Laura Kuske von Wallmenich  
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Office: SAC 338  
Phone: x 7132, or 463-7132  
Hours: MW 1-2:30, TTH 1-2  

**REQUIRED TEXTS**  
- course website  
- Reserve materials (Alma College library)  

**RECOMMENDED TEXTS**  
- Diana Hacker, *A Writer’s Reference*  

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**  
Survey courses are about literary history; they are intended to provide students with an introduction to the historical patterns and contexts that have shaped the literature of a particular culture or nation. American literary history is a story that can be told in many different ways, and for various different reasons. In this course, we will be as interested in exploring *how* the ‘story’ of American literature is constructed as we will be in the story itself. For instance, consider the question of where a course on American literature should begin. Do we start with the first texts published in English in the British colonies, with the British promotional tracts describing an promoting colonization of the "new World", with Columbus's letters to the King of Spain describing his discoveries, or with the rich and complex native American oral traditions that predate the "discovery" of the Americas? Or do we look at ancient writings from early cultures in South and Mesoamerica? What criteria do we use to decide which texts and authors are central to the story, and which do we demote to a minor role... or omit entirely? Each of these decisions changes the story itself.  

Although I want to provide you with an overview of some of the major ‘scenes’ in the literary and cultural history of North America to 1865, I also want you to think carefully and critically about *why* these moments and these figures matter — *and to whom*. My hope is that you will leave this class with a richer understanding of the literature and culture of early America, as
well as a more complex understanding of the role that literature played in the development of the United States as a nation.

Course Goals

1. Provide a foundation for further study in upper-division English courses in general and courses in American literature in particular.

2. Improve your ability to read and write critically about literary texts. This includes the ability to close-read, to think analytically about the language and form of a text, to formulate and defend a complex and interesting literary thesis, and to incorporate research into your arguments.

3. Practice reading literary texts with a sensitivity to their historical and cultural context.

4. Think comparatively about early American texts and to observe patterns of similarity and difference across diverse early American cultures.

5. Discuss the role of literature within colonial and early national cultures, and especially its relationship to the formation of a collective identity in the United States of America.

Requirements

Reading and Discussion (15%)

Reading early American literature can be hard work; the languages of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century colonial cultures can seem quite alien. I have tried to keep the reading load to a reasonable amount, in the expectation that you will read – and reread – the texts assigned carefully, thoroughly and thoughtfully. However, given the amount of material we have to cover, you should expect to spend a great deal of time on your reading.

One way to measure your engagement with the reading is through your participation in discussions of the material. Since I am aware that different students participate in different ways, and that the large class size may tend to silence quieter students, there are a number of ways to actively participate in this class. If you have any concerns about how I evaluate participation, please come and talk to me.

Discussion (5%)

All forms of discussion, including group work and electronic discussion, are considered when evaluating your contributions to discussion. Thoughtfulness, inquisitiveness, and thoroughness matter more than the sheer volume of what you say.

Journal (10%)

You will be required to write on almost all of the assigned readings for this class. The assignments will range from journal responses to the readings to more focused writing “fragments”. Both types of writing are a central part of the learning you will do in this
class, but they focus on different types of skills. Journals help improve reading skills, particularly the ability to observe patterns and analyze and reflect on those patterns. Journals are not about a right or a wrong answer; they are about the process of reading a text thoughtfully and critically. Fragments can also help with reading skills, but they place more emphasis on paying attention to language and style, both in the text and in your own writing. Fragments often combine critical and creative thinking and writing. For instance, after reading the classic sermons of John Winthrop and John Edwards, you might be asked to write your own parody of the Puritan style. Both journals and fragments are to be submitted before the start of class via Moodle. I will often draw on class journals in discussion.

**Papers (40% total)**
The formal papers for this class should conform to the guidelines for literary essays provided on the course web page. These assignments are intended to help you develop and improve your abilities to construct arguments about your interpretations of texts that will be persuasive to an audience of literary critics. Do not let the shortness of the paper deceive you; expect to work very hard on each paper. *I will fail any paper that does not meet my minimum expectations for a 200-level English course.* This is an upper-level literature course, and hence it presumes strong reading and writing skills. Students that are under-prepared for an upper-level literature course should expect to devote extra time to improving their skills in this class, and make frequent use of both the writing center and office hours.

