Moravian College

Spring 2005

English 101: American Literature

Instructor: Dr. Comfort Class Meets: MWF, 7:50-8:40
Office: Z-200 Phone: X 7977 Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursday 7:50-8:40
memsc01@moravian.edu


PREREQUISITE: Successful completion of Writing 100. (See instructor immediately during office hours if you do not meet this requirement.)

COURSE GOALS (for students)

1. Students will learn to identify works by representative American authors.

2. Students will place representative American authors in an appropriate historical period.

3. Students will be able to describe the styles and thematic concerns of these authors.

4. Students will learn to consider figurative as well as literal ideas and to consider the implications of figurative ideas which appear to contradict explicit notions.

5. Students will demonstrate the ability to discuss these authors and their works using standard literary terminology and citation formats.

QUIZZES

Quizzes may occur at any time. Quizzes may cover the reading assignment for the day and any material discussed in earlier classes. The period notes and headnotes for each reading are part of the assignment. For example, if the syllabus says, "1/12, 2005: Edward Taylor, "Upon Wedlock, and the Death of Children," "Huswifery," and "Upon a Spider Catching a Fly," students are expected to review (and quizzes may cover) notes from 1/10, "Exploration and the Colonies" (1-10), "Puritanism" (55-58), and "Edward Taylor" (69-70). Quizzes measure students’ ability to
identify works by representative authors, place those authors in an appropriate historical period, and describe styles and thematic concerns of these authors. (Goals 1, 2, & 3)

EXAMS

Exams occur at midterm and at the end of the course. The final exam is cumulative. Exams may cover all reading assignments including collateral readings, additional materials distributed or viewed in class, and any material discussed during the class meetings. Exams assess students’ ability to identify works by representative authors, place the authors in appropriate historical periods, identify styles and thematic concerns of these authors, and consider figurative as well as literal meanings. (Goals 1, 2, 3, & 4)

PAPERS

(3 at 15% each) Papers must be about readings assigned for this course. Students will write three essays during the semester. In these papers, students will identify a problem worth considering in an essay (thesis), extend class discussion (including contextualized quotes from peers and instructor), use literary terminology correctly (initiation story, elegy, confessional poetry, etc.), follow literary conventions (historical present, naming of authors and characters), and use MLA citation (in-text) and documentation (bibliography) formats correctly. (Goals 4 & 5)

Topics: Write for an audience of your peers, people who have read the same materials but have not seen the works through your eyes. Use the *Bedford Handbook* to discover and focus your topic. Paper mechanics: no cover pages, 3-4 pages, double-spaced, typed, 12 pt. font, 1-inch margins; write your name, course and section numbers, assignment description, and date in upper right corner of page 1. Follow MLA guidelines for citation and documentation form. MLA guidelines are available in *Bedford Handbook*, on-line, in Reeves library, and at the Writing Center. **To be sure your paper will extend class discussion, introduce your topic in class to get peer responses. Since you don’t know at the start where your best topic will be, nor can you expect to have time to ask a question in every class (don’t save your question until the day before the paper due date!) have a tentative topic prepared for EACH reading and take notes on responses from instructor and from your peers.**

You may revise any paper graded D+ or lower once as long as you submit it within one week of receiving it; you must submit the original paper, or the revision will not be graded. The new grade is an average of the two; revisions can lower a grade. Simple cosmetic changes, proofreading, and other minor corrections do not constitute a revision. A revision includes substantial changes. See *Bedford* for guidelines or go to the Writing Center or bring it to me.
Computers: Do not submit any work via e-mail attachments. This having been said, computer and printer problems are not acceptable excuses for late work.

**Paper Grades:** Generally, papers will be evaluated as follows:

A -- an original and thoughtful analysis of a specific rhetorical strategy as it supports a theme, illustrates a literary style, or compares to a similar strategy in another work. Thesis is effectively supported with concrete detail, including quotations analyzed according to the 3:1 guideline. Draws on appropriate materials from the text, the headnotes, lectures, and class discussion, citing all sources. Extends a class discussion. No plot summary. Mechanics, grammar, and spelling are correct.

B -- a thoughtful analysis of a specific rhetorical strategy as it supports a theme, illustrates a literary style, or compares to a similar strategy in another work. Thesis is adequately supported with concrete detail, including quotations analyzed according to the 3:1 guideline. No plot summary. Mechanics, grammar, and spelling are correct.

C -- a thoughtful analysis showing full understanding of the work as discussed in class. Shows understanding of the movement from generalizations to specific support and provides analysis of supporting quotations. Little or no plot summary. May have one or two minor errors in mechanics, grammar, or spelling.


