

English 3327: American Literature to 1865
Sections 002 and 350, Spring 2017
T-Th 1 – 2:25 pm
213 Patterson Hall
Dr. John David Miles
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Early American Literature: From Contact to a Country

Course Description

This course will introduce 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 America 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 quizzes, 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 with complexity and authority about literature from this period.

Texts

The following text will be available at the University of Memphis bookstore. (They are on order and should arrive shortly.) Should you wish to purchase your texts elsewhere, you must be certain to buy the specific editions and/or volumes indicated.

Baym, Nina, general ed. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Eighth edition, vols. A & B. New York: W.W. Norton, 2011. Volume A (Beginnings to 1820), ISBN: 9780393934762. Volume B (1820 to 1865), ISBN: 9780393934779. Package One (Volumes A & B together), ISBN: 9780393913095.

Child, Lydia Maria. *Hobomok*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1986. ISBN 9780813511641.

There will also be a number of texts that will be available in .pdf format on our class's eCourseware site.