

Course Guide

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English 277 American Literature I

Lewis-Clark State College
3 Semester-Hour Credits

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3 – Engl 277

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English 277 surveys representative works of American poetry, fiction, and nonfiction (personal journals, sermons, autobiographies, memoirs, and essays) written during the period of about 1600 to 1870. These works are grouped into nine categories on the basis of chronology, authorship, and literary technique and theme. Each of these nine groups of works forms an assignment or an exam. Students are asked to study each work in light of:

1. its intrinsic literary features,
2. its contribution to American literary history,
3. its reflection of outstanding "ideas" from the time
4. its concern with particular human experiences that may be viewed as universal to humankind.

The course aims at balancing the acquisition of knowledge about American literature and American cultural history with practice of the basic skills of literary analysis and criticism.

By successfully completing this course, you should gain:

- Knowledge of significant developments in American literary history, as well as how these developments relate to important cultural, social, economic, and political events of the period.
- Ability to read exemplary works of American literature with insight, understanding, empathy, and aesthetic appreciation.
- Ability to apply personal, historical, and critical perspectives to the understanding of individual literary works.
- Ability to identify a variety of literary genres and sub-genres, recognize their structural elements, and understand how these all contribute to literary meaning.
- Critical perspective on the "myths" of American culture and how these function in the human situations depicted in American literature.
- Sufficient control over the thinking processes of comprehension, interpretation, analysis, application, synthesis, and evaluation to write clear and convincing responses to a variety of critical questions, which address outcomes 1-5 above.

Assignments

Overview

Each assignment and exam preparation includes the following components:

- A set of assigned readings from the literature.
- Several questions requiring personal responses in a written journal.
- A brief critical perspective on the assigned author(s), written by the course developer.
- A set of micro-essay questions requiring critical responses to the literature.
- Additional assigned critical and historical readings from the text.


A list of definitions of key literary terms is also provided for you.

Each assignment and exam is made up of two basic activities: (1) participating in the experience offered by the literature and responding to it from your own personal perspective, i.e., reading and writing to and for yourself; (2) observing and re-conceptualizing the literature from a "critical" perspective, which is necessarily more detached, social, and intellectual, i.e., re-reading and writing to and for a broader audience. Both activities are entirely valid and useful, within their own domains. What is more important, though, is that they are mutually reinforcing. For a student to gain a full and lasting understanding of either an individual work or a body of related literary works, both levels of reading and responding must take place. The first provides the private dimension of meaning and the second, the

broader public dimension. Both dimensions of meaning are required before genuine understanding and knowledge are achieved.

Personal Journal

To facilitate your personal participation in the literature, you are expected to record your initial thoughts and feelings about the assignment in a Personal Journal. Several journal questions are provided with each assignment to help you focus these responses. Be frank and honest in your responses. The object is to discover just exactly how the selection affected you. Did it involve you? In what specific ways? To what degree? If it did not, what apparently inhibited that involvement? What can you say about why?

Your journal responses do not have to be of any certain length. They should, however, reveal a thoughtful and conscientious effort to answer the assigned questions. Submit your journals to  on the day of taking each exam. If your journal responses are conscientiously done, you can receive up to 12 points on your grade for each of the three exams. A thorough and thoughtful journal is thus critical to achieving an "A" grade on each of the exams (See Grading for details on grading policy).

Critical Reading Assignment

In the "critical" section of the assignment or exam, you are expected to shift from your personal perspective to a more detached, analytical, and evaluative perspective. Your role is now that of a "teacher" or "persuader", of someone writing from a position of understanding and insight. You are not writing to yourself now, but to an audience, one that either knows less about the topic than you do, or one whose view of the topic differs from your own. You may be asked to sort out an author's view on an issue and relate it to the view of another author. You may be asked to show how an author's ideas reflect religious, social, political, or philosophical views common to America of that time. Or you may be asked to evaluate the effectiveness of one author over another; or to defend or refute a claim, either adulatory or derogatory, about an author's work. In general, you are expected to assume a position and convince your audience that it is well reasoned and based on accurate evidence.

Micro-Essay Assignment

Each micro-essay should be planned as a single integrated paragraph. Your paragraph should be constructed around a controlling idea that is insightful, rather than obvious. Subordinate ideas should be clearly related to your main idea and develop its most significant aspects. Evidence (details or examples) from the literature should be used to support your argument, but used circumspectly. Do not quote at length to provide support. One or two short and succinct quotations are about all that can be used effectively in a 200-word paragraph. A carefully organized and clearly reasoned paragraph is the goal to strive for on each of your micro-essay answers.

