

# 620:151g Early American Literature Spring 2005

**Instructor:** Dr. Anne Myles  
**Time:** TTh 9:30-10:45 a.m.  
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## **Office hours:**

Available Tuesday 1:00-2:30 p.m., Wednesday 12:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. If this doesn't fit your schedule, please contact me and I'll be happy to arrange another time. I am often in my office at other times besides scheduled office hours; feel free to knock anytime you see my door cracked open.

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## **Course Description:**

In this class we will explore the diverse writings produced in America from the Discovery period to around 1800. We will approach this material with attention to its historical context, the literary and intellectual developments displayed by the texts, and to the questions of gender, race, and cultural authority. Along the way, we will find ourselves extensively engaged in the question, just what, and who, is "American"? Who gets to speak for this identity, how, and for what end? What is the function of writing in a society engaged in the process of self-definition? Equally, our readings will raise the question, what is "literature"? Is it a kind of writing, or a way of reading? Who defines when writing becomes literature? Is there *an* American literature, or many literatures? In addition to gaining knowledge of a fascinating body of material that is also central to understanding later writers, I hope students will learn a new set of questions to bring to their readings, and gain an expanded awareness of current debates among scholars over the changing literary canon.

## **Required Texts:**

- ◆ Emory Elliot, *The Cambridge Introduction to Early American Literature*
- ◆ Paul Lauter, et al, eds. *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, Vol. 1
- ◆ Susanna Haswell Rowson, *Slaves in Algiers, or a Struggle for Freedom*
- ◆ William Hill Brown and Hannah Webster Foster, *The Power of Sympathy* and *The Coquette*
- ◆ Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland, and Carwin the Biloquist*

There will also be a number of required readings available online or as photocopies.

**Prerequisites:** 620:034 or consent of instructor; junior standing. 620:053 Major American Writers/Survey of American Lit. is strongly recommended.

### Required Work:

1. **5 response papers, 2-4 pages each.** These are due at intervals during the semester. See page 10 of this syllabus for more details and the specific response questions.
2. **Take-home midterm exam.** This will involve several essay questions on a range of texts and topics we have covered in the first half of the course. The target length of the exam will probably be about 8-10 pages. There will be opportunity for you to choose among questions, and probably for most questions to choose the work(s) you use as the basis for your discussion. You will have a week and a half to do the exam, and I am willing to meet with you to discuss your answers and/or look at drafts.
3. **Final paper or project.** You will write an extended final paper (around 10-15 pp.) on a text/topic of your choice, developed in consultation with me. The paper will require secondary research (critical/scholarly sources) and may involve additional primary reading, depending on your topic. English Teaching Majors have the option of designing a curriculum unit or other teaching-related project on some aspect of Early American Literature in lieu of a regular essay.

### Grading:

Responses:	100 points (5 @ 20 points each)
Midterm:	100 points
Final project:	100 points
Attendance:	25 points
Participation:	25 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>350 points</b>

Your final course grade will be determined by calculating the number of points you receive overall as a percentage out of 340, according to the following standard scale. Excellent participation may tip you to a higher grade if your score for written work doesn't seem adequately reflect your overall course performance.

A	95%	B-	80%	D+	67%
A-	90%	C+	77%	D	64%
B+	87%	C	74%	D-	60%
B	84%	C-	70%		

**Attendance:** This will be counted as part of your grade; I do regularly take attendance. In terms of scoring, you will start the semester with 25 points for attendance. For each unexcused absence, you will lose two points. If you lose all your points, I reserve the right to fail you in the class (although I will not automatically do so).

If you are unable to complete all the work by finals week and wish to receive a grade of I (Incomplete) you must request this of me specifically before the beginning of finals week. However, I will *not* give Is to people who have vanished for much of the semester and make a sudden late reappearance. According to University policy, the final date you may drop the class and receive a W on your transcript is Friday, March 11.

