

HL1006 Introduction to American Literature

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Course Description

This survey course examines how literature shapes and challenges the understanding of America as a land, a nation, a multicultural community, and a set of sociopolitical ideals. We will read classic texts from the seventeenth century to the present, developing our understanding of four interrelated concerns: what separates American culture from its European roots; how the American land informs American experience and identities; how the U.S. participates in world politics and globalization; and how to address these issues through establishing a distinctive, self-conscious national literature. Featuring writers from different gender, racial, and cultural backgrounds, the course further covers writings of various forms, including fiction, poetry, essay, and film, to consider how stylistic conventions interact with individual ingenuity to create hegemonic narratives and counternarratives.

Textbook requirements:

Please purchase Willa Cather's *My Ántonia* (Oxford University Press). All other readings will be provided as PDFs on NTULearn. Please also acquire your own access to the film in Week 8.

Weekly Schedule (this schedule is subject to change)

Week 1: Constructing and Deconstructing American Mythologies

Crèvecoeur, "What is an American?"; Gertrude Stein, "Introduction" from *The Making of Americans*

The American Man

Week 2: Puritan Values

Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"; Benjamin Franklin, excerpt from *The Autobiography*

Week 3: Dream

Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"; Washington Irving, "Rip Van Winkle"

Week 4: Mania

Edgar Allan Poe, “The Tell-Tale Heart”; “The Raven”; “The Philosophy of Composition”;
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper”

The American Nature

Week 5: Nature and Self

Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself”

Week 6: Beauty and Order

Ralph Waldo Emerson, excerpt from “Nature”; Emily Dickinson, selection
(Midterm Paper Due)

Week 7: Naturalism and Regionalism

Sarah Orne Jewett, excerpt from *The Country of the Pointed Firs*; Stephen Crane, “The Open Boat”

Recess Week (No Class)

The American Nation

Week 8: The Civil War

Mark Twain, “The Private History of a Campaign that Failed”; Film: *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), dir. D. W. Griffith

Week 9: The Frontier

Willa Cather, *My Ántonia*

Week 10: The Frontier (continue)

Willa Cather, *My Ántonia*

The Global World

Week 11: The World Wars

Ezra Pound, “Hugh Selwyn Mauberley”; Ernest Hemingway, selections from *In Our Time*

Week 12: Race

Zora Neale Hurston, “How It Feels to Be Colored Me”; James Baldwin, “Notes of a Native Son”

Week 13: Immigration

Maxine Hong Kingston, “No Name Woman”; Jhumpa Lahiri, “Sexy”
(Final Paper Due)