

English 3327: American Literature to 1865
Section 001, Fall 2017
MW 12:40 – 2:05 pm, 217 Patterson Hall
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Early American Literature: From Contact to a Country

Catalog Course Description

Survey of major authors, themes, and movements in American literature from the colonial period through 1865.

Extended Course Description

This course introduces students to some of the important authors, texts, and literary movements from European-American contact to the American Civil War. Our readings will cover a wide swath of historical, generic, and thematic ground, but we will approach each reading with an attention to the work's unique textual features to better understand its depths and complexities. We will read both fiction and non-fiction, poetry and prose in our examination of issues such as colonial settlement, American Puritanism, identity and autobiography, slavery, women's rights, New England Transcendentalism, and the development of an American literary tradition. Threaded through our investigations will be an attention to how an idea of the United States takes root in the writings of its inhabitants, as well as how such constructions have always been sites of conflict and conversation. We will attend to how texts construct communities, as well as to how individuals are written out – and write against – these narratives.

Student progress will be evaluated through a combination of exams and papers, both formal and creative. Attendance is mandatory, and well-informed, engaged classroom discussion is vital to students' success. Close, careful reading, along with insightful and lucid writing are necessary to insure students' success.

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to:

- Identify important American writings from the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, and relate these works to their historical context.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the development of American literature from the first English explorations of North America in the sixteenth century, up to the American Civil War.
- Understand the relationships between different generations of American writers.
- Have a critical understanding of how “America” has been variously defined through and in relation to the course readings.
- Interpret and analyze the works of important American writers before 1865, with attention to issues of both breadth of coverage and depth of analysis.
- Write complexly and with authority about literature from this period.