Legitimate reasons for missing class include your own illness; a death or medical emergency in your immediate family; your required attendance at an official University-sponsored event; or dangerous driving conditions. If one of these pertains to you, please notify me by e-mailing me or leaving a message on my office voice-mail, if possible before the class you will miss.

In the event of bad weather, assume that class is being held so long as the University is open. If class is cancelled, I will send you an e-mail if at all possible.

If a situation arises that will cause you to miss a number of classes, notify me as soon as you reasonably can so that we can discuss how we will handle it. If you are going through a personal or family crisis that wreaks havoc with your ability to participate in the class, I strongly urge you to withdraw from it. Every semester a few students have problems and ask for Incompletes: in my experience few of them ever complete their coursework later. You will spare yourself and me future headaches by not getting yourself into this situation. There is no stigma attached to withdrawing from a course.

**Participation:** This also forms part of your grade (25 points). I will give 25 points to someone who contributes to discussion daily, in an intelligent, engaged, constructive way. I would give 0 points to someone who never speaks all semester, doesn't bring the book, and falls asleep half the time (or else looks longingly at the clock and the door throughout class). Someone who seems to be paying attention and contributes occasionally but not often should get about 13 points. So you can figure it from there.

In a less bean-counting spirit, my appeal: This class is a joint effort. Your part is to read and participate actively in every class. We will be reading texts that may feel quite remote to you in their language, assumptions, and forms, and you may often feel uncertain how to discuss them in a "literary" way; so do I, sometimes. Developing the kinds of questions that it is appropriate to ask of these texts will be a large part of our work together. I encourage you not to fear a productive uncertainty as we journey through the textual wilderness. Your participation, along with your attention to your classmates and thoughtful responses to what they say and write, will create an engaging course.

### **Deadlines:**

Work is due on the date specified. Papers are normally due at the beginning of class, but I will not penalize you so long as they are in by 5 p.m. on that day. (Do not skip class because you're having trouble with your printer, etc.) I will accept papers by e-mail (Word attachment preferred) if you can't make it to campus. There will be subtractions from your grade for late work, increasing with the length of time the paper is late. In

those cases I will give the paper a “merit grade” which lets you know how I responded to the paper in itself, and the official “recorded grade” which factors in the lateness. I am willing to negotiate extensions requested at least one class in advance, preferably more. Even if a piece of work is very late, it is always better to turn it in that way; I won’t refuse it and will always give you some credit.

### **Revision Policy:**

Yes, you are welcome to revise your work if you are dissatisfied with the grade -- so long as there is time left in the semester to do so. If I give the revision a higher grade, it replaces the old grade. However, you need to meet with me first to go over my comments and your revision plans. I expect substantial rethinking/rewriting in a revised paper; except in special, mutually agreed-upon cases, I will return unmarked a revision that contains only mechanical or sentence-level changes. When you submit a revised essay, you must also attach the original copy of the first version along with my comments and grade sheet; I cannot evaluate your changes otherwise. Due dates for revisions are generally negotiable/flexible, but I will not accept revisions after the last week of regular classes (i.e., no last-minute revisions of earlier work accepted during finals week; I have too much to grade then as it is).

If you are unhappy with your marks on written work you have submitted, please consult with me and we’ll determine whether, and how, you might improve your score on these or your ultimate grade in the class. Obviously, the earlier in the semester we discuss this, the more opportunity there is for you to make a meaningful difference in your grade.

I am also always willing to look at rough drafts (though I make no promises about drafts shown me the day before the paper is due). It generally works best if you can e-mail me your draft as a Word attachment; that way I’ll probably get it quickly and I can send it back to you with comments as soon as I’ve read it.

### **Format for Submitting Class Work:**

All essays must be word-processed/typed in a plain, average-sized font, double-spaced, with approximately 1” margins on all sides, on 8 1/2” x 11” plain paper. I recommend Times Roman 12-pt. font (as in this syllabus) or something similar.