F -- Plot summary with some errors, lacking any organizational strategy except chronology. Fails to demonstrate close reading of the text. OR: technical errors make a potentially acceptable paper incoherent.

Even if the paper is late, it must be turned in to complete (i.e., pass) the course.

**PARTICIPATION (10%)** This grade is based on attendance, careful preparation, and thoughtful participation during class discussion. I recommend that you write a journal about each reading assignment and prepare to *ask as well as answer* questions such as those in the Bedford Handbook. (Goals 4 & 5)

Full and prompt attendance is expected, as is courtesy in the classroom (e.g. no active cell phones unless you are expecting an emergency call). **If an emergency prevents you from attending class, get ALL notes and notices about changed assignments from a classmate so you can return to the next class fully prepared to participate, i.e., instead of responding in class by saying, "I don’t know; I wasn’t here."** Instead, be ready to participate as if you never missed a class. Because this is a discussion course, rather than a lecture course, three
absences are likely to lower your participation grade; four absences may cause you to fail the course. Lateness and leaving early count toward absences.

Students should expect to work 6 hours per week outside of class preparing for this course (in addition to extra time while writing papers). **Schedule this course during a semester when you can reasonably allot enough time to complete all assignments.**

The reading assignments will, by necessity, be uneven. Therefore, it is important to look ahead and schedule time to complete lengthy readings. We may spend more time on some readings than is scheduled. To reflect students’ interests and abilities, this syllabus is subject to change. You are responsible to keep up with those changes.

**DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Learning Services Office as soon as possible to enhance the likelihood that such accommodations are implemented promptly.

**WINTER WEATHER AND CLASS CANCELLATIONS**

If we do not meet because classes are canceled due to inclement weather, you should keep up with the syllabus. I will collected any missed week’s work the next time we meet. I drive over South Mountain to get to Moravian, so be sure to check cancellations even if the college does not cancel classes.

**COMMUTERS:** Please do not risk an accident to get to class during ice or snow. Contact me after class to arrange a makeup session.

**RETURNING STUDENTS’ WORK**

Every effort will be made to return quizzes and exams no later than two weeks after they are given and, in any event, no later than the next-to-the-last class meeting. Every effort will be made to return papers no later than three weeks after the due date or in any case no later than the last day of classes. Revisions will be returned on the day of the final exam.

**INSTRUCTOR’S PURVIEW**

The discretion of the instructor is the final word in judgment of the quality of work and assignment of grades for participation, quizzes, tests, and papers.
The questions in these weekly assignments might prompt class discussion, so be prepared to respond (write a journal?). They are also possible prompts for a paper topic.

1/10-1/14: The Colonies and Puritans: Bradstreet, Edwards (Sinners)

Based on your readings, what were the Puritans like? Note, especially, values and attitudes.

1/17-21: Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography*

Benjamin Franklin exemplifies The Enlightenment in America. What is the difference between Franklin and the Puritans? What are the values and attitudes associated with the Enlightenment?

1/24-1/28: Emerson’s "Self Reliance," Thoreau’s "Civil Disobedience," and Irving’s "Rip Van Winkle." After summarizing the central values of Transcendentalism as set down by Emerson and Thoreau, explain how Rip Van Winkle is (or is not) self-reliant.

1/31-2/4: "Sonnet to Science," Hawthorne’s "Rappaccini’s Daughter," and Melville’s "Bartleby the Scrivener." Using the information from your headnotes, summarize the central ideas and values of Romanticism. Then explain how Poe, Hawthorne and Melville dramatize those ideas and values.

2/7-2/22: Douglass’s *Narrative*, Whitman’s "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d," and Dickinson’s poetry. How are the values of transcendentalism and Romanticism dramatized or illustrated in these works? Feb. 7: Essay #1 Due

2/14-2/18: Twain’s "Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" and "The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyurg" (film), Reeves Library Orientation (2/16), Independent research. Compare the early and the late attitudes of Mark Twain as represented in these two stories. Based on headnotes and period notes in your text and on your reading, begin to compile a list of the qualities of writing by realists. Compare to the views of Romantic writers and Puritans.

2/21-2/25: Henry James’s "The Real Thing," Midterm Exam (2/23), Mary E. Wilkins Freeman’s "The Revolt of Mother." Compare the artistry of the protagonists in "The Real Thing" and "The Revolt of Mother."


3/14 Essay #2 due.