**Review (2.5%)**
Each of you will select an article from a peer-reviewed literary journal (or a chapter from a book) and read and review that article for the rest of the class. Your one-page, written review will be posted online and will be a resource for others in the class researching your text. You will be expected to be able to articulate the main ideas and arguments of your source in class on the day your review is due. If you are unhappy with your grade on your review, you may sign up for another text, and I will replace the first grade if the second review earns a higher grade.

**Close-Reading (15%)**
The first paper you write in this class is a short (2-3 page) argument that will focus on a close reading of a particular poem, passage, or motif. This is a focused paper; although it is short, it will present significant challenges, especially to students that are new to close-reading. In this paper, you must be able to 1) define a topic that is sufficiently narrow for such a short paper; 2) construct a clear, interesting, relevant thesis; and 3) support your thesis with careful attention to and analysis of the language choices in the text. You will have the opportunity to revise this after you receive comments from me.
Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (2.5%) 
Before you write your major paper for this class, you must submit a research proposal and an annotated bibliography. The annotated bibliography should include the citations for 5-6 relevant book chapters or articles, with a short summary for each source.

Major Paper (20%) 
The major paper for this class will combine both the close-reading and the research skills that you practiced in the other writing assignments for this class. You must define and defend your own critical thesis about a text we have read, and you must put your own argument into a clear dialogue with the larger conversations about the text that you discover during your research. Your final paper will be 5-6 pages.

Midterm and Final Exams (20% and 25% respectively) 
There will be two exams for this class. Both exams will follow the same format and consist of two sections. Each section is designed to test a different set of skills. The first section will test your understanding of the concepts and ideas that shape early American literature and culture as well as your ability to synthesize and analyze what we have been reading. This section will also include one passage analysis, which is designed to test your ability to read closely and discuss rhetoric and figurative language. Section 2 will consist of a short essay. This section tests your ability to synthesize the material in the course and construct your own argument about early American texts. All exams are take-home, and will be distributed one week prior to the due date.

COURSE POLICIES

Understanding Grades:
All material in this class is graded using the standard letter system at Alma College. Each letter grade corresponds to a number on a 4.0 scale. To calculate midterm and final grades, I convert all letter grades to a number, and calculate the weighted average. Final letter grades are assigned according to the following scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>4.0 Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3.8 and higher</td>
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<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>3.30 to 3.79</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>2.8 to 3.29</td>
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<td>BC</td>
<td>2.3 to 2.79</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>1.8 to 2.29</td>
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<td>CD</td>
<td>1.3 to 1.79</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>0.8 to 1.29</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>below 0.79</td>
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It is my firm conviction that every student has a right to understand both the criteria used to evaluate their work and the meaning of the grade they have been assigned. You can find out much more about my grading philosophy and criteria, as well as a handout called "What
Grades Mean”, on the course web site. You are also encouraged to ask me questions if you ever receive a grade that you do not understand.

Policies for Written Work:
Written work must be submitted on the day it is due, at the beginning of class– no exceptions unless you have made prior arrangements with me. For each day that your paper is late (including weekend days), I will deduct one half of a letter grade, or .5 on a 4.0 scale. All written work you hand in to me must be typed in a standard 12-point font, with one-inch margins, according to the length and formatting requirements of each individual assignment. I will not accept emailed papers, unless it is by prior agreement. All outside sources must be cited in accordance with MLA guidelines.

Attendance Policies:
You must attend regularly to do well in this course; missing one class in a course that meets twice a week will result in a significant gap in your understanding of the material we cover. However, I assume that you are an adult, capable of making your own choices, and therefore I do not monitor or grade attendance. However, class participation makes up a large part of your grade in this class. Since you cannot participate if you are not in class, frequent absences will affect your grade, as you will miss in-class assignments, group work, and discussions. If you miss a class, it will be your responsibility to get the assignment from one of your classmates, or from the course web page. If there will be a significant interruption in your attendance due to a medical or family emergency, please be sure to contact me so we can discuss your options.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:
Plagiarism is claiming someone else’s work (words or ideas) as your own without giving them credit for that work. Plagiarism is easily avoided by documenting the sources for all direct quotations and paraphrases of others’ ideas using parenthetical or footnoted citations. I take plagiarism quite seriously. It is my policy to routinely screen work submitted to me for plagiarism, and I have a very good track record at identifying and documenting instances of plagiarism. Plagiarism constitutes grounds for failure of an assignment, course failure, or even suspension from the College. I report all incidents of intentional plagiarism to the Provost’s Office for disciplinary action.