Study Hints:

- Keep a copy of every assignment submitted.
- Complete all reading assignments.
- Set a schedule allowing for course completion one month prior to your personal deadline. An *Assignment Submission Log* is provided for this purpose.
- Web pages and URL links in the World Wide Web are continuously changing. Contact your instructor if you find a broken Web page or URL.

Refer to the **Course Rules** in Canvas for further details on assignment requirements and submission.

Exams

- You must wait for grades and comments on assignments prior to taking subsequent exams.
- For your instructor's exam guidelines, refer to your *Registration Confirmation Letter*.

Refer to *Grading* for specific information on assignment/exam points and percentages.

Grading

The course grade will be based upon the following considerations:

Students are expected to write several personal journal entries and four micro-essays on each assignment and exam. You should be prepared to respond to all of the questions on the exams.

Journal responses are mandatory. Journals must be submitted to Canvas on the day of taking the exam. Your journal entries up through the first exam are due on the day of taking exam 1 (the same procedure applies with exams 2 and 3). Your instructor will evaluate your journal responses and award you up to 12 points on your micro-essay exam score for exam 1. For example, if you earned the maximum possible score of 88 points on your four exam answers plus the maximum 12 points for your journal responses, your final score for exam 1 would be 100.

Since your journal comprises 12% of each possible exam score and since exam grades are weighted almost twice as heavily in computing the final course grade, completing a conscientious journal on each assignment can affect your course grade significantly.

The four micro-essay answers on each of the six assignments can earn up to 25 points each, for a possible total of 100 points. The four answers on Exams 1, 2, and 3 can earn up to 22 points each for a possible total of 88 points, plus 1-12 journal points.

There will be five micro-essay question options for each of the three exams. You should be prepared to respond to all of those five options on the exam. However, you will only be assigned four of the options to write on.

You may use your textbook as a resource during the exam, but no notes, outlines, or other materials are allowed. Your exam must be written on the pages that come with the exam. You will have 80 minutes to write your responses, which means you should plan on 20 minutes per question. See the following specific exam sections for further information.

Assignment grades are also weighted on a gradually ascending scale, so as to give you additional credit for improving your critical skills throughout the course sequence.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Assignment 1	8
Assignment 2	8
Assignment 3	9
Assignment 4	9
Assignment 5	10
Assignment 6	10
Total	54

Points and Letter Grades

A = 90-100 points
 B = 80-89 points
 C = 70-79 points
 D = 60-69 points
 F = below 60 points

<u>Exam</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Exam 1	14
Exam 2	15
Exam 3	17
Total	46

The final course grade is issued after all assignments and exams have been graded.

Academic Integrity

Acts of academic dishonesty, including cheating or plagiarism are considered a very serious transgression and may result in a grade of F for the course.

PLAGIARISM is the dishonest representation of language from another source as your own--phrases, sentences or paragraphs, without indicating in quotation marks and a citation in your text, what your source is, whether print or internet.

The penalty for plagiarism in this course is SEVERE. ONE example of your use of language from another source without acknowledging it in quotation marks and the citation of the source will earn you a failing grade in this course, NOTE: only one example is all it takes.

In case of such a determination, you will receive notice from your course instructor of a pending failing grade in the course. You will have 3 days to respond to this notice before your grade will become final.

Contacting Your Instructor

Instructor contact information is posted on your Canvas site under *Course Rules*.

<u>Assignment Submission Log</u>				
Assignment	Projected Date for Completion	Date Submitted	Grade Received	Cumulative Point Totals
1				
2				
It is time to take Exam 1.				
Exam 1				
3				
4				
It is time to take Exam 2.				
Exam 2				
5				
6				
It is time to take Exam 3.				
Exam 3				

Definitions of Basic Literary Terms

Plot - The sequence of major incidents, scenes, and events which make up the story.

Conflict - A clash of actions, ideas, emotions, or motives. This clash may be physical, psychological, or moral. The main character may be pitted against some other person or group of persons, against some external force (physical nature, society, or "fate"), or against some part of his/her own nature. Conflict may be simple or multiple; the character involved may be aware or unaware of his involvement.

Protagonist - The central character in the conflict, whether sympathetic or unsympathetic.

Antagonist - The force(s) arrayed against the protagonist, whether persons, things, conventions of society, or traits of his/her own character.

Character - "Persons" involved in the story. One can ask questions about their consistency, motivation, plausibility, simplicity, complexity. A *static* character is the same sort of person at the end of the story as he/she was at the beginning. A *developing* (or dynamic) character undergoes a permanent change in some aspect of his/her personality or way of looking at the world.

