



English 203 **Studies in American Literature**

Fall 2011
Section 00
MWF 10-10:50 a.m.
Oddfellows 105B

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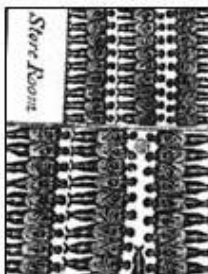


These volumes are so far from being intended as a substitute for genuine history, that the ambition of the writer would be fully gratified if, by this work, any of our young countrymen should be stimulated to investigate the early history of their native land.

So concludes the preface of Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in Massachusetts*, the first novel we will read in this course and one that will provide a touchstone for us throughout the semester. Our goal will be, in part, "to investigate the early history of [our] native land" (or, if the United States happens not to be your country of birth, the early history of the nation in which you now reside). Much more so, however, we will be investigating how American literature has helped to construct and reconstruct a narrative of national history, one that helps us ("our young countrymen," Sedgwick calls them; our young countrywomen, too, I will add) to imagine a relationship between ourselves and our national predecessors—our "Founders," as we may or may not wish to call them.



To do this, we will focus on two colonial settlements that have since been interpreted (in literature, film, popular history, and other forms of culture) as sites of national origin, sites at which "America" itself may be said to have been born. The first of these is Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in the New World and the place that furnishes us one of our earliest national myths, the Pocahontas story, as well as one of our original sins, slavery. The second is Massachusetts, the most important setting in the story of early American "freedom" yet also the site of the first wars to exterminate natives. The course will thus provide you some sense of U.S. literary history. More than this, however, it aims to provide you a sense of U.S. literary *historicity*: a sense of how works of the imagination both reflect the historical moments at which they were produced and contribute to an ongoing, never settled, and always charged set of debates concerning who "we" are, what our "early history" represents, and to whom our "native land" belongs.



Required Texts All texts (except for those uploaded to Sakai) are available at the Campus Center bookstore. If you do not already own copies of the texts ordered for this course, buy the editions listed below. If you happen already to own a different edition of a text and do not wish to purchase another, check with me to make sure your edition is acceptable.



Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie* (Rutgers)
Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (Penguin)
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Evangeline and Selected Tales and Poems* (Signet Classics)
Walt Whitman, *The Complete Poems* (Penguin)
Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (Penguin)
Suzan-Lori Parks, *The Red Letter Plays* (Theatre Communications Group)
Sherman Alexie, *Indian Killer* (Grove)
Toni Morrison, *A Mercy* (Vintage)

