



Bridgewater State University
ENGL 234: Survey of American Literature
1 June-28 June, Summer 2021

Instructor: Dr. Carrie Oeding

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Credits: 3

Office hours: over email with questions or by zoom appointment in W or TH 8-9 a.m. Email me to set up a time, if needed.

Class location: 🌞

Class time: Homework is due on W and F at noon EST each week.

Required Texts and Materials:

- The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Shorter 9th Edition, ISBN: 9780393264517
Volumes I (Beginnings to 1865) green cover—only this book! Don't buy the 2-volume set, as it isn't needed for Summer I
- Internet access

Course Description

This course will survey a collection of some key American authors, movements, and terms starting from pre-Columbian America to today. This course is both a sprint and a marathon. It is impossible to read every author and text that deserves to be studied in an American literature course. Yet, you will be notably more informed by the end of this course on the authors and movements of American literature. Thus, this introduction will be a “long sprint” that requires succinct focus but also endurance. We will study rhetorical strategies of our read authors, in light of their historical contexts. We will investigate what it means to call a piece of literature “American” and how certain movements and themes complicate this question. We will also track connections within periods and across periods to see how American literature evolves, challenges, and reflects across time. Some of these texts will even make us question what *is* literature. The course is reading-heavy, and students should be prepared to spend around 2 hours of reading homework for each course meeting, more if you are a slower reader. Keep in mind that while you will read a great deal this semester of literature spanning over many centuries, I do not think the schedule definitively frames what should be studied in a survey. If you're interested in reading in a direction more on your own, or creating a reading list for when you have time to read, I will be happy to talk.

Course Objectives

Through readings, lectures, class discussions, writing, and exams you will refine:

- your understanding, identification, and application of American literary/cultural history through the 21st century
- your analytic reading, writing, and discussion skills
- your ability to both write and articulate compelling literary analysis
- your use of literary analysis to develop academic arguments between or about periods, authors, themes, or movements

Coursework

Reading Notes and Discussion Board Responses: 30% see handout for the prompt in Getting Started.

Weekly and Final Review Homework: 20%

Final essay exam: 50%

The final will not be a timed exam, but a series of short essays that our homework will support. More info to come. Grading:

100-95: A	79-77: C+
94-90: A-	76-74: C
89-87: B+	73-70: C-
86-84: B	69-67: D+
83-80: B-	66-64: D
	63-60: D-

Course Policies

- Students are required to post work on time on Wednesdays and Fridays at 12:00 noon. EST If you need an extension until 5 p.m. or less, ask *before* the 12:00 noon deadline. Breaking an extension agreement or submitting work late = 1 point lost per day (see how many points the homework is worth on reading notes handout).
- Students are responsible for viewing the next week's assignment on Blackboard. Each week will be numbered (see below for the corresponding week).
- Students are responsible for reading and knowing the syllabus.
- Students are required to read email every day. •
- Students are required to submit all work to pass the class.

ENG 234 Summer 2021 Schedule

Assignments are due on Wednesdays and Fridays at noon EST. Post the work for these assignments before/by this time.

WEEK 1

Wednesday, June 2, Read and Submit Homework on Reading to Blackboard by 12 noon, EST

- **Due:** Read any handouts or teacher notes from me in 6/2's Blackboard folder before reading the homework in the anthology
- **Due:** Read **Christopher Columbus's** Introduction pp. 44-45 and *Letter of Discovery* pp. 45-50
- **Due:** Read **John Winthrop's** Introduction p. 92-93 and "A Model of Christian Charity" pp.93-104
- **Due:** Submit Reading Homework to Blackboard by 12 noon, EST

Friday, June 4, Read and Submit Homework on Reading to Blackboard by 12 noon, EST