Theme - The central insight of the literary work. It is the story's unifying notion about life, whether stated or implied. To derive the theme of a story, one must ask what its central purpose is: what view of life underlies the story? What insight into life does it reveal?

Symbol - Something that means *more* than what it literally or objectively is. It may be an object, a person, a situation, or an action that is literally what it is in the story, but also suggests or implies other meanings as well. Symbols may reinforce and add to a story's meaning, or they may carry the meaning. Symbols are a way of adding meaning indirectly.

Narrative Voice - Literally the speaking voice telling the story. More complicated than point of view, this is the overall attitude that the speaker/narrator expresses toward the subject matter. This can vary from one or more of the following: completely detached (objective), authoritative, critical, ridiculing, ironic, humorous, ambivalent, ambiguous, or sympathetic.

Point of View - The capabilities of the speaker/narrator for "viewing" and /or presenting the subject matter. This may be all knowing (omniscient), or limited to the viewpoint of one (or more) characters (limited), or this may disappear entirely so that the reader is placed in the position of watching a movie or play (objective). The speaker/narrator may or may not speak for the author, and may or may not give reliable information to the reader.

Style - *How* a speaker or writer says what he/she says. A writer's style can be determined by looking at his/her choice of words (diction); sentence structure and syntax; figurative language (metaphor, simile, etc.); and patterns of rhythm and sound.

Irony - A contrast or opposition in which one side of the contrast in some way reverses, undermines, or mocks the other side. *Verbal* irony is the simplest type of irony; in this type there is a discrepancy between what is said and what is meant. In *dramatic* irony the contrast is between what a character says and what the reader knows to be true; this type of irony gives one perspective on the speaker or his expectations. In irony of *situation*, the discrepancy is between appearance and reality, or between

expectation and fulfillment, or between what is and what would seem appropriate. Like symbolism, irony makes it possible to generate meanings without stating them directly.

Lesson 1

Literature of Early America

Lesson Objectives

The purpose of the initial part of the lesson is to allow you to experience the literature firsthand and without a preconceived sense of historical and biographical context. The primary context at this stage should be your own personal experience. Please read the following selections without reference to the historical and biographical information about the period and the authors provided by your text.

To enhance your participation in the experiences related in these readings, you will need to respond to each selection in writing. Immediately following the reading assignment are two journal questions. After reading each selection, you should answer at least one of these questions. Answer both if possible. Keep these responses so that they can be submitted to Canvas on the day of taking the first exam for your journal points. You should also refer to these responses when you work on your required micro-essays. A conscientious effort on your journal will facilitate your success with the critical questions in this lesson.

Personal Reading Assignment

Captain John Smith	from	<i>"The General History of Virginia,"</i>	pages 43-54
		<i>"Powhatan's Discourse,"</i>	page 54
William Bradford	from	<i>"History of Plymouth Plantation,"</i>	pages 97-101
Thomas Morton	from	<i>"The New English Canaan,"</i>	pages 105-113
John Winthrop	from	<i>"The Journal of John Winthrop,"</i>	pages 115-125
Anne Bradstreet		poems	pages 154-176
Edward Taylor		poems	pages 194-200
Cotton Mather	from	<i>"The Wonders of the Invisible World,"</i>	
	and from	<i>"Magnalia Christi Americana,"</i>	pages 202-219
Samuel Sewall	from	<i>"The Diary of Samuel Sewall,"</i>	pages 221-234
Mary Rowlandson	from	<i>"A Narrative of the Captivity,"</i>	pages 237-252
John Woolman	from	<i>"The Journals of John Woolman,"</i>	pages 293-301
Jonathan Edwards		"Personal Narrative,"	pages 304-314
		"Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,"	pages 319-330

Journal Assignment

1. What experience(s) were familiar in this author's work? Were there experiences that were completely unfamiliar?
2. Describe your feelings or thoughts while reading each author. What were they after you had finished?

Lecture-Critical Perspective

American literature began with Seventeenth century reports of exploration, colonization, and settler encounters with a new land and its indigenous peoples. The accounts of these experiences form the roots of our nation's literature. These early colonists were mainly the Pilgrims and the Puritans, who settled in New England. They were religious reformers, committed to "purifying" the English church of its Roman elements, as well as to cleansing it of its loyalties to the British crown and its own bureaucratic

organization. To the Puritans, the Bible was the revealed word of God, and as such, a divine guide in religion, government, business, and daily life. From the Puritans' attempts to integrate spiritual and public life came America's traditions of the independence of individual conscience and the solidarity of a Christian community. The expression of these and other religious ideas was the major contribution of these literary pioneers.