Course schedule Tentative and subject to change

Fri. 9/2	Introduction and Course Overview	
Mon. 9/5	Smith, from <i>The General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles</i> (Sakai)	
Wed. 9/7	Winthrop, from “A Modell of Christian Charity” and <i>The Journal of John Winthrop</i> (Sakai)	
Fri. 9/9	<i>Class does not meet; work instead on paper #1 and begin reading Hope Leslie</i>	
Mon. 9/12	Sedgwick, <i>Hope Leslie</i> , Preface-vol. 1, ch. 3 (pp. 1-40)	Paper 1 due
Wed. 9/14	Sedgwick, <i>Hope Leslie</i> , vol. 1, chs. 4-7 (pp. 41-94)	
Fri. 9/16	Sedgwick, <i>Hope Leslie</i> , vol. 1, chs. 8-12 (pp. 95-169)	
Mon. 9/19	Sedgwick, <i>Hope Leslie</i> , vol. 2, chs. 1-5 (pp. 173-235)	
Wed. 9/21	Sedgwick, <i>Hope Leslie</i> , vol. 2, chs. 6-9 (pp. 236-294)	
Fri. 9/23	Sedgwick, <i>Hope Leslie</i> , vol. 2, chs. 10-15 (pp. 295-353)	
Mon. 9/26	Hawthorne, <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> , chs. 1-3 (pp. 45-64; “The Custom House” is optional)	
Wed. 9/28	Hawthorne, <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> , chs. 4-7 (pp. 65-95)	
Fri. 9/30	Hawthorne, <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> , chs. 8-12 (pp. 96-138)	
Mon. 10/3	Hawthorne, <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> , chs. 13-17 (pp. 139-173)	
Wed. 10/5	Hawthorne, <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> , chs. 18-Conclusion (pp. 174-228)	
Fri. 10/7	<i>Class does not meet; instead we will schedule smaller-group visits to the Pelletier Library’s Special Collections room</i>	
Mon. 10/10	Longfellow, <i>The Courtship of Miles Standish</i> , sections I-IV (pp. 178-200)	Paper 2 due*
Wed. 10/12	Longfellow, <i>The Courtship of Miles Standish</i> , sections V-IX (pp. 201-227)	
Fri. 10/14	Dickinson, “God is a distant—stately Lover,” “Some keep the Sabbath going to Church,” “The Bible is an antique Volume,” “A word made Flesh is seldom,” “The Brain—is wider than the Sky,” “‘Heaven’ is what I cannot reach!” “I never felt at Home—Below,” “I cautious, scanned my little life,” “Savior! I’ve no one else to tell,” “I never saw a moor,” “God permits industrious Angels” (Sakai)	
Mon. 10/17	Fall Break	
Wed. 10/19	Fall Break	
Fri. 10/21	Dickinson, “I’m nobody? Who are you?” “The Soul selects her own Society,” “He fumbles at your Soul,” “I gave myself to Him,” “I like a look of Agony,” “I’m ‘wife’—I’ve finished that,” “One Sister have I in our house,” “Wild nights! Wild nights!” “Did the harebell loose her girdle,” “To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee” (Sakai)	
Mon. 10/24	Dickinson, “My life had stood—a Loaded Gun” (Sakai)	
Wed. 10/26	Whitman, from <i>Song of Myself</i> , sections 1-10 (ll. 1-198)	
Fri. 10/28	Whitman, from <i>Song of Myself</i> , sections 11-21 (ll. 199-447)	
Mon. 10/31	Whitman, from <i>Song of Myself</i> , sections 22-52 (ll. 448-1346)	
Wed. 11/2	Twain, <i>Pudd’nhead Wilson</i> , “A Whisper to the Reader”—ch. 8 (53-110)	Paper 3 due*
Fri. 11/4	Twain, <i>Pudd’nhead Wilson</i> , chs. 9-16 (111-176)	

Mon. 11/7	Twain, <i>Pudd'nhead Wilson</i> , chs. 17-Conclusion (177-226)
Wed. 11/9	Twain, <i>Those Extraordinary Twins</i> (229-303)
Fri. 11/11	Alexie, <i>Indian Killer</i> , part I, chs. 1-5 (pp. 3-54)
Mon. 11/14	Alexie, <i>Indian Killer</i> , part I, chs. 6-21 (pp. 55-153)
Wed. 11/16	Alexie, <i>Indian Killer</i> , part II, chs. 1-13 (pp. 157-223)
Fri. 11/18	Alexie, <i>Indian Killer</i> , part II, chs. 14-26 (pp. 225-296)
Mon. 11/21	Alexie, <i>Indian Killer</i> , part III, chs. 1-31 (pp. 299-420) and "How to Write the Great American Indian Novel" (Sakai)
Wed. 11/23	Thanksgiving Break
Fri. 11/25	Thanksgiving Break
Mon. 11/28	Parks, <i>Fucking A</i> , part I (pp. 113-184)
Wed. 11/30	Parks, <i>Fucking A</i> , part II (pp. 185-221)
Fri. 12/2	Parks, <i>Fucking A</i> continued (no additional reading)
Mon. 12/5	Morrison, <i>A Mercy</i> (pp. 3-41)
Wed. 12/7	Morrison, <i>A Mercy</i> (pp. 42-83)
Fri. 12/9	Morrison, <i>A Mercy</i> (pp. 84-136)
Mon. 12/12	Morrison, <i>A Mercy</i> (pp. 137-196)
Wed. 12/14	Morrison, <i>A Mercy</i> continued (no additional reading)

Paper 4 due

Course policies and procedures

Contacting me In addition to my regular office hours, I am available for appointments. You will need to e-mail or talk to me before or after class to arrange one. I tend to do most of my e-mailing in the morning and early afternoon. I cannot be counted upon to check e-mail during the evening, though, so if you're wanting to correspond about an upcoming paper, do not wait until the evening before it's due to contact me.

Readings You should complete the assigned reading before each class and be ready to discuss it. Longer readings are divided into sections, and you are responsible only for those pages assigned for that day.

To borrow a line from a great teacher of mine, you should also think of reading as a contact sport. Active reading requires writing, so be sure to mark your text, noting specific passages, questions, etc. you would like to discuss in class.