- **Due:** Read any handouts or teacher notes from me in 6/4's Blackboard folder before reading the homework in the anthology
- **Due:** Read **Anne Bradstreet's** Introduction pp. 112-114 and 1. "The Author to Her Book," 2. "Before the Birth of One of Her Children," 3. "Here Follows Some Verses upon the Burning of Our House..." 122-125
- **Due:** Read **Jonathan Edwards' Introduction** pp. 166-167 and *Personal Narrative* pp. 168-178
- **Due:** Submit Reading Homework to Blackboard by 12 noon, EST
- **Due:** Week 1 Review Homework to Blackboard by 12 noon, EST

WEEK 2

Wednesday, June 9, Read and Submit Homework on Reading to Blackboard by 12 noon, EST

Due: Read any handouts or teacher notes from me in 6/9's Blackboard folder before reading the homework in the anthology

- **Due:** Read **Phillis Wheatley's** Introduction pp. 420-422 and "On Being Brought from Africa to America," and "To His Excellency General Washington" pp. 422-423, 429-430
- **Due:** Read **Benjamin Franklin's** Introduction p. 204-207 and "The Autobiography Part One" pp. 221-235 (beginning at the start of Part I and ending on page 235 at "Perhaps too she thought my Expectations not so well founded as I imagined them to be")
- **Due:** Submit Reading Homework to Blackboard by 12 noon, EST

Friday, June 11, Read and Submit Homework on Reading to Blackboard by 12 noon, EST

- **Due:** Read any handouts or teacher notes from me in 6/11's Blackboard folder before reading the homework in the anthology
- **Due:** Read **Ralph Waldo Emerson's** Introduction pp. 550-553 and *The American Scholar* pp. 582-591 (end at the end of the top paragraph on p. 591 at "This is my music; this is myself.")
- Read **Henry David Thoreau's** Introduction pp. 900-902 and *Walden Pond*, Chapter 2 pp. 962-972
- **Due:** Submit Reading Homework to Blackboard by 12 noon, EST
- **Due:** Week 2 Review Homework to Blackboard by 12 noon, EST

WEEK 3

Wednesday, June 16, Read and Submit Homework on Reading to Blackboard by 12 noon, EST

- **Due:** Read any handouts or teacher notes from me in 6/16's Blackboard folder before reading the homework in the anthology
- **Due:** Read **Frederick Douglass's** introduction pp. 996-1000 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written By Himself* Chapters I—XI pp. 1008-1054
- **Due:** Submit Reading Homework to Blackboard by 12 noon, EST

Friday, June 18, Read and Submit Homework on Reading to Blackboard by 12 noon, EST

- **Due:** Read any handouts or teacher notes from me in 6/18's Blackboard folder before reading the homework in the anthology
- **Due:** Read **Walt Whitman's** Introduction pp. 1070-1073 and from *Song of Myself* Parts 1-7 (starts on p. 1088)
- **Due:** Read **Emily Dickinson's** Introduction pp. 1246-1250 and poems 112, 236, 269, 339, 598, 764 starting on page 1250
- **Due:** Submit Reading Homework to Blackboard by 12 noon, EST
- **Due:** Week 3 Review Homework by 12 noon, EST

WEEK 4

Wednesday, June 23, Read and Submit Homework on Reading to Blackboard by 12 noon, EST

- **Due:** Read any handouts or teacher notes from me in 6/23's Blackboard folder before reading the homework in the anthology
- **Due:** Read **Wallace Stevens's** "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," **William Carlos Williams's** "This is Just to Say," **Robert Frost's** "Mowing," **Elizabeth Bishop's** "The Fish," **Gwendolyn Brooks's** "The Kitchenette," **Sylvia Plath's** "Morning Song," **Adrienne Rich's** "Diving into the Wreck" (handout in Blackboard)
- **Due:** Submit Reading Notes Homework to Blackboard by 12 noon, EST
- **Due:** Submit Final Essay Exam Prep Homework to Blackboard by 12 noon, EST

Friday, June 25: Final Essay Exam

Due: Submit Final Essay Exam to Blackboard by 12 noon, EST

Reading Notes Homework

I. The Prep: Before You Read for the Day's Homework

A. Check the day's folder in Blackboard first, to see if I submitted any handouts or teacher notes for that day.

B. For every assignment we read, you should first read the introduction to the author to understand their context. This will help you with any historical or literary context that I provide, along with getting a preview of who you are about to read.