In my experience, many cases of plagiarism result, not from a desire to cheat, but from a sense of desperation at being unable to complete an assignment successfully. There are better options, in these cases. Please talk to me at any time during the quarter if you are confused or overwhelmed by an assignment. I will be happy to work with you individually and, in turn, I will expect all of you to fulfill your obligations for academic honesty.
Campus Resources for Writing:
You should feel free to ask me questions about writing assignments (or writing in general) in or out of class. You can also find specific resources for writing on the course website. However, I also recommend making use of the Alma College Writing Center’s free peer tutoring service. You may visit the writing center as often as you like, but it is a good idea to make an appointment. See http://acwritingcenter.wikispaces.com/ for more information.

Office Hours and Email:
Please take advantage of my office hours to ask questions or deal with issues you would like to discuss with me outside of class. Just come by – you don’t need an appointment. If you can’t make my office hours, I can always arrange to meet you at a time that will work for both of us. If you need to reach me outside of class or office hours, I try to check email and voice mail at least twice daily.
READING SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to revision, so be sure to check Moodle for any updates and changes. You can find specific discussion questions and departure points for journal responses on the course website, which you can access through Moodle.

1: STORY AND POEM IN PRE-COLUMBIAN CULTURES

Tuesday, 9/8

When does “American” literary history begin?

*The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel* (4-5); Aztec and Inuit poetry (89-97)

Thursday, 9/10

*Oral Traditions and Indigenous Peoples*

Indigenous Literary Traditions (16-17), Native American Oral Literatures (18-19), and Creation/Emergence Accounts (21-23); “Changing Woman and the Hero Twins” (38-49); “Wohpe and the Gift of the Pipe” (52-54); “Iktome and the Dancing Ducks” (60-62); Raven and Marriage” (68-72); Ritual Poetry and Song (80-82); “My Breath” (109-111); “Deer Hunting Song” (111-112)

2: AMERICA IN THE EUROPEAN IMAGINATION

Tuesday, 9/15

*The Rhetoric of Discovery and Conquest: New Spain*

America in the European Imagination (124-130); Columbus, *Journal of the First Voyage and Narrative of the Third Voyage* (131-149); Sor Juana Inés de las Cruz, all poems (204-213)

Thursday, 9/17

*The Rhetoric of Exploration and Settlement: Chesapeake*

John Smith, from *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England and the Summer Isles* (273-277) and from *Advertisements for the Unexperienced Planters of New England* (285-287); James Revel, “The Poor, Unhappy Transported Felon” (298-306)

3: NEW ENGLAND PURITANS

Tuesday, 9/22

*The Rhetoric of Colonization: Puritan New England*

Thursday, 9/24  
*Puritanism and its Discontents*

Thomas Morton, from *New English Canaan* (319-331); William Bradford, from *Of Plymouth Plantation*, chapters I, IX, XIX, and XXXII only (348-370)

### 4: THE PURITANS: GRACE AND AFFLICTION

Tuesday, 9/29  
*Puritan Poetics*

Anne Bradstreet, selected poems (418-437). Edward Taylor, “Huswifery” and "Upon Wedlock, & Death of Children" (492-495; 503-505)

Thursday, 10/1  
*The Captivity Narrative*

Mary Rowlandson, *Narrative of the Captivity and Restauration* (461-491); Cotton Mather, from *Decennium Luctuosum*, Article XXV: A Notable Exploit (548-550); Mary French, from “A Poem, Written by a Captive Damsel” (586-587)

Supplementary reading: *The Bay Psalm Book* (psalms 23 and 137) and *New England Primer*, all (447-457)

### 5: THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: THE DISCOURSES OF LIBERTY

Tuesday, 10/6  
*Enlightenment and Reason*

“The Enlightenment and the Great Awakening” (592-595); Jonathan Edwards, "Personal Narrative" and "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (669-671; 680-700)

Thursday, 10/8  
*Reasoned Virtue*

“Voices of Revolution and Nationalism” (835-837); Benjamin Franklin, Parts Two and Three of *The Autobiography* (872-890, begin reading at the letter from Mr. Abel James). Nathaniel Evans, “To Benjamin Franklin” (905-923).

