



American Literature

Beginnings to Civil War • Fall 2018

Course Description

- Reading early American literature requires understanding the varied perspectives, conflicts, and geographies of our nation's history. In this course – the first of two American literature surveys at MSUB – we will read widely across genres and styles to consider how literature both reflected and helped to define the colonial and early national periods, roughly 1600-1865.
- This version of LIT 312 has particular emphasis on concepts of *self* and *other* in early American literature: terms with implications for community, nationhood, law, ecology, technology, religion, and race that continue to shape our attitudes in the twenty-first century.

Image: Richard Caton Woodville, "News About the War in Mexico" (1848)

Meets: TTH 12:10-1:40, LA 627
 Instructor: Tom Nurmi
 Email: thomas.nurmi@msubillings.edu
 Office Hours: W 2-5, LA 425 or by appt.

Booklist

Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker*. Toronto: Broadview Press, 2018. [9781554813384]
 Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man; or, His Masquerade*. New York: Norton, 2006. [9780393979275]
The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Vol. B. (9th Ed.) New York: Norton, 2017. [9780393264470]

* By enrolling in this class, you agree to all terms, assignments, and responsibilities. You agree to treat the course as professional work, including all email exchanges, and attendance is mandatory. You should not be late, and you should not miss classes. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late or leave more than 10 minutes early, you are counted absent. Missing any more than two classes will result in a two percent (2%) deduction from your final grade, per absence.

* If you have a legitimate conflict, please discuss it with me ahead of time. Any work missed as a result of tardiness or absence is your responsibility to make up. Quizzes are not made up; however, if you give 24 hours' notice before an absence, you may take an alternate quiz.

* The Academic Support Center in the Student Union Building (<http://www.msubillings.edu/asc/>) offers a variety of services to help you as well. You should also be familiar with the *MSUB Student Policies & Procedures Handbook* for information on appropriate behavior and academic integrity.

* MSU Billings is committed to providing equal access. If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, please meet with me so that we can discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. If you determine that disability-related accommodations are necessary, please contact Disability Support Services (657-2283; located in the College of Education, Room 135). We can then plan how best to coordinate your accommodations.

* Should you need help for health or counseling, there is a mental health counselor on campus at **Student Health Counseling Services**, 2nd floor Petro (657-2153). If you feel overwhelmed, angry, depressed, or need help or support, please contact **Student Health Service** in the SUB (657-2153) or after hours: **Billings Clinic Emergency Department** (657-4150), **Billings Clinic Hospital Emergency Room** (2800 10th Ave N), or **Community Crisis Center** (259-8800), 704 N 30th.

| Assignments and Grading | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| <u>Quizzes</u> | 20% |
| <u>Website</u> | 20% |
| <u>Essay 1</u> | 20% |
| <u>Essay 2</u> | 20% |
| <u>Final Project</u> | 20% |

Learning Outcomes

To successfully complete LIT 312, students will:

- Demonstrate critical reading of New World literature until 1865, with special attention to the relation between craft and historical contexts.
- Produce a textual interpretation that speaks to broader issues of style, theme, or history in early American literature, with clear, effective writing in service of an evidenced argument.
- Identify the major themes, movements, forms, and problems in early American literature, with specific authors and works to support all claims.

Daily Syllabus

* Note: Assignments are subject to changes. It is your responsibility to stay current. Any reading assignments not included in the required texts will be available on the D2L course website.

Unit 1: Origins

9/6 – Introductions

- * “Beginnings to 1820” from *Norton Anthology of American Literature, Vol. A* (9th Ed.) [D2L]

9/11 – Indigenous Americas

- * Create your own course website [see D2L]. Email site address to thomas.nurmi@msubillings.edu
- * “Indigenous Literary Traditions” & selected creation stories [D2L]
- * “Ritual Poetry, Song and Ceremony” & selected poems [D2L]

9/13 – Colonial America

- * John Winthrop, bio & selections from *Model of Christian Charity* (1630) [D2L]
- * Anne Bradstreet, bio & “The Prologue,” “The Author to Her Book,” “In Memory...,” “On My Dear Grandchild...” & “Here Follows...” (1650-1678) [D2L]

9/18 – American Liberty [Post 1]

- * “On the Discourse of Liberty” & John Locke, selections from *Treatise of Civil Government* (1689) [D2L]
- * Thomas Jefferson, bio & “Declaration of Independence” (1776) [D2L]
- * J.H.S.J. Crèvecoeur, bio & selected “Letters from an American Farmer” (1782) [D2L]

