



ENGLISH 355
AMERICAN TEXTS
EARLIER 19th CENTURY
FALL 2007

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Meeting Place & Time

190 Dwyer | TTh | 10:25-12:05

Course Description

English 355 surveys representative works of American literature from the early 1800s to the Civil War. This period includes the historical and artistic phenomenon widely known as the "American Renaissance" during which authors first began to assert themselves on the international literary scene. It includes authors often described either as Romantics (Irving, Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne) or Transcendentalists (Emerson, Thoreau). Written texts will be studied as literary and historical documents. The goal of English 355 is to critically engage students with textual analysis while providing a broader scope of the formation of a distinct American literary voice.

Text

Cain, William, ed. *American Literature: Volume 1*. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2004.

Grading Scale

Course grades will be based on the following percentages:

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Attendance & Participation | 10% |
| Assignments & Quizzes | 20% |
| Minithemes | 40% |
| Final Essay | 30% |

Attendance

Attendance is an essential part of this course. It is expected that you will come to each class period prepared for the day's activities; when you do not show up, or when you show up unprepared, the quality of the class's labor suffers. As we only meet twice weekly, it is important that you attend class, barring any unforeseen illnesses, family emergencies, religious observances, etc. More than TWO absences will negatively affect your grade. For each additional absence beyond two, one letter grade will be deducted from your final grade (e.g. a B will become a C). You are responsible for all assignments given during a class period you miss.

Tardiness affects your number of absences. Continual tardiness disrupts the class and demonstrates a lack of respect for your professor and fellow students. Anybody that is more than 10 minutes late to class will receive an absence for the day, and if you leave class early, you will not receive credit for being present on that day.

Participation

This includes in-class speaking, activities, and responsive listening. Participation is crucial. Simply showing up for class does not constitute participation. You are expected to present your informed ideas and show respect for others in the classroom. Participation is mental attendance. You will be graded on how much you contribute to the learning environment of each class session.

Assignments & Quizzes

Throughout the semester, you will be given a number of assignments to be completed both in and out of the classroom. In-class assignments will generally not be given ahead of time; they will be issued during class and are to be completed during that class session. If you are absent, you will not be able to make up those assignments. Quizzes will be given periodically to ensure that the reading schedule is being followed. They will usually be administered at the beginning of class. If you are absent or tardy on a day that a quiz is

administered, you will not be able to make it up.

Minithemes

A minitheme is a one page, single-spaced work in which you will be required to engage with the reading material for the class. The purpose of writing a minitheme is to develop your skills as a critical thinker and reader. In order to write a successful minitheme, you should keep a reading journal. As you read the course texts, look for recurring symbols, images and ideas and write them down in your journal along with anything else that seems interesting, disturbing or provocative. Then amass the information you have collected. Take one of the themes you have been focusing on in your reading journal and flesh it out with details, citations, and page numbers. Minithemes should exhibit SIX primary things: 1) an imaginative title that entices readers' attention; 2) a concise, specific, argumentative thesis; 3) evidence of attentiveness to the text under consideration; 4) strong textual support for your argument; 5) an explanation of the significance of the theme you have chosen to focus on; 6) questions or concerns for further investigation.

Minithemes serve as models for the sort of process that should be undergone when you write longer essays. In short, you must first read a given text, taking notes and underlining important phrases and passages. Then gather and sort out your notes, making sure your focus is clear and sufficiently narrow. Finally, develop a meaningful and interesting reading of the text.

A total of SIX minithemes will be due at the beginning of our discussion sessions for each major written text. Your first minitheme, for instance, will be on Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" and is due on the first day we discuss that story.

Final Essay

This 5-6 page essay should be based upon the ideas developed in your minithemes and our class discussions and assignments. Students are responsible for developing their own topics and choosing a text to analyze. Final essays must be distinguished by the following:

12 TIMES NEW ROMAN FONT
DOUBLE-SPACED TEXT
1 INCH MARGINS (TOP, SIDES, BOTTOM)
IMAGINATIVE, DISCERNING TITLE
IMAGINATIVE, ARGUMENTATIVE THESIS
8 CITATIONS FROM PRIMARY TEXTS
5 SECONDARY SOURCES
BIBLIOGRAPHY
MLA STYLE

Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when a writer: (1) copies verbatim from an author without quotation or attempts to disguise the act by selective omissions or alterations; (2) paraphrases from an author without naming the source in the text of the paper or providing a list of references at the end; (3) turns in a paper written by somebody else. As a point of academic integrity, you are required to submit original material of your own creation. Plagiarism of any material is a serious offense and, if established with sufficient evidence, can result in failure of the course or dismissal from the university.

Writer's Hotline

This service is available for quick or one-time questions that can be answered over the phone and usually involve grammar or writing mechanics. The phone number is **937.775.2158**. The hotline is open daily until 4 p.m.

Class Calendar

| Week | Schedule |
|------|--|
| 1 | Introduction to the Course <i>Letter to the Reader: The Age of Emerson</i> James Fenimore Cooper, "On American Inequality" |
| 2 | Due: Minitheme #1 Washington Irving, "Rip Van Winkle" William Cullent Bryant, "Thanatopsis" & "The Prairies" |
| 3 | Due: Minitheme #2 Edgar Allen Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher" & "The Purloined Letter" |
| 4 | FILM: <i>House of Usher</i> |
| 5 | Due: Minitheme #3 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature" & "Self-Reliance" Margaret Fuller, <i>The Great Lawsuit</i> (Selection) |
| 6 | Due: Minitheme #4 Henry David Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government" & <i>Walden</i> (Selection) Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" |
| 7 | FILM: <i>Bartleby</i> |
| 8 | Due: Minitheme #5 Herman Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener" |

- 9 **Due:** Minitheme #6
 Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*
 Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Selections)
- 10 Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*
- E **Due:** Final Essay

(NOTE: This schedule is subject to changes.)