Close-Reading due.
6: THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: THE DISCOURSE OF LIBERTY

Tuesday, 10/13  Rhetoric of Revolution

On the Discourse of Liberty (1081-1082); Thomas Paine, from Common Sense and The American Crisis (989-1003); Mercy Owen Warren, “To Fidelio” (923-927) and from An Address to the Inhabitants of the United States of America (951-954); Anonymous, “Rights of Woman” (1095-1096); Hannah Griffitts, “The Female Patriots” (1086-1087); Toussaint L’Ouverture, “Proclamations and Letters” (1076-1080)

Thursday, 10/15  Nature, Nation, and the fear of Degeneracy

Crèvecoeur, from Letters from an American Farmer (954-989); Jefferson, from Notes on the State of Virginia, Query VI (1026-1031) and Query XVII (2039-1041)

7: MIDTERM

Tuesday, 10/20  Unite or Die

Thomas Jefferson, original draft of the declaration, from Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson (1089-1093); Royalist and Patriot Songs (1099-1118); Podcast of songs from the Revolution

Take-home Midterm due.

Thursday, 10/22  MIDTERM RECESS – NO CLASS

8: THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: EMERGENCE OF THE TALE AND THE ROMANCE

Tuesday, 10/27  American Gothic: Irving

Irving, "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (2143-2145; 2153-2185)

Thursday, 10/29  American Gothic: Poe

Poe, “Fall of House of Usher” (2484-2486; 2497- 2510); “The City in the Sea” (2484-2486); “The Raven” (2484-2486), and “Annabel Lee” (2570-2571)

9: THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: AMERICAN RENAISSANCE

Tuesday, 11/3  American Renaissance: Hawthorne

Hawthorne, “My Kinsman, Major Molineux” (2242-2258) and “The Minister’s Black Veil” (2267-2276)
Thursday, 11/5  
*American Renaissance: Dickinson*

Dickinson, (3125-3177). See discussion questions for specific pairings and suggested reading recommendations.

**10: THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: SLAVE VOICES**

Tuesday, 11/10  
*The Slave Narrative*

Douglass, *Narrative* (2035-2101)

Thursday, 11/12  
*The Slave Narrative*

Jacobs, from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (2029-2055)

**11: THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY:**

Tuesday, 11/17  
*Abolitionism and ‘Transcending’ Race*

Stowe, from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (2573-2614)

Thursday, 11/19  
*Transcendental Self*

Emerson, “Self-Reliance” (1704-1706; 1746-1762)  
**Paper due.**

**12: THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: TRANSCENDENTALISM**

Tuesday, 11/24  
*Transcendental Politics*

Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government” (1859-1876) and “A Plea for Captain John Brown” (1911-1926)

Thursday, 11/26  
THANKSGIVING RECESS – NO CLASS

**13: THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: LONG FICTION**

Tuesday, 12/1  
*American Renaissance: Melville*

Melville, “Benito Cereno” (2647-2650; 2695-2752)

Thursday, 12/3  
*American Renaissance: Melville*

Melville, “Benito Cereno” (2647-2650; 2695-2752)

**14: THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: THE HOUSE DIVIDED**

Tuesday, 12/8  
*American Renaissance: Whitman*

Whitman, "One’s Self I Sing" and “I Hear America Singing” (2992-2995; 3062-3063) “To The States” (3081); all poems from *Drum Taps* (3081-3089)
Thursday, 12/10  *The legacy of war*

Lincoln, Gettysburg Address (2232-2234); Folk Songs of Slavery, War, and Reconstruction (podcast); Whitman, “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” (3089-3096)

15: EXAM WEEK  *Monday, December 14*

Take-home final exam due by 9 p.m.