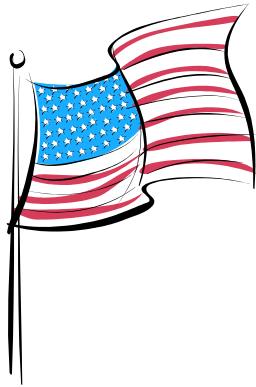


Course Prospectus
Honors American Literature
J. Todd



This course can be described as "a study of the nature of American literature through the examination of representative literary works by major American authors." In this course we will not only read a sample of American literature, we will also examine the process by which an American literary tradition is created.

One of the goals of this course is to present you with a survey of American literature from the beginning of America (The Colonial Period) to the literature produced through the 21st century. Since the first publication of American literature, Americans have been striving to establish some sort of identity. While it is impossible to decide upon a single comprehensive definition of American identity, we will examine several works throughout the year that will lend themselves to an appropriate attempt at establishing this definition.

How do we bridge the gap between early American Literature and 21st Century literature? Where does the common thread exist that unites the five centuries of American literature we will survey in this course? American literature begins with the ideas of American individualism and the conflict of liberty and equality, but ends with something quite different...or does it? American literature attempts to tell the story of the creation and subsequent establishment of a nation, of an ideology, and of a myth, and this is what we will explore this year.

We will trace the development of an American national consciousness through the literature that we cover this year. How does American literature define what it means to be American *and* how has that definition evolved throughout the course of American literature?

Other questions we will tackle include:

- What is the American dream and how does it pertain to almost every time period in American literature?
- America seems to be founded on the principals of unity...have we been successful? Why or why not?
- How does this dream change throughout the evolution of American literature?
- How is the literature of America shaped by history?
- Why do so many American writers seem to be rebelling against something?
- What is the meaning of American individualism?
- How will the literature of the future depict these issues?
- How does my American experience relate to the characters in the literature we will read?

The goal of this course is to give you an understanding of American literature from origins up to the (hopefully) the 21st century across a variety of literary genres and cultural perspectives.

It is my goal to create a classroom atmosphere where we can analyze and interpret the different American experiences that reveal themselves in some great books, and to analyze the themes, ideas, struggles, and meanings which inspire American writers to create their stories in the first place.

FALL SEMESTER

Continuous: Vocabulary

Writing: Various essays, MLA format, citations

Unit 1: Weeks 1-6

1. Course expectations and style, summer reading, writing in MLA format
2. Examine the American Dream, American Literature as propaganda
3. Introduction to Puritanism: Winthrop's Theocratic social structure, lifestyle, and influence on American literature/thought, schisms in Puritan society ("city on a hill") audience, subject and purpose, rhetoric and style, diction and syntax

Readings: Oral Traditions/Native American literature ("The World on the Turtle's Back"), Olaudah Equiano ("The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano"), Anne Bradstreet ("Upon the Burning of Our House"), William Bradford ("Of Plymouth Plantation"), Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (Communism and the Red Scare/20th century American Puritanism)

Assessment: essay/exam on Puritanism, Miller's *The Crucible*

Unit 2: Weeks 7-8

1. Transition to secular society, analyzing a speech and propaganda, Dr. Seuss as propagandist?
2. The Age of Reason/Enlightenment/Revolutionary Period

Readings: Ben Franklin ("Poor Richard's Almanack," "The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin"), Crèvecoeur ("Letters from an American Farmer"), Thomas Paine ("The Crisis"), Patrick Henry (Speech to the Virginia Convention), Thomas Jefferson (Declaration of Independence, thoughts on education)

Assessment: essay/exam on Age of Reason

Unit 3: Weeks 9-11

1. Romanticism

Readings: Folk tales & Washington Irving ("The Devil and Tom Walker," "Rip Van Winkle"), Edgar Allan Poe ("Fall of the House of Usher"), various poems from the Fireside Poets (Bryant, Holmes, Longfellow, Whittier, Lowell)

Assessment: exam over Romantics

Unit 4: Weeks 12-14

1. American Renaissance/Transcendentalism/Rise of the individual

Readings: Emerson ("Self-Reliance"); Thoreau (*Walden* and *Civil Disobedience*)

Assessment: essay on Emerson and Thoreau

Unit 5: Weeks 15-17

1. Anti-Transcendentalism/indifferent God, fatalism

Readings: Hawthorne ("The Minister's Black Veil," "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment," "Young Goodman Brown")

Assessment: Exam/essay over Anti-transcendentalism

Week 18

Review and Final Exam

**I reserve the right to exclude or include works from these time periods as time permits

SPRING SEMESTER

Continuous: Vocabulary

Writing: Essay (literary analysis, research process, formatting)

Unit 1: Weeks 1-2

1. New American Poetry
2. Dickinson and Whitman, various poems

Assessment: Poetry Explication kiosk

Unit 2: Weeks 3-8

1. Realism, Regionalism, Naturalism: America in Conflict
2. Readings: Frederick Douglass ("Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave") Bret Harte ("The Outcasts of Poker Flats"), Ambrose Bierce (The Devil's Dictionary, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge"), Mark Twain (The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," "The Private History of a Campaign that Failed"),
3. Independent novel: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
4. Begin research paper: literary analysis on selected novel; research process (MLA documentation)

Assessment: 5-7 page research paper

Assessment: exams/essay over unit and novel

Unit 3: Weeks 9-13

1. Modernism and Disillusionment: American and the Effects of World War One
2. Readings: F. Scott Fitzgerald, ("Winter Dreams," *The Great Gatsby*), Hemingway ("In Another Country"), Faulkner ("A Rose for Emily"), Flannery O'Connor ("The Life You Save May be Your Own") modern poets (Sandburg, Edgar Lee Masters, Edwin Arlington Robinson)

Assessment: exam on Modernism and essay/exam over *The Great Gatsby*

Unit 4: Weeks 14-15

1. Harlem Renaissance and the Red Scare/McCarthyism
2. Readings: James Weldon Johnson ("Harlem: The Culture Capital"), W. E. B. Du Bois ("Returning Soldiers"), Countee Cullen ("Yet Do I Marvel," "Tableau," "Incident"), Langston Hughes ("Harlem," "A Negro Speaks of Rivers"), Arna Bontemps ("Golgotha is a Mountain"), Claude McKay ("America," "If We Must Die," "The White House"), Zora Neale Hurston ("How it Feels to Be Colored Me), Georgia Douglass Johnson ("The Heart of a Woman," "I Want to Die While You Love Me")

Countee Cullen – "Tableau," "Incident," "Yet Do I Marvel"

Assessment: Exam over Harlem Renaissance

Unit 5: Weeks 16-17

1. Contemporary literature
2. Readings: Story stories: Malamud, Kingston, Barthelme, Cisneros

Assessments: quizzes

Week 18

Final Exam: Essay or Presentation: traces the development of an American national consciousness through the literature we have covered this year. How does American literature define what it means to be American *and* how has that definition evolved throughout the course of American literature?

**I reserve the right to exclude or include works from these time periods as time permits. Remember that we have the GHSCT and the EOCT this semester, so it is inevitable that we will not cover all of these works this semester.