

MORAVIAN COLLEGE

Spring 2006

English 101 (A&B): American Literature

INSTRUCTOR	Dr. Comfort	OFFICE	Zinzendorf 200
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TEXTS Perkins and Perkins. *The American Tradition in Literature*. Shorter Edition, 10th or 11th edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002, 2006.

Hacker, Diane. "Writing About Literature." *The Bedford Handbook*. 6th edition. (Chapter on Writing about Literature; available upon request from instructor)

COURSE GOALS (for instructor)

To introduce the diversity of voices that make up American literature

To discuss historic, literary, and cultural contexts of American literature

To encourage students to respect varied responses during class discussion

To provide opportunities for oral presentations in small groups and in the class

To respond thoughtfully to students' views as written in three essays

To encourage students to welcome the delicious ambiguity of the "difficult beauty" in literature

GOALS (for students)

1. To identify and locate many American authors and their works in the American literary tradition

2. To recognize values and define themes in American literature

3. To think critically about and appreciate the complexity and diversity of serious literature

4. To enter into and continue a discussion about American literature

to compare the treatment of a single theme in several works of American literature

to analyze the literary elements of American literature to answer a specific question

5. To write essays that shape and extend this discussion

to incorporate research about literature into this writing

to incorporate American literature as support for a thesis in a personal essay

6. To understand literal meanings and consider implications in figurative meanings

7. To tolerate--and even welcome--the lack of closure and certainty found in complex literature

GRADES

1. Papers	(3) @ 10%, 15%, & 15% each	40%
2. Midterm & Final	(short answer) @ 20% each	40 %
3. Participation	(reports, discussion, quizzes, attendance)	20%

PAPERS

(Papers allow students to demonstrate their engagement with the text, close attention to

details, and interest in class discussions. Writing these papers allows students to demonstrate their achievement of goals 4-7.) 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. You are encouraged to discuss your topic with the instructor prior to writing the paper. 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 #, and date in upper right corner of page 1. Follow MLA guidelines for citation and documentation form. All are available in *Bedford Handbook*. For at least one paper, use outside resources (critical articles).

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. Integrates comments from published readers (literary critics).

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. Uses research appropriately.

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. Uses research.

D -- Plot summary presented in an organized fashion. No thesis. Unanalyzed quotations