



**ENGLISH 355**  
**AMERICAN TEXTS**  
**EARLIER 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY**  
**FALL 2009**

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**Websites**

**Course:** [www.wright.edu/~david.wilson](http://www.wright.edu/~david.wilson)  
**Textbook:** [www.wwnorton.com/literature](http://www.wwnorton.com/literature)  
**Personal:** [www.dharlanwilson.com](http://www.dharlanwilson.com)

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**Meeting Place & Time**

184 Andrews | MW | 4:45-6:25

NOTE: This is a multimode course and we will meet in person once a week, usually on Wednesdays. The time reserved for the other day will be administered online via the course's ten modules, which can be accessed at [www.wright.edu/~david.wilson](http://www.wright.edu/~david.wilson). Unless dictated otherwise, all major and minor writing assignments must be turned in via WebCT.

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**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, 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 Written texts will be studied as literary and historical documents.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.

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### **Text**

Krupat, Arnold and Robert S. Levine, eds. *The Norton Anthology to American Literature: Volume B (1820-1865)*. 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007. <[www.wwnorton.com/literature](http://www.wwnorton.com/literature)>.

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### **Grading Scale**

Course grades will be based on the following percentages:

Attendance & Participation	20%
Assignments & Quizzes	20%
Minithemes	40%
Final Essay	20%

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### **Attendance**

Attendance is an essential part of this writing intensive, discussion-oriented 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 will usually only meet in person once a week, it is important that you attend class, barring any unforeseen illnesses, family emergencies, religious observances, etc. More than ONE absence will negatively affect your grade. For each additional absence beyond one, a 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.

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### **Participation**

This includes in-class and online dialogue, 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 constitutes mental and verbal 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 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.

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## **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 "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and is due on the first day we discuss that story.

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## **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 one or two texts 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  
MINIMUM 8 CITATIONS FROM PRIMARY TEXTS  
MINIMUM 6 SECONDARY SOURCES  
BIBLIOGRAPHY  
MLA STYLE

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### 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.

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### 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.

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### Class Calendar

Week	Schedule
1	Introduction to the Course Introduction to Norton Anthology: American Literature (1820-1865)
2	<b>Due:</b> Minitheme #1 Washington Irving, "Rip Van Winkle" & "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" William Cullent Bryant, "Thanatopsis" & "The Prairies" William Apess, "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man"
3	<b>Due:</b> Minitheme #2 Edgar Allen Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher" & "A Man of the Crowd"
4	FILM: <i>House of Usher</i>

- 5 **Due:** Minitheme #3  
Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature," "Self-Reliance" & "Thoreau"  
Margaret Fuller, *The Great Lawsuit* (Selection)
- 6 **Due:** Minitheme #4  
Henry David Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government" & *Walden*  
(Chp. 2: "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For")  
Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" & "The Birth-Mark"
- 7 FILM: *Bartleby*
- 8 Herman Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener"
- 9 **Due:** Minitheme #6  
Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Selections)  
Fanny Fern, Select Essays
- 10 Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself"
- E **Due:** Final Essay

(NOTE: This schedule is subject to minor changes.)