No separate title page is necessary. At the top of the first page of your paper (I don’t care which corner[s]), include your name, the name of this course, and the date. Centered beneath that, give your paper a title that gives some idea what it is about – do not use just the title of the work you are writing about. Double-spacing between the title and the beginning of the text makes it easier to read. Also, please number your pages -- do so by hand if you forget to do it on the computer.

In a separate page at the end of your paper, list all the texts you have used in the paper in correct MLA style. There are guides to MLA style in any writer’s handbook and on countless websites. If you have a question, please ask.

All quotations from the text or direct references to passages in the text of the work(s) you are writing about must be followed by page references. I expect prose, poetry, and dialogue to be quoted in the correct form(s).

Proofread your paper carefully (spell-checkers help but won't do the whole job [*see?*]); numerous typos and other errors you could easily have fixed make you look careless or indifferent and will detract from your grade, probably more than one or two honest mistakes in syntax will.

**Also, be sure to save all your work on a disk, both completed papers and important writing in progress. On occasion papers do get misplaced during the grading process – your computer may crash. Don't let this become a crisis!**

### **Academic Ethics:**

All students are expected to abide by the University's official policy on academic ethics. You can review this policy at <http://www.uni.edu/pres/policies/301.html>. If you have any question about what would constitute plagiarism in relation to your use of a particular source, please consult with me or, if I am not available, with another faculty member. Keep a record of the sources you consult while doing research for a piece of writing; you should be able to retrieve all sources consulted if an issue should arise.

*Any work you submit that appears intentionally plagiarized (you attempt to pass off language, ideas, or a complete text from another source as your own, assuming or hoping I won't be able to tell) will be graded F, and you will have to redo the assignment from the beginning on another topic, under close supervision. Final papers that are plagiarized cannot be redone. I reserve the right to automatically fail any student from the course for wholesale or repeated plagiarism. Notification of plagiarism cases is routinely sent to the Department Chair and the Provost.*

### **Students with Disabilities:**

If you have a disability requiring special accommodation in the classroom or for exams or other assignments, please contact me early in the semester so we can work out the appropriate adjustments. Please bring some kind of official documentation if possible; I should receive this directly from the university, but I may not have it at hand.

## Reading and Assignment Schedule

### January

T 11 Introduction: What do we mean by “Early” “American” “Literature”?

#### New World Identities

Th 13 *Cambridge Intro to Early American Literature* (henceforth *CIEAL*), chap. 1. Explore *Early Americas Digital Archive*, <http://www.mith2.umd.edu:8080/eada/index.jsp> (use “Gateway” to browse texts). **#1 response due** (see pages 10-11 in syllabus for response prompts).

T 18 *Heath*, section on New Spain, 105-164; section on New France, 201-221. Start reading *Heath* section intro, “Colonial Period: to 1700” (1-17), though you need not finish it for today.

Th 20 *Heath*, section on Chesapeake, 235-289; can skip Bacon, 260-67.

F 21 *Last day to drop course without a W*

T 25 *CIEAL*, chap. 3. Voices from New England 1: John Winthrop, from *A Modell of Christian Charity* (294-304), Thomas Shepard, *Autobiography* (355-381), Michael Wigglesworth (402-410), *The Bay Psalm Book & The New England Primer* (411-424).

Th 27 *CIEAL*, chap. 4; chap. 2 is optional. Voices from New England 2: Edward Taylor (poems 456-484; I’ll indicate which to focus on), Cotton Mather (495-505 only), Jonathan Edwards, 620 ff., focus on *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* and *Personal Narrative*.

### February

#### Between God and Man: Female Identity in Colonial Anglo-America

T 1 John Winthrop, from *Journal* (317-324). Excerpts from examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson at <http://homepages.rootsweb.com/~tmetrvlr/hd7.html>; material on Mary Dyer’s life, and read her letters, at <http://www.rootsweb.com/~nwa/dyer.html> (letters are links on this page). Recommended: Anne Myles, “From Monster to Martyr: Re-Presenting Mary Dyer,” [I’ll give you link] **#2 response due**

Th 3 *CIEAL*, chap. 5. Anne Bradstreet, all poems 382 ff.