Attendance and participation The success of the course depends on the enthusiastic participation of each and every member. I thus expect you to arrive to every class having completed the assigned reading and prepared yourself to contribute to class discussion. Come with responses to the questions I may have posed during the class before. Come also with questions and comments of your own—and, more generally, with a willingness to involve yourself in the give-and-take of that day's discussion. I do a fair amount of preparation to ensure productive discussions, but my favorite classes are inevitably those that assume lives of their own (which is to say, those in which students take the lead and work collaboratively to address the issues they find most compelling).

You may wish to e-mail or meet with me before or after class if there are specific issues you would like to discuss. I consider these forms of participation, too, though they cannot entirely substitute for active in-class participation.

Your participation grade (15% of your final grade) will reflect how well you make these contributions. The student who does not miss class and comes always prepared, always willing to contribute insights of his or her own, and always willing to respond thoughtfully to the questions and comments of others will receive a grade in the "A"

range. The student who does not miss class but contributes less frequently will receive a “B.” The student who misses class routinely (four or five unexcused absences) will receive a “C,” as will the student who shows up but participates infrequently and/or unpreparedly. The student who receives a “D” participation grade likely has six unexcused absences. The student who has seven or more unexcused absences simply fails the course.

Excused absences generally involve family emergencies, illness, or activities related to other collegiate commitments (athletics, e.g., or the occasional field trip required by another course). Excused absences do not generally involve personal travel plans; if your ride home for fall break necessitates that you leave campus a day early, you do so at the expense of an unexcused absence. In the case of illness, you are required to provide a doctor’s note. Should you miss class for any reason, you are responsible for knowing what went on, including any changes to the syllabus or revisions to assignments.

Papers You will write three papers for this course, one short (3 pp.), two longer (5-6 pp.). You will have the option of writing four papers. Here is how this will work. Everyone will write paper #1, due 9/12 and worth 10 percent of your final grade. Everyone will also write paper #4, due 12/14 and worth 20 percent of your final grade. For paper #2 (10/10; 20%) and paper #3 (11/2; 20%), you may write *either* or *both* papers. If you write one, that one counts toward your final grade. If you write both, the better of your two papers counts toward your final grade.

We will discuss later what constitutes a successful paper, and I will provide you a handout that outlines my expectations and explains what in my book separates “A” from “B” from “C” work, etc. Handouts for papers 2, 3, and 4 will arrive at least two weeks before their due dates. The handout for paper 1 will arrive on Mon., 9/5.

Weekly reading quizzes You will be quizzed often, usually on Fridays, on the assigned reading for the week. These will be brief in-class assignments, and they will show me that you are keeping up with the reading. They will also help us to launch into lectures and discussions. Some may ask you to identify specific passages or answer questions based on the assigned reading. Others may be more conceptual: I might ask you to comment on the importance of a particular character or key idea, for example, or I may ask you compare the current text with an earlier one. Regardless of the question, the answer should be *detailed*. You will want to show me that you have read the assigned material carefully, looking up words and historical references with which you are unfamiliar. I want to see evidence that you have read the assignment completely, thoroughly, and thoughtfully.

If you miss a quiz because of an excused absence, you will be allowed to make it up; it will be your responsibility to contact me and arrange a time outside of class to take the make-up. You will also be able to drop your lowest quiz grade. We will take a total of 11.

Quizzes will normally commence at the beginning of a class period; if you arrive late, you may miss part or all of the quiz. (Note: There will be no quiz during weeks 1 or 2. Your first quiz will be Fri., 9/16).

Exams There will be no midterm or final exam for this course. The weekly quizzes will take the place of exams and provide some objective measure that you’re keeping up with the reading.

Plagiarism Article III, section 3 of the Allegheny College Honor Code defines plagiarism as “using the ideas or words of another without citing the sources from which the ideas or words are taken.” We will devote a portion of an upcoming class to discussing plagiarism and how to avoid it. Know now simply that I take it very seriously, that it will result in an “F” for the course, and that I will refer any instance of it to the Honor Committee.

Grading Your grade for the course will be computed as follows.

Participation.....	15%
Paper #1	10%
Paper #2 or #3	20%
Paper #4	20%
Weekly quizzes	35% (Your best 10 of 11 quizzes)