

## English 2230: American Literature I

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Hours: M 1-3 pm, TF 10-11 am, W 5:30-6:30 pm, and by appt.

Fall 1998  
Section 1

### Course Description

According to the A.R.C.C. *1998-1999 Semester Catalog*, English 2230 “introduces students to the literature of the United States from the Colonial Period (c.a. 1500) through the Romantic Period (c.a. 1860). This course is strongly recommended for English, elementary education, history, and humanities majors, or anyone interested in becoming acquainted with American authors and literature” (112).

This first course in the two-part survey will cover major American literary movements, genres, and writers during the period from about 1600 to about 1865. In addition, we will look at some of the historical, social, and political forces that shaped the literature of the period and our perceptions of it. Readings will include a variety of genres—autobiography, journals, diaries, essays, poetry, and fiction—and works from writers of different genders, races, and religions will be included for a more comprehensive view of “American literature.” As we read, we will look at four major concerns of human beings as these ideas have been expressed in American literature. The focus is on the person in relation to the self, to society, to nature, and to the supernatural. Our goal will be to discover how a variety of people of different backgrounds and philosophies have stated their thoughts and feelings on these subjects. Hence, we will often study works of literature in pairs, using comparison and contrast analysis, to examine their similarities and differences.

### Course Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:

- Read, discuss, and interpret selected works of American literature from its beginnings to approximately 1865.
- Explain the three major literary periods from 1600 to 1865: the Colonial Age, the Age of Enlightenment, and the Age of Romanticism.
- Place selected American authors within one or more literary periods.
- Understand how the selected works of American literature studied reflect the characteristics and values of the people and times in which they were written.
- Understand the important historical events and socio-political movements from the 1600’s to the 1860’s.
- Explain the Puritan religious belief system, its vision, and its mission.
- Define and explain such 17<sup>th</sup> century concepts as Faith, Atonement, Evil, Nature, and Omnipotence.
- Define and explain such 18<sup>th</sup> century concepts as Nature, Reason, Compromise, Empiricism, Deism, Mechanism, Classicism, Art, Sublime, Noble Savage, and Gothic.
- Define and explain such 19<sup>th</sup> century concepts as Romanticism, Reason, Transcendentalism, Oversoul, Feeling, Correspondence, Self-Reliance, Nature, and Pantheism.
- Analyze and discuss specific works of literature using terms such as character, point of view, plot, structure, conflict, setting, theme, symbol, allegory, metaphor, simile, scansion, meters, feet, end rhyme, metonymy, synecdoche, onomatopoeia, and irony.
- Read selected works of American literature and present, through activities such as group discussion, journals, response papers, critical essays, reviews, and examinations, a personal interpretation and evaluation of the selected works of literature.
- Appreciate the ways in which literature helps us understand ourselves, other people, and the world around us.

### Required Text

George McMichael, et al. *Anthology of American Literature*. Vol. I. 6<sup>th</sup> edition. 1997.

## Requirements and Evaluation

**Quizzes (20%):** Short reading quizzes will be given randomly and unannounced; they will contain objective short-answer questions. These quizzes will be on the reading assigned for the day or from previous days, so be sure to keep up-to-date with your reading. Obviously, I will not give quizzes early, and missed quizzes cannot be made up under any circumstances since the answers are discussed immediately after the quizzes are collected.

**Journals (20%):** You will write and submit one journal entry each week. To receive credit, journal entries must be submitted on the day we discuss the assignment you have written about. Only one entry will be accepted each week, and late entries will not be accepted. Please see the journal assignment sheet for more details.

**Examinations (60%):** There will be four one-hour exams during the semester; each exam will be worth 15% of your grade. The exams may include identification, matching, short-answer, and short-essay types of questions. Later exams may refer to authors covered in earlier exams, and the fourth exam may contain a “comprehensive” essay question.

## Policies

**Attendance:** Since participation is so important to the success of this class (see note below), attendance is required. If you miss six (6) or fewer hours of class, you will receive the higher final grade in a borderline situation. If you miss more than eleven (11) hours of class (25% of the course), you will receive No Credit for the course—this is an English Department policy. It is **your** responsibility to notify me as soon as possible if you are absent due to a medical or family emergency.

**Incompletes:** Incompletes will only be granted to students who have a **documented** medical emergency in the final two weeks of the semester. These students must have completed the journals and the first three exams with an average grade of “C” or better, must not have missed more than 10 hours of class, **and** must demonstrate the ability and willingness to complete the work before the third week of the following semester. It is **your** responsibility to notify me as soon as possible if this scenario applies to you.

**Reading Log:** I strongly encourage you to keep a reading log or notebook for this class. In the log, you can keep track of the literature by writing lists, summaries, definitions, details, questions, and personal notes. I will never collect this reading log, but it can help you by providing material for class discussions and journal entries, and reminders for the examinations.

**Conferences:** Please see me during my office hours or schedule an appointment with me if you have questions or problems at any time during the semester. I am here to help.

**Plagiarism:** Knowingly presenting another person’s ideas or writing as your own without appropriate citation will result in an “F” for the course and notification of the appropriate college officials.

## A Note about Participation

In my experience, both as a student and as a teacher, the best literature classes are those which have stimulating and enjoyable discussions. We understand, enjoy, and appreciate literature more when we have an opportunity to discuss it, which is also active learning, as opposed to passively listening to lectures. For these reasons, small- and large-group discussions will be an important part of this class. (Of course, I will often need to provide you with information, but I will work hard to keep these lectures short.) If the discussions are good, this class will be both informative and enjoyable. A silent class, or a class filled with lectures, is too much work and no fun for anyone.

Since most classes will be a mixture of lecture and discussion, you will understand the lectures better and be more willing and able to participate in discussions if you are prepared for class. I expect that you will (1) prepare for each class by reading, thinking, and writing about the assigned readings; (2) attend each class; and (3) be willing to participate in small- and large-group discussions. Bring your books, notes, and journals with you each day, and volunteer to share your thoughts, feelings, ideas, opinions, and interpretations. Most importantly, bring your questions and don’t be afraid to ask them. There is no such thing as a bad question; often, others have the same question, they make excellent starting points for discussion, and they allow me to know what’s clear, what’s not, what intrigues you, and what frustrates you. As an incentive for active participation, the quality and quantity of your class participation will be considered if you have a borderline final grade.

**Note:** This syllabus and schedule are subject to change; changes will be announced in class.