Fall 2015

ENGL 2031

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University of New Orleans

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English 2031--American Literature to 1865  
Fall 2015, TTh 9:30-10:45  
Patricia Roger  
Office: LA 291  
Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 1:30-3:30, Wednesday 10:00-12:00, and by appointment  
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Email: pmroger@uno.edu


Prerequisite: C or higher in English 1158 or the equivalent.

Student Learning Outcomes:  
By the end of the semester, students successfully completing the course will be able to:  
- Demonstrate an understanding of American literature from the Colonial period to the Civil War in relation to the historical and cultural context.  
- Effectively analyze literary texts and the relations of the texts to their contexts.  
- Effectively research literary and historical scholarship.  
- Write clear, interesting, well organized essays based on analysis and research.  
- Give an interesting, well organized, and effective oral presentation.

Course Description:  
This class is a survey of American literature up to the Civil War. It is designed and required for English majors; however, all interested students are welcome. We will read and discuss fiction, non-fictional narratives, essays, and poetry by American writers from this period, focusing both on the literary elements of the texts and on connections between the texts and historical events, social values and attitudes, and cultural movements.

Assignments:  
- **Discussion Questions:** After the course is underway, I will ask you (five students at a time) to post discussion questions on Moodle, which will help guide our discussion in class. These questions comprise 5% of your final grade.  
- **Reading Notes:** I will ask you to respond in writing to the texts we are reading primarily by answering questions about the literary elements of the texts and by posing questions of your own. These notes comprise 15% of your final grade.  
- **Short Essay & Presentation on a Text in its Context (approximately 4 pages):**  
You will choose a text we are reading and connect it in a short essay to an aspect of its historical and cultural context (the events and trends happening and/or the prevalent beliefs, values and attitudes at the time the text is written and published). Early in the semester I will ask you to choose one of five contexts for this assignment: Colonial Period, Revolutionary Period, Antebellum Period (and within this period, Transcendentalism and Slavery & Abolition) and a text from that context. I will give you directions for the assignment and time during class to meet
with the other students who have chosen the same period. You will hand in to me a short proposal in which you will tell me your plan for the essay and presentation. You will give your individual presentation, which should be **7-10 minutes long** as part of the group. After I receive your choices I will make a schedule of due dates. The short essay is worth **20%** of your final grade. The presentation is worth **10%** of your final grade.

- **Short Research Essay (approximately 4 pages):** For this assignment, you should research the answer to a question that interests you about a text or texts we are reading this semester (choose a different text from the one you wrote about in your other essay). You may ask a question about the relation of the text to its historical and cultural context and/or about its literary elements. You will first hand in to me a short proposal in which you tell me what your question is and what research you are doing to answer your question. I will give you feedback on your proposal and will be happy to help you research. This essay will be due after midterm and is worth **20%** of your final grade.

- **Exams:** Your midterm and final exams will be essay questions focusing on the literary elements of the texts and on the relation of the texts to the historical and cultural context. The midterm is worth **10%** and the final is worth **15%** of your final grade.

**Policies:**

**Come to class and participate:** You should attend each class and participate in class discussions. Please turn off your cell phones and put them away, arrive on time, and remain in the classroom. If you use a laptop for class work, remember to stay engaged with the class discussion. Your attendance and participation help to make the class interesting and lively. Please don’t hesitate to ask questions. Let me know if you must miss class, arrive late or leave early. If you repeatedly arrive late, leave early or during class, I will lower your participation grade. If you miss more than **three** classes without valid excuses, I will notify your dean and begin to lower your final grade one-half of a letter grade for each absence after two. **If you miss eight classes, you will fail the course.** If you actively participate in most classes, you will receive full credit for participation, which is worth **5%** of your final grade; more important, by engaging in class discussions, you will learn more and develop your skills in speaking and analyzing texts.

**Bring the text to class:** I encourage you to buy the textbook we are using for class, *The Norton Anthology of American Literature, 8th Ed.* Vol. A & B, so that you will easily be able to find passages that we are discussing in class. The texts we are reading are available online also and you may access them that way, though the anthology is more convenient for class discussions. We will spend time in class analyzing specific passages in the texts, so you will need to have the text in front of you.

**Hand in work on time:** You may ask for an extension if you cannot hand in an essay on time. **I will only give extensions before or on the due date for the essay.** If you are ill or have another compelling reason for missing class on the day of an exam, you may make arrangements to make up the exam. Again, you must let me know on or before the day of
the exam. **You may have one extension or make-up during the semester.** If you miss the oral presentation, you cannot make it up. If you have a valid excuse, I will allow you to apply the grade you made on your essay to your presentation grade. You may make up reading notes up to a week after the due date.

**Consult with me about your work:** I encourage you to come in to see me in my office with a rough draft of your essays. I’m glad to help you at any stage of your writing.

