ENG 253
SURVEY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE: EARLY

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Class Website: LBCC home/Dept & Programs/Instructor Webpages/English/Havenick
Office Hours: Mon and Wed: 1:00 – 3:00
CRN: 27075, Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00 – 12:20 NSH210


Prerequisite: ENG 253 is the first of a 3-course sequence in American Literature that may be taken alone or in sequence this year with ENG254 Winter 2008 and ENG255 Spring 2008. (Note: the same Harper text will be used in all 3 quarters in the sequence.)

“Over and over again I am amazed by the treasure trove that American literature is . . . work which bears and invites re-readings, which motions to future readings as well as contemporary ones, (which) implies a shareable world and an endlessly flexible language.” Toni Morrison Playing in the Dark 1992

Course Description:
Welcome to our study of Early American Literature. They say that in order to understand the meaning of something you have to go back to the beginning. In ENG253, we’ll go back to the beginnings of America and explore literature through Native American stories, European exploration writings, the writings of Colonial America (1620–1776) and the Literature of the New Republic (1776—1836). Throughout our study, we’ll appreciate these works in relation to their historical and philosophical backgrounds, in relation to their authors, in relation to other literature and even in relation to other art forms. I encourage you to recognize your own important place as world citizens of the 21st century in understanding the literature of this country and its peoples.

Learning Outcomes: When you successfully complete ENG253, you should be able to:
- Read, write, and talk critically and insightfully about American Literature.
- Recognize literature’s place in American culture and history.
- Demonstrate how American Literature enhances our contemporary selves/cultural awareness and creativity.
- Write and speak confidently about your own and others’ ideas regarding American Literature.
Discussion/Participation (60 points) Plan to prepare well before class and to participate in readings, activities, and discussions during class. Each week, you’ll be responsible for discussion leads in both small and large groups.

Weekly Writings (100 points) You’ll be gathering your responses to weekly readings in a focused writing each week. These assignments, which are designed for you to reflect on and apply what you are learning, must be word-processed (one full page, single-spaced) and turned in on time and will be evaluated on the thoroughness and quality of your response. (Full Credit = turned in on time, represents clear understanding and critical thinking, well-developed / Partial Credit: not turned in on time, or does not represent a clear understanding or clear critical thinking, or is not well developed)

Take Home Final Essay (100 points)

Research Presentation: Oral presentation/project with written notes submitted (40 points). Please help the class in imagining and understanding the history, culture, and/or issues which concern the topic that you have chosen (e.g. witchcraft; abolition of slavery; beginnings of the republic). This project gives you the opportunity to be creative, analytic, and collaborative. This will work best for the class if you schedule your presentation on the day that our class will be focusing on your topic. (Plan to present for up to – but no more than – 15 minutes.)

Tentative Calendar

Week One: September 25 – 27 “The Literature of the New World”: Overview and Native American Narratives

Week Two: October 2 – 4: Christopher Columbus, De Vaca, Powhatan, John Smith

Week Three: October 9 – 11: “Colonial America” William Bradford and Anne Bradstreet

Week Four: October 16 – 18: “Colonial America” Witchcraft, Anne Hutchinson and Mary Rowlandson

Week Five: October 23 – 25: Benjamin Franklin and Phyllis Wheatley


Week Seven: Nov 6 – 8: Oloudah Equiano and Slavery

Week Eight: Nov 13 – 15: Washington Irving and Noah Webster

Week Nine: Nov 20 – 22 (Thanksgiving): Cooper

Week Ten: Nov 27 – 29: Presentations

Succeeding in this class will require that you have college-level writing and reading skills (write at the WR121 level). If you have not yet taken WR121 (or aren’t taking it this term), please see me.