick Douglass: *Narrative* 2060-2091

4/6: Frederick Douglass: *Narrative* 2091-2129

4/11: Henry David Thoreau: "Resistance to Civil Government" 1853-1872; *Walden* 1872-1914

4/13: Henry David Thoreau: *Walden* 1914-1995

4/15: research paper due by 2 p.m. at 401 Irby Hall

4/18: Henry David Thoreau: *Walden* 1995-2046

4/20: Herman Melville: "Bartleby the Scrivener" 2363-2389; poetry selections 2465-2466

4/25: Walt Whitman: "Song of Myself" 2210-2254; **last chance for third reader response**

4/27: Walt Whitman: "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" 2263-2267; "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" 2267-2272

5/1-5/6 Final Examinations