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Office Hours:
M/TH 1:30-2:30pm
and by appointment

English 39500-01: American Literature Origins to the Civil War
M/TH 2:45-4:00pm | Room 509 HW

The Puritan settlers came to New England with the conviction that God had sent them on an “errand in the wilderness.” Their encounters with the landscape and the indigenous populations produced an intense and varied religious experience. The diversity of American religious experience expanded through the Enlightenment and revolution, leading to 19th Century attempts to balance religious virtue with pragmatic principles. We will examine our religious and political origins through the Puritan ethic and search for truth, as well as natural and political “wildernesses” and the desire for self-definition in 19th Century American literature before the Civil War.

Required Texts

The Norton Anthology of American Literature (Volume A, 8th ed.) {Norton}
Hope Leslie by Catharine Maria Sedgwick {Penguin}
The Last of the Mohicans by James Fenimore Cooper {Penguin}
Moby-Dick by Herman Melville {Norton}
Twelve Years a Slave by Solomon Northrup {any edition}
Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl by Harriet Jacobs {Norton or Modern Library Classics}

Recommended Texts

The Norton Anthology of American Literature (Volume B, 8th ed.) {Norton}
Walden, Civil Disobedience and Other Writings by Henry D. Thoreau (3rd ed.) {Norton}

Course Requirements

20% Class participation (attendance, contributions to discussions, reading quizzes, group work)
30% Blog posts and comments (4 posts, 8 comments)
20% Midterm paper (4-5 pages)
30% Final paper (8-9 pages)

Attendance Policy

Attendance is important to your success in this class. If absent, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed. If you miss four (4) or more class meetings, you will likely fail the course. Punctuality ensures that you will hear announcements at the beginning of class. Lateness is disruptive, and after reading quizzes have been collected, lateness will count as one absence.

Academic Integrity

The college officially states: “Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.” My motto: No replication without representation. If you plagiarize, you will fail the course.

Statement of Accommodation

In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical and/or Learning) consult the Office of Access ABILITY located in Room E1124 to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance please call (212- 772-4857)/TTY (212- 650- 3230). Please contact me by email or in person outside of class if you require accommodation.

Office Hours

My office hours and email address are stated above. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask me. I prefer to schedule meetings in advance and I will try to make myself available to meet at other times on Mondays and Thursdays if my office hours conflict with your class schedule. If you find yourself in a position that requires asking for an extension on a deadline, deadlines can sometimes be made flexible, though an extension is not guaranteed.

~ **Schedule of Readings** ~
[Subject to Change]

First Encounters in the Wilderness

Aug 27: Syllabus & *The New World* (2005)

Aug 31: Las Casas, *The Very Brief Relation of the Devastation of the Indies* [excerpt in Norton]

Smith, *The General History of Virginia* [chapter 2, *The Third Book*]

Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation* [I, IV, VII, X in *Book One* & XI in *Book Two*]

Sep 3: Thoreau, "Walking" & Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* [1, 4 & 5]

[Sep 7: No Class] **First Blog Post Due**

Sep 10: Rowlandson, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*

Mather, "A Notable Exploit: *Dux Foemina Facti*"

Thoreau, *Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* [excerpt]

Varieties of "American" Experience

[Sep 14: No Class] **Second Blog Post Due Sep 15th by midnight**

Sep 17: Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" & "The Case of Anne Hutchinson"

Bradstreet, "The Prologue," "Contemplations," "To My Dear Children"

Wigglesworth, "The Day of Doom"

Taylor, "Meditation 38" (First Series), "Meditation 26" (Second Series)

Sep 21: Edwards, “Personal Narrative,” “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”

Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* [excerpt]

Sep 24: Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* [III & IX]

Paine, *Common Sense* [excerpt in Norton]

Freneau, “On Mr. Paine’s Rights of Man,” “On the Religion of Nature”

Wheatley, “On Being Brought from Africa...,” “To His Excellency General...”

Encounters Re-imagined

Sep 28: Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie*

Oct 1: *Hope Leslie* & Brougham, *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas*

Oct 5: *Hope Leslie* **Midterm Papers Due**

Oct 8: Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*

[Oct 12: No Class] **Third Blog Post Due**

Oct 15: *The Last of the Mohicans*

Oct 19: *The Last of the Mohicans*

Oct 22: Hawthorne, “The Maypole of Merry Mount,” “Young Goodman Brown”

Atwood, “Hello, Martians. Let Moby-Dick Explain”

Nature and the American Renaissance

Oct 26: Melville, *Moby-Dick*

Oct 29: *Moby-Dick*

Nov 2: *Moby-Dick*

Nov 5: *Moby-Dick*

Nov 9: Emerson, *Nature*

Nov 12: *Nature* & James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* [excerpt]

Nov 16: Thoreau, *Walden*

Nov 19: *Walden*

Whitman, “Song of Myself” [excerpt]

Fourth Blog Post Due Nov 22nd by midnight

Emancipation, Civil War, Domestic Disobedience

Nov 23: Thoreau, "Slavery in Massachusetts"

[Nov 26: Thanksgiving Break]

Nov 30: Northrup, *Twelve Years* **Email title, intro paragraph, and 2-3 sources for paper**

Dec 3: *Twelve Years*

Dec 7: Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Dec 10: *Incidents*

Dec 14: **Final Papers Due**

Participation

Come to every class with either a short passage you would like to discuss or a well-formed question about the reading to facilitate class discussion. I encourage open but *respectful* discussion; thus, derogatory comments, including, but not limited to, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, etc., will not be tolerated both in class and on the class blog.

Blog Post Prompts & Comments

30% of your grade will be determined by your four (4) blog posts and eight (8) comments on peers' posts: <https://americanorigins.wordpress.com/>. In the first week of class I will invite you to the blog and help you set up a WordPress account, which is free. Do NOT pay a fee for your WordPress account. Please come to me with any questions you have about the blog. The blog will be available to the public, so be conscientious as you write your posts. Don't include any personal information, don't post explicit content, and refrain from using profane language.

Each blog post must be 300-600 words and each comment must be 100+ words in order to count toward the total four (4) blog posts and eight (8) comments. You may post additional comments but it is not required. Each post has a prompt and deadline. Late work will be given half credit. After each deadline, you are responsible for commenting on two (2) of your peers' posts, preferably before the next class meeting. This is the *recommended* order:

Blog Post 1 (Due Sep 7): What does it mean to be "American"? Are you "American"?

Blog Post 2 (Due Sep 15): Go on a nature walk for at least one hour and write about it.

Blog Post 3 (Due Oct 12): Find artwork inspired by nature or American history, or a historical figure like Sacagawea and draw connections between your discoveries and our class.

Blog Post 4 (Due Nov 22): "Choose your own adventure."

Midterm & Final Papers

Your midterm (4-5 pages, due Oct 5) and final (8-9 pages, due Dec 14) papers can be written using MLA or Chicago Style formatting to cite all of your sources. To avoid plagiarism, I recommend you also cite any works consulted. Your final paper should draw from 2-3 secondary sources. I highly recommend you meet with me during office hours in late November or early December to discuss your final paper. Writing prompts available upon request.