3/21-3/25: Langston Hughes’s poetry and prose. Faulkner’s "Barn Burning," and Hemingway’s "Big Two Hearted River, Parts I & II." Using the text’s summary of the Harlem Renaissance, show how its values are dramatized in Langston Hughes’s poetry. How does "Barn Burning" show the human heart in conflict with itself?

3/28- 4/1 Find four symbols in Hemingway’s story and explain what they symbolize. Elizabeth Bishop. "The Fish" "Sestina" "One Art" "In the Waiting Room" Define ‘sestina’ as a poetic form, based on your study of "Sestina." Gwendolyn Brooks. "The Lovers of the Poor" "We Real Cool" "a song in the front yard" What is your response to the lovers of the poor? Why?

4/4-4/8 Ralph Ellison. "Battle Royal"; Describe the argument between the narrator and Tatlock, explaining each character’s motives. Robert Lowell. "For the Union Dead" "Epilogue" What images recur in "For the Union Dead"? How do they support a theme? How might the first line of Malamud’s story have figurative significance? Who are the "title characters?"

4/11-4/15 James Wright. "A Note Left in Jimmy Leonard’s Shack" "Autumn Begins in Martin’s Ferry, Ohio" What is the relationship between Jimmy and the speaker/ note-writer? Why does the speaker link the first and last part of "Autumn" with the word "therefore?" I.e., what’s the relationship between the two parts of the poem? Flannery O’Connor: "Good Country People" How is her choice of a name Joy/Hulga’s most creative act? Is Manley Pointer a hero or a villain? Explain. Rita Dove "Dusting" "Roast Possum" How does the process of dusting lead to the memory of the boy’s name? What is the significance of Strolling Jim?

4/18- 4/22 John Barth. "Lost in the Funhouse" How is this a postmodern story? How is it metafiction? Cathy Song. "Picture Bride" "Heaven" What does the speaker know about her grandmother? What part is imagined? What similarities do you find between "Picture Bride" and "Heaven," in terms of subject,
theme, and style? John Updike "Separating" Why is the couple separating? What is the effect of making this reason so difficult to discover?

4/25-4/29 Explain the significance of the chewing gum in "Night March." Explain the significance of the paragraph about Paul Berlin’s mother in "Night March." Explain the significance of Paul Berlin’s name. Amy Tan: Do you see any signs of change that might foreshadow successful reconciliation in the marriage? Louise Erdrich. "The Red Convertible" What is the significance of Suzy from Chicken, Alaska? What about Bonita?

1/10 Introduction

1/12 Anne Bradstreet, poetry

1/14 Edward Taylor, poetry

1/17 No class

1/19 Jonathan Edwards, Sinners/Angry God

1/21 Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography

1/24 Washington Irving, Rip Van Winkle

1/26 Ralph Waldo Emerson, Self Reliance

1/28 Henry David Thoreau, Disobedience

1/31 Edgar Allen Poe, poetry

2/2 Nathaniel Hawthorne, Rappaccini

2/4 Herman Melville, Bartleby

2/7 Frederick Douglass, Autobiography

2/9 Walt Whitman, When Lilacs... Bloom’d

2/11 Emily Dickinson, poetry

2/14 Mark Twain, Jumping Frog

2/16 Reeves Library Orientation
2/18 Independent Research

2/21 Henry James, The Real Thing

2/23 Midterm Exam

2/25 Mary E.W. Freeman, Revolt of Mother

2/28 Charles Chesnutt, Grandison

3/2 Edith Wharton, Roman Fever

3/4 Robert Frost, poetry; 3/7-3/11 BREAK

3/14 T. S. Eliot, Prufrock

3/16 Wallace Stevens, poetry

3/18 Eugene O’Neill, Hairy Ape

3/21 Langston Hughes, poetry, Simple

3/23 F. Scott Fitzgerald, Babylon

3/25 William Faulkner, Barn Burning

3/28 Ernest Hemingway, Big 2-Heart River

3/30 Elizabeth Bishop, poetry

4/1 Gwendolyn Brooks, poetry

4/4 Robert Lowell, poetry

4/6 Ralph Ellison, Battle Royal

4/8 Bernard Malamud, Mourners

4/11 Flannery O’Connor, Country People

4/13 James Wright, poetry

4/15 Rita Dove, poetry

4/18 Cathy Song, poetry

4/20 John Barth, Funhouse
4/22 John Updike, Separating
4/25 Tim O’Brien, Night March
4/27 Amy Tan, Half & Half
4/29 Louise Erdrich, Red Convertible