

CUYAMACA COLLEGE
COURSE OUTLINE OF RECORD

English 231 – American Literature I

3 hours lecture, 3 units

Catalog Description

Study of American literature which explores literary works and their contexts from pre-colonial America until 1860. Reading selections may consist of poetry, short stories, novels, and nonfiction prose from major literary figures as well as marginalized or lesser-known authors. Students read, discuss, analyze, and interpret texts, with a focus on the relationships between literature, national identity, and social movements.

Prerequisite

Placement into ENGL 120 or ESL 122

Recommended Preparation

“C” grade or higher or “Pass” in ENGL 122 or equivalent

Entrance Skills

Without the following skills, competencies and/or knowledge, students entering this course will be highly unlikely to succeed:

- 1) Critically read and analyze college-level texts.
- 2) Write clear and well-organized essays that integrate sources in MLA format.

Course Content

The organization of the course content may be chronological, thematic, dialectic, etc. and will incorporate the following topics:

- 1) Introduction to American Literature
 - a. Overview of American literary history
 - b. Writing about literature; key concepts in literary studies
 - c. Literary canonicity and marginalization
- 2) Pre-Colonial and Early Colonial Narratives
 - a. Native American oral traditions
 - b. Early colonial journals and letters; may include travel writing, crime narratives, etc.
 - c. Puritan diaries, sermons, and poetry; responses to Puritanism
- 3) Enlightenment and Rationalist Literature
 - a. Political pamphlets and essays; early American political documents (e.g., The Federalist Papers)
 - b. Literature about nature, the natural world, science, and reason
 - c. The emergence of an American literature
 - d. Early African American poetry and feminist texts
- 4) Romanticism and Transcendentalism
 - a. Nature writing and philosophical essays
 - b. Gothic fiction and Dark Romanticism
 - c. American literature as a distinct national formation
 - d. Explorations of race, identity, and otherness in literary and cultural texts
- 5) Slave Narratives and Abolitionist Literature
 - a. First-hand accounts of slavery
 - b. Writings advocating for abolition and racial equality
 - c. Literature of the Antebellum South

- 6) Women's Voices in Early American Literature
 - a. Sentimental and domestic fiction
 - b. Women's poetry and letters
 - c. Early feminist texts
 - d. Intersections of gender, race, and class in women's writings
- 7) Class and Labor in American Literature
 - a. Early literature on labor organization and workers' rights
 - b. Industrialization in literature; representations of the Industrial Revolution
 - c. The intersections of immigration, labor, and class issues in American Literature
 - d. Critiques of capitalist structures and their impact on workers
- 8) Literatures of the American West and Borderlands
 - a. Frontier and expansion literature
 - b. Early Western narratives and travel writing
 - c. Writings by and about Native Americans
 - d. Depictions of cultural conflict and assimilation
 - e. Reflections on Mexican-American experiences and/or literary responses to the Mexican-American War
- 9) Antebellum and Pre-Civil War Literature
 - a. Writings reflecting social and political tensions
 - b. Literature and social change

Course Objectives

Students will be able to:

- 1) Utilize vocabulary necessary for engaging in thoughtful analysis of the assigned literature in class discussion and written assignments.
- 2) Describe the major literary periods in the United States from pre-colonial America until 1860.
- 3) Describe various literary genres and their common elements.
- 4) Identify the literal, symbolic, and inferred meanings of prose, poetry, and/or plays in class discussions and in written analyses.
- 5) Situate literary texts in their various historical, political, literary, and cultural contexts and discuss how those contexts inform their meanings, values, and roles.
- 6) Discuss how authors use, resist, and alter conventions of genre to inform representations of key concepts, subjects, and themes in assigned literature.
- 7) Account for intersectional formations such as race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability, religion, national identity, etc. in assigned readings.
- 8) Write critical analyses of the literature by making a claim (thesis) and supporting it with specific evidence from the text, documented in MLA format.
- 9) Evaluate the roles of literary and cultural production in formations of national identity, social movements, and debates over ideologies, customs, and norms.

Method of Evaluation

A grading system will be established by the instructor and implemented uniformly. Grades will be based on student achievement of the course objectives and outcomes, as determined by multiple measurements of evaluation and/or student self-assessment.

- 1) Summaries
- 2) Annotated bibliographies
- 3) Reader responses, journals, and/or notes
- 4) Quizzes on assigned texts
- 5) Analysis, interpretation, and discussion of literature
- 6) Student reports and/or presentations on selected topics, texts, or authors
- 7) Contributions to group activities and/or workshops
- 8) Group and individual projects
- 9) Evidence-based analytical essays (in MLA format) that may require outside research
- 10) Reflection activities in which students examine their own learning and writing processes

Special Materials Required of Student

None

Minimum Instructional Facilities

Smart classroom

Method of Instruction

- 1) Lectures and presentations by the instructor, visiting writers, and/or speakers
- 2) Facilitation of student analysis, interpretation, and discussion of literature
- 3) Student-led inquiry into relevant literature and theoretical frameworks via discussion groups, presentations, and other projects
- 4) Collaborative small group activities
- 5) Whole class discussion of sample writing (student and/or professional), peer workshops, and instructor-student conferences to help students successfully complete assignments
- 6) Multi-modal texts (i.e., films, short video content, podcasts, social media, and audio clips), including culturally relevant and diverse interpretations

Out-of-Class Assignments

- 1) Read and take notes on assigned texts.
- 2) Maintain journals or other types of informal writing.
- 3) Research various assigned texts and/or authors.
- 4) Create content for presentations, projects, or other assignments.
- 5) Participate in workshops, peer reviews, or other collaborative assignments.
- 6) Write evidence-based analytical essays, annotated bibliographies, and other shorter assignments.
- 7) Attend literary arts events and readings on campus, online, and in the greater literary community.

Texts and References

- 1) Required (representative examples):
 - a. Levine, Robert S. and Sandra M. Gustafson, editors. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: Beginnings to 1865*. Shorter Tenth Edition. W.W. Norton, 2022.
 - b. Belasco, Susan and Linck Johnson, editors. *Bedford Anthology of American Literature, Vol. 1*. 2nd edition. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013.
- 2) Supplemental: Novel(s) chosen by instructor

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Use literary terminology to discuss, interpret, analyze, and synthesize key concepts and elements in early American literature.
- 2) Create evidence-based literary analyses demonstrating close reading and interpretive skills, logical reasoning, and argumentative strategies.
- 3) Evaluate how literature informs, reinforces, challenges, alters, resists, or otherwise influences formations of American national identity and related ideologies.