**Revise your essays:** You may revise your essays after you have received a grade. In order to do so, you must come in to my office to discuss the revision and you must hand in the original with your revision. **Revisions are due two weeks after I return the original essay to you; I cannot accept revisions after the last day of class.**

**Do your work honestly:** Your main goals in class should be to understand the texts we read and to improve your skills in analyzing, researching, writing, and speaking. In order to achieve these goals you must do the work yourself. You will, of course, be consulting sources, but you should develop your own ideas and write all assignments in your own words. If you don’t clearly acknowledge sources and indicate when you quote or paraphrase a source, you are plagiarizing. Please avoid plagiarism. If I discover solid evidence of plagiarism, I will follow the University guidelines and file an Academic Dishonesty Report form and give the assignment a zero. If you have questions about using sources honestly, please ask. Here is the University’s statement about academic honesty: Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the Student Code of Conduct for further information. The Code is available online at http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu.

**We offer accommodations for students with disabilities:** It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services as well as their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. For more information, please go to http://www.ods.uno.edu.

**Grading Criteria:**

**Essays**
- Clear thesis based on an analysis of the text (and context, for essays on text and contexts)
- Specific examples from text to support your thesis
- Quality of research and effective use of it to support your thesis
- Clear plan of organization
- Clear and correct writing
- Correct use of mechanics and correct MLA documentation
- Required length
**Oral Presentation**
- Clear thesis based on an analysis of the text and context
- Specific examples to support your thesis
- Clear plan of organization
- Voice clear and loud enough for the class to hear easily
- Eye contact with listeners frequently
- Required length (7-10 minutes)

**Exams:** Because time is limited on exams, I evaluate your exams primarily on how well you address the question and how well you demonstrate your specific knowledge of the texts and the concepts we have been discussing in class. The questions are essay questions. Your responses should be clear and fairly well organized and well written.

I give your essays, exams, and presentations letter grades, using plus & minus. If the essay has many strengths, but does not fulfill the assignment, I usually ask that you revise before I assign a grade.

- A = Excellent work; fully meets all criteria
- B = Very good work; meets criteria well
- C = Satisfactory; meets most criteria well
- D = Needs work; does not meet most criteria
- F = Does not meet criteria

**Reading Notes:** Your reading notes are designed to help you understand the texts and the concepts we discuss in class as well as to give me feedback on what you do and do not understand. The important thing is that you try to answer the questions. At the end of the semester you will get full credit for the reading notes (15% of your final grade) if you have completed all and received a satisfactory grade on 75% of the assignments. I give your reading notes three kinds of grades:
  - Satisfactory— you show that you understand the questions and give some specific examples from the text.
  - Needs work— either too sketchy or you seem not to understand the concept or the text.
  - Better than satisfactory

You may make up reading notes assignments up to one week after the due date.

**Schedule**

**Aug 20**
Introduction

**Colonial Period—August 29-September 10**

Aug 25  Iroquois Creation Story (21-25); Navajo Creation Story (25-34)

Aug 27  Columbus (34-38); Cabeza de Vaca (43-51)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 1</td>
<td>Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation (131-144); Bradstreet, “The Author to Her Book” (225), “Before the Birth of One of Her Children” (225)</td>
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<td>Sept 3</td>
<td>Rowlandson, A Narrative of the Captivity (256-288) <em>Choices Due—Essay on Text and Context and Presentation</em></td>
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<td>Sept 8</td>
<td>Jefferson, From The Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson (661-667)</td>
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<td>Sept 10</td>
<td>Franklin, “Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America” (476-480); Red Jacket, “Speech to the U. S. Senate” (450-453)</td>
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<td>Sept 15</td>
<td>Franklin, Autobiography (481-503 &amp; 534-542)</td>
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<td>Sept 17</td>
<td>Equiano (687-709, Chapters I-V &amp; 718-721, Chapter VII); Wheatley, “On Being Brought from Africa to America” (764), Letter to Samson Occom (774)</td>
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<td>Sept 22-24</td>
<td>Foster, The Coquette (818-916)</td>
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<td>Oct 1</td>
<td>Poe, “The Tell-Tale Heart” (691-695)</td>
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<td>Oct 6</td>
<td>Review for Midterm</td>
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<td>Oct 8</td>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>Oct 13</td>
<td>Emerson, “The American Scholar” (243-256)</td>
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<td>Oct 15</td>
<td>Fall Break</td>
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<td>Oct 20</td>
<td>Fuller, from The Great Lawsuit (747-752 &amp; 774-777); Thoreau, from Walden, “Spring” (1136-1147)</td>
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<td>Oct 22</td>
<td>Proposal for Short Research Essay Due</td>
<td>Douglass, Narrative of the Life (1182-1188 [Chapters I &amp; II], 1193-1201 [Chapters V, VI, VII] 1208-1235 [Chapters X &amp; XI])</td>
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<td>Oct 27</td>
<td>Jacobs, from Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (921-942)</td>
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Nov 10-17  Melville, *Billy Budd, Sailor* (1587-1643)
Nov 12  **Short Research Essay Due**
Nov 19  Whitman, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” (1383-1387)
Nov 24  Dickinson, “I taste a liquor never brewed” (1667), “There’s a certain Slant of light” (1672), “I felt a Funeral in my Brain” (1673), “’The Bustle in a House” (1695)
Nov 26  **Thanksgiving**
Dec 1-3  Conclusion of Course
          **Last Day to Hand in Revisions**
          **Review for Exam**

**Final Exam**  **Thursday, December 10, 10:00-12:00**