Micro-Essay Assignment

Before beginning the first written assignment, refer to the *Course Rules* in Canvas for your instructor's assignment requirements. If emailing assignments to your instructor, please copy the ISI office at indepst@uidaho.edu.

Study each of the following critical questions. You must write on *four* of the eight questions (choices are indicated). Settle on which four questions you wish to answer. Then read each of the related selections from the critical reading assignment, which follows the questions, beginning with the general introduction, "The Literature of Colonial America." As you proceed through this part of your reading, you should *re-read each relevant selection* from the authors on the initial journal assignment. Take pertinent notes from *both* sets of readings. Next, draft an answer to each of the four questions, using your notes and the techniques of outlining and pre-writing (you may find it more effective to complete a draft answer to one question, before you go on to the reading and writing on the next question). Allow each response to "cook" for a day or two before re-drafting it into a single, "polished" micro-essay of a minimum of 200 words. Submit these final micro-essays to Canvas for grading and evaluation by the course instructor.

Questions

Unless otherwise indicated, *you* are the instructor and the other students in this class are your audience. You are thus addressing *them* when you answer each question.

Write on Question 1 or 2 (200 words).

1. Briefly describe the attitudes towards the Indians expressed by William Bradford and Mary Rowlandson. Then explain what specific Calvinist belief underlies this attitude.
2. You are a teacher in a reservation high school. The only data you have about the motives and behavior of Indians encountered by the Colonists are the accounts of Captain John Smith, William Bradford, and John Winthrop. With particular reference to the actions of Pocahontas and Powhatan in Smith's account compare/contrast their perspectives towards the Colonists. What justifications are there for the Indians responses to the Colonists' actions overall?

Write on Question 3 or 4 (200 words).

3. William Bradford's account of the incident involving Thomas Morton and Merrymount differs notably from Morton's own account. Your teenage daughter and son have taken opposing sides on who is telling the truth and your job is to try to settle their dispute. What is your argument on behalf of the "truth" in this matter?
4. Cotton Mather and Samuel Sewall were both apologists for Calvinist orthodoxy, during a time of increasing secularism in New England. Yet both also exhibited a certain "independence of conscience" with regard to the same orthodoxy. Describe the exact nature of this independence, using the assigned works of *one* of these authors.

Write on Question 5 or 6 (200 words).

5. Using "Upon the Burning of Our House" and two other Bradstreet Poems, analyze her subtle skepticism about her faith.
6. Using "Upon Wedlock and Death of Children" and two other poems, describe Taylor's attitude toward his faith.

Write on Question 7 or 8 (200 words).

7. Compare and contrast the expressions of "piety" evident in Woolman's "journal" and Edwards' "Personal Narrative." Make specific reference to Edwards' two "conversions."
8. Compare and contrast the beliefs in "freewill" in Woolman's "journal" and Edwards' "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

Critical Reading Assignment

Before beginning the first written assignment, refer to the *Course Rules* in Canvas for your instructor's assignment requirements. If emailing assignments to your instructor, please copy the ISI office at indepst@uidaho.edu.

"The Literature of Early America,"	pages 1-9
"Captain John Smith,"	pages 41-43
"William Bradford,"	pages 80-81
"Thomas Morton,"	pages 104-105
"John Winthrop,"	pages 114-115
"Anne Bradstreet,"	pages 152-154
"Edward Taylor,"	pages 184-185
"Cotton Mather,"	pages 200-202
"Samuel Sewall,"	pages 220-221
"Mary Rowlandson,"	page 235
"John Woolman,"	pages 292-293
"Jonathan Edwards,"	pages 300-303

Exam 1 Information

It is time for you to take Exam 1.

Prior to taking this exam:

- You must submit assignments 1–2 to your instructor before taking this exam.
- Please do not take this exam until you have received graded assignments 1–2 back from your instructor.
- Do not submit any subsequent assignments until you have taken this exam.
- Submit your journal assignment to Canvas on the day of taking the exam. The journal is worth a maximum of 12 points.

Exam components:

- This exam covers Cooper.
- This is an open-book only exam. Notes, outlines and other materials are not allowed.
- This exam consists of essay questions.
- This exam is worth 88 points.
- Time limit: 80 minutes
- 8 pages

Items to take to the exam:

- Textbook
- Photo identification
- V number
- Pen, pencil

Exam grades and comments:

- Refer to your *Registration Confirmation Letter* for how you will receive exam grades and comments from your instructor.
- Graded exams will not be returned to you.