9/20 – American Gothic

- * Charles Brockden Brown, bio [D2L] & *Edgar Huntly* (1799), Ch. I-VII (pp. 49-104)

9/25 – American Gothic [Post 2]

- * *Edgar Huntly*, Ch. VIII-XV (pp. 105-172)

9/27 – Class Canceled

10/2 – American Gothic [Post 3]

- * Finish *Edgar Huntly* (pp. 173-282)
- * “Introduction” to *Edgar Huntly* (pp. 9-40)

10/4 – *Edgar Huntly* in Context

- * Appendices A, B, C (Locke selection only) & D (pp. 283-305 and 329-334)

Unit 2: Selves

10/9 – Thinking [Essay 1 Due]

- * “American Literature, 1820-1865” (*Norton B*, pp. 12-21)
- * Ralph Waldo Emerson, bio (pp. 178-81) & “Self-Reliance” (1841) (pp. 236-53)

10/11 – Building

- * Henry David Thoreau, bio (pp. 950-52) & *Walden* (1854): Ch. 1 (only pp. 969-75 and 993-1012) & Ch. 18 (pp. 1136-44)
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10/16 – Confronting [Post 4]

- * William Apess, bio & “An Indian’s Looking Glass for the White Man” (1833) (pp. 124-5 and 135-40)
* Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, bio & selected writings (1827-1839) (pp. 140-47)

10/18 – Assembling

- * Edgar Allan Poe, bio (pp. 604-8), “The Man That Was Used Up” (1839) [D2L] & “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839) (pp. 629-42)
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10/23 – Witnessing [Post 5]

- * Lydia Hunt Sigourney, bio (pp. 106-7) & selected poems (1827-1860) [D2L]

10/25 – Stitching

- * Emily Dickinson, bio (pp. 1654-58) & selected poems (1858-1872) from the Dickinson Archive (<http://www.edickinson.org/>): F446a, F450a, F337a, F901a, F995b, F1070a, F1097a & F1440a
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10/30 – Receiving [Post 6]

- * Dickinson, selected *Envelope Poems* [D2L]

11/1 – Singing

- * Walt Whitman, bio (pp. 1294-97) & “Song of Myself” (1891) §1-32 & §51-2 (pp. 1312-35 and 1356)
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Unit 3: Others

11/6 – No Class, Election Day [Essay 2 Due]

11/8 – Race and Slavery

- * Frederick Douglass, bio (pp. 1159-63) & *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), Ch. I-II, VII and X (pp. 1171-77, 1187-90 and 1197-1216)
* Harriet Jacobs, bio & selections from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) (pp. 909-931)
* Frances Harper, bio & selected poems (1853-1872) (pp. 1630-37)
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11/13 – American Wests [Post 7]

- * “Traditional Lives,” “The Resisting Indians” & selected Native American autobiography [D2L]

11/15 – American Wests

- * John Rollin Ridge, bio & selection from *Joaquín Murieta* (1854) (pp. 1638-53)
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11/20 – American Confidence [Post 8]

- * Johannes Bergman, “The Original Confidence Man” (in *The Confidence-Man*, pp. 304-312)
* Herman Melville, bio (pp. 1410-12) & *The Confidence-Man* (1857), Ch. 1-7 (pp. 9-51)

11/22 – No Class, Thanksgiving

11/27 – American Confidence [Post 9]

* *Confidence-Man*, Ch. 8-28 (pp. 52-164)

* Hershel Parker, “The Confidence Man’s Masquerade” (pp. 293-303)

11/29 – American Confidence [Final Project Proposal Due]

* *Confidence-Man*, Ch. 29-39 (pp. 165-208)

12/4 – American Confidence [Post 10]

* *Confidence-Man*, Ch. 40-45 (pp. 208-251)

* Selected “Contemporary Reviews” of *The Confidence-Man*

“A Sketchy Affair” (p. 269)

“Philosophy Brought ‘Into the Living World’” (pp. 272-3)

“Melville as ‘A Mediaeval Jester’” (pp. 273-5)

“Ineffably Meaningless and Trashy” (p. 277)

“Melville as Keen and Bitter Observer” (pp. 288-89)

12/6 – Legacies of Confidence

12/11 – Final Project Presentations, 10 AM: LA 627 [Final Project Due on D2L or Website]