

HL2027 / Early American Literature  
Wednesdays, 14:30-17:30 / HSS-TR+5  
Professor Christopher Trigg  
[cptrigg@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:cptrigg@ntu.edu.sg)



### Description

The European settlement and colonization of the Americas created the global world of the modern era. In Peru, Mexico, Haiti Barbados, Virginia, New England, and New York, new forms of political, religious, commercial, and cultural life emerged. The modern concept of racial difference also first developed in the Americas, through contact with indigenous peoples and the importation of slaves from Africa.

This class introduces you to the literature produced in and about England's North American Colonies (including Virginia, Massachusetts Bay, and Maryland). Our readings explore the challenges posed by living, working, and thinking in colonial and revolutionary America.

With adventurer playwright Aphra Behn, students will reflect on the transformative promise of the New World. How did Virginia offer ordinary men and women the chance to live like royalty? In the life of Olaudah Equiano, the class will encounter the other side of the colonial enterprise: how could a man of royal descent cope with being sold into slavery? Mary Rowlandson's account of her captivity amongst the Wampanoag finds proof of God's supervising plan in the midst of bitter hardship. Reading Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, students will consider how a man from the same New-England Puritan culture could come to consider himself the master of his own destiny.

Covering a wide variety of literary forms and genres, this course serves as a solid foundation for further study of American literature, as well as seventeenth- and eighteenth- century British & Irish literature. You will also develop important skills in textual editing and the use of online archives.

### Required Texts

Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette* (Dover - [0486796191](#))

All other texts posted online

### Assessment

Participation and Preparation 10%

Bibliographic Exercise 15%

Term Paper 25%

Final Exam 50%

### Participation and Preparation

Each Friday, two discussion questions will be posted via LAMs. Students must write brief answers to both of these questions, and post them online by 12 noon on Tuesdays, the day before class. Answering these questions is compulsory.

### Bibliographic Exercise

Working in small groups, students will identify an interesting (and brief) early American text from an online database. They will then produce an edition of the text, including a short introduction, a bibliographic record, and any footnotes necessary for the comprehension of a general reader. Students will be able to conduct most of the work for this exercise during class on September 18<sup>th</sup>.

### Late Penalties

Late work submitted without an approved extension will be penalized one half-mark per day late – an A paper submitted one day late would drop to an A-, etc.

### Plagiarism

Please see the School of Humanities' statement on plagiarism [here](#).

### Seminar Schedule

1. 14<sup>th</sup> August

#### The Idea of America

William Strachey, "To the Lords of the Councell of Virginea" (1612)

2. 21<sup>st</sup> August

#### Colonial Virginia: Planters, Rebels, & Indians

Aphra Behn, [The Widow Ranter](#) (1689).

3. 27<sup>th</sup> August

#### Colonial Massachusetts: Puritan Ideology, Puritan Faith

John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" (1630).

Anne Bradstreet, Selected Poems.

4. 4<sup>th</sup> September

#### The Captivity Narrative

Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (1682).

5. 11<sup>th</sup> September

#### The Salem Witch Trials

Deodat Lawson, *A Brief and True Narrative* (1692).

\*Cotton Mather, [Wonders of the Invisible World](#) (1692).

6. 18<sup>th</sup> September

#### The Book in the Atlantic World

Bibliographic Exercise.

7. 25<sup>th</sup> September

#### Slaves and Slave Holders

Samuel Sewall, [The Selling of Joseph](#) (1700).

John Saffin, *A Brief and Candid Answer* (1701).

Cotton Mather, [The Negro Christianized](#) (1706).

Recess -----

8. 9<sup>th</sup> October

The Black Atlantic: Olaudah Equiano

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789).

9. 16<sup>th</sup> October

Commercial Culture

Ebenezer Cooke, *The Sot-Weed Factor* (1708).

**In-Class Peer Review Session——bring draft of term paper.**

10. 23<sup>rd</sup> October

New Puritans: Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin

Jonathan Edwards, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (1741).

Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography I & II* (1793).

11. 30<sup>th</sup> November

Writing the Revolution: Jefferson and Freneau

Thomas Jefferson, *Draft of the Declaration of Independence* (1776).

Philip Freneau, “On the Emigration to America and Peopling the Western Country” (1784); “The Indian Burying Ground” (1788); “To the Americans of the United States” (1797).

12. 6<sup>th</sup> November

Early American Novels: *The Coquette*

Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette* (1797).

13. 13<sup>th</sup> November

Revision and Exam Preparation——**term paper due in class.**