C. When you read, underline or highlight what you would mark as

1. Significant ideas, concepts, definitions, images, realizations, examples, or expressions from the author/text.
2. Significant shifts or turns in a text.
3. Any passage that you find surprising or standing out in the text
4. Any key passage in the text that you think might connect with what we have been discussing (concepts, terms, etc.) or with another text's ideas (or perhaps, contrasts) that we have already read this term.

What I am reviewing above, is yes, how to take notes, but I'm just giving you my expectations on what you should emphasize and take note of, to understand where I am coming from.

II. The Post: What to Actually Post in Blackboard for Homework

A. For each reading assignment (this means for each author we read), you are to post in one Word document or PDF:

- **3 typed passages** (with page numbers included) of that text that you think are significant and would like to examine further. This is easy because, you are already marking passages when you read. Choose 3 that you would want to direct the class to as significant. You are just typing these up. Keep what I said above about taking notes and what to look for. Type them with the page number from the textbook. The textbook cited must be the correct Norton anthology, volume and addition. **This is your time to choose what you are drawn to and want to unpack and analyze. Your selections should be passages you are invested in.**
- **If I discuss a passage in my teacher notes, don't use that passage.** I am referring to that passage to help contextualize the reading for that day and there are so many other passages to write about.

Example of correctly typed passage: "I offer here the history of neither a saint, a hero, nor a tyrant. I believe there are few events in my life, which have not happened to many: it is true the incidents of it are numerous; and did I consider myself an European, I might say my sufferings were great: but when I compare my lot with that of most of my countrymen, I regard myself as a *particular favorite of Heaven*, and acknowledge the mercies of Providence in every occurrence of my life" (Equiano 373).

- **Choose 1 of those passages** (of that author—you are doing this for every author) that you want to spend time with. **This is your time to choose what you are drawn to and want to unpack and analyze in significance.** We will be turning back to this work for our essays and directly using it for these larger assignments.
- **Close-read this passage by writing a 300-word close-reading of the passage that:**
 1. Explains what it is saying and why the passage is significant, paying attention to specific phrases,

- the context of the passage, and what makes the specific meaning of *this* passage significant. If other passages in this text contain similar ideas, think of what this adds, though, that is specific to the passage. It is not just repeating those other passages/moments. Break this down in depth: *When Bradstreet says . . . she means . . . Here Bradstreet is emphasizing . . . Here Bradstreet uses the word . . . in order to . . .* No, the quotes don't count as your word count. You should focus more on the point that this assignment is going to directly feed into your larger assignments. It's also a chance for you to show your particular interest in a passage to the class.
2. Also in this close-reading, connect to the terms and concepts we have been discussing for that day or earlier in the term: *This is an example of how Columbus views the land vs. how he views the people, and it reveals that . . .*
 3. Connect this analyzed passage to another moment in the text and explain that connection. Perhaps the connection is a contrast: *This passage is in contrast to when Jacobs later says . . .* Give a reason for why that apparent contrast exists. Perhaps the passage further deepens an overall idea/purpose of the text, when connected with the outside passage: *When you jump to an earlier passage in which Whitman focuses on . . . you can see that . . .*

You have a lot to write about. Don't worry so much about word-count. Yes, you do have to reach the minimum. But don't stop and start to count words as you are typing. Write your close-reading to completion.

Remember that you have to do this for each author. Some days there is only 1 author, but often there are 2. I will have special directions for the day we read a single poem of many different poets. The instructions will be different, so we can write a manageable/reasonable close-reading.

What's the point of this?

- To prepare for the major essays.
- To show me you have not only read the assignment for the but have begun to analyze a key passage from it. This will allow me to respond to that initial analysis and help you in your major essays.
- To fulfill ALL of the mentioned objectives for this course (see the syllabus). We are practicing all of the objectives for the class with this particular assignment.