- T 8 Bradstreet, continued. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, poems 173-181. For those who have studied Bradstreet before or want to go further: read poems by other women in the two “sheafs” of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> C. poetry in the *Heath*.
- Th 10 *CIEAL*, chap. 6. Mary Rowlandson, from *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration...* 437-468. If you are already familiar with Rowlandson and/or wish to venture further, read *An Account of the Captivity of Elizabeth Hanson*, at *Early Americas Digital Archive* (link: <http://www.mith2.umd.edu:8080/eada/gateway/hanson.jsp>)
- T 15 Cotton Mather, from *Decennium Luctuosum* [on Hannah Dustan], 512-514. Abraham Panther, *The Panther Captivity* (Xerox handout).
- Th 17 Sarah Kemble Knight, *The Journal of Madam Knight* (582-602).
- T 22 Elizabeth Ashbridge, from *Some Account of the Fore-Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge* (677-689). The complete text is available at <http://www.sewanee.edu/amstudies/Ashbridge.html> (the *Heath* drops out the first half, which is important and interesting). Begin reading *Heath* introduction to “The Eighteenth Century,” 553 ff.

### Other Americans: Voicing Indian and Black Identities

- Th 24 Samson Occom, \**A Short Narrative of My Life* and *A Sermon*, 1078-1099; Hendrick Aupaumut, from \**A Short Narration of My Last Journey into the Western Country*, 1300-1305.  
**#3 response due by Friday, 5 p.m.**

### March

- T 1 *CIEAL*, chap. 7. Briton Hammon, *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings...*, 1100-1105; Prince Hall, “To the Honorable Council & House of Representatives...” 1106-1109; Jupiter Hammon, poems 1090-1097; Phillis Wheatley, read all poems 1205 ff.  
**Take-home midterm questions distributed**
- Th 3 Phillis Wheatley, continued. Additional primary and secondary material likely to be assigned.
- T 8 Wheatley, continue poems. Anti-slavery discourse: Samuel Sewall, *The Selling of Joseph*, *A Memorial* 489-504; John Woolman, from *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes*; 664-667, 678-684; Sarah Wentworth Morton, “The African Chief,” 768; Lemuel Haynes, “Liberty Further Extended,” 1221-1233.
- Th 10 Time off to work on midterm, or a catch-up day if we need it.  
**Midterm due at the end of the week (before you leave for break).**

F 11 *Last day to drop course without an F*

T 15 Spring Break

Th 17 Spring Break

### **Staging the Nation: American Identity at Home and Abroad**

T 22 *CIEAL*, chap. 8. Thomas Paine, from *Common Sense* and *The American Crisis*, 934-948. J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, from Letter XII, “Distresses of a Frontier Man,” 898-899, 918-934, and “The Man of Sorrows” (xerox).

Th 24 Royall Tyler, *The Contrast, A Comedy in Five Acts*, 1257-1300.

T 29 Tyler, *The Contrast*, continue; begin Susanna Rowson, *Slaves in Algiers: or A Struggle for Freedom*.

Th 31 I'll be away at a conference; no class. Those who want to do a staged reading of a scene in one of the plays (5 points extra credit) can use class time to prepare.

### **April**

T 5 Continue Rowson, *Slaves in Algiers*. Class performances!  
**#4 response due**

### **The Limits of Freedom: Fiction and the National Psyche**

Th 7 Judith Sargent Murray, essays 1149-1164, focus on “On the Equality of the Sexes.” Begin Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette*.

T 12 *The Coquette*, continued. You should have read Mulford’s introduction to the volume by today.

Th 14 *The Coquette*, finish discussion. Additional secondary source: from Cathy Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*.

T 19 Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland*.  
**#5 response due**

Th 21 *Wieland*, continued. You should have read the introduction to the volume by today.

T 26 *Wieland*, continued. I may assign an additional secondary article.



Th 28 *Wieland*, continued if necessary, or time off for work on paper / individual conferences.

## May

W 4 Official exam time 8:00-9:50 a.m. I will be available in my office for consultation, but you are not required to come at this time. **Your final paper/project will be due Thursday, May 5, by 5 p.m.**

### Response Papers – worth 20 points each

With the exception of #1, which can be shorter, these responses should be a minimum of 2 pages in length, to a maximum of 4 pages. They should be typed. If you cannot make it to class, or forget to bring your response with you, I will accept it by e-mail submission (Word attachment preferred). *Except in unusual circumstances, responses turned in later than one week after the due date will receive radically reduced scores (i.e. probably 10 points maximum).*

These are not formal papers, and given the short length you should not spend time on full introductions and conclusions. They should be thoughtful and carefully written, however, quote or cite passages from the text(s) you're discussing as appropriate, and even when you are not quoting should reflect intelligent attention to the work(s) you've chosen to focus on. A Works Cited page is not needed, unless you are drawing on sources other than those assigned for class.

The questions below are designed as prompts to get you thinking; they aren't meant to be answered point by point. If you want to change the question somewhat, or address a different issue about the works in question, that should be OK – if in doubt, ask me.

#### #1 response.

Explore the Early Americas Digital Archive, <http://www.mith2.umd.edu:8080/eada/index.jsp>. Choose a text that intrigues you (and one that you can access fully on your computer). Look at it, and read around in it, do what you can to figure out what kind of text it is and what is going on in it (who is it addressed to or written for, what is it about or what is it trying to accomplish, etc.) Describe as best you can what you've found and figured out about it (it's fine if you're still uncertain): your target readers are other members of our class, who've looked at different texts. What if anything makes the text you've chosen hard for English majors to approach? How does it contribute to an expanded, multicultural definition of what "Early American Literature" might include? Can you relate it to anything in the *Cambridge Introduction* chap. 1, or to anything we discussed in the first class?

#### #2 response.

Choosing one of the texts we've read in the "New World Identities" section of our syllabus (perhaps in particular one we did not discuss extensively in class), do a close reading of it focused on the notion of "identity." How you choose to define identity will be up to you, and definition will in fact be part of your task. What form(s) of identity seem to apply to this text: personal identity, religious identity, national identity [the link to one's European country of origin], colonial identity? How do such categories shape the author's expression and goals? If you are focusing on personal identity, assume the author's sense of self is very different from that of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century American: what forces, beliefs, etc. inform his particular construction of selfhood, and how?

**#3 response.**

Choosing one of the texts from the Female Identity section of our syllabus, discuss how you see it as shaped by gendered experience and/or by gender ideology (beliefs about men, women, and gender as a system). Try to draw on our readings and discussion to *historicize* gender in the work you're discussing, rather than reading modern assumptions back into it. Also, you might consider: to what extent do you think the writer you're discussing sees gender as a central category – or not? Does the woman you're considering desire or achieve transcendence of her gender role, or would such a notion make no sense to her?

**#4 response.**

For this response you may choose one text from the Staging National Identity section, or compare characters/elements in two texts. All of these texts deal in one way or another with the idea of *virtue*: a concept central to conceiving both private behavior and the public good in the Revolutionary and early national periods. How is virtue defined in the text(s) you're discussing – either by its manifestation or its absence? How is virtue in individuals related to the broader question of America's identity as a nation? Do you see any contradictions or problems in these relations, or in the image(s) of virtue or virtuous behavior advanced in your text(s)?

**#5 response.**

So, what is your final interpretation of Eliza's character, actions, and fate within *The Coquette*, and hence your overall reading of the novel? Is she, in fact, a "coquette," or only forced to occupy that category? Do you read the novel, finally, as a monitory tale (a warning of what not to do) or as a novel portraying, and embodying, a (perhaps stifled) resistance to limited options in an age of revolution? Draw on the novel, class discussion, and our secondary reading to argue for your position. (Or, if this question does not speak to what interests you, take up some other issue about the novel that our discussion did not fully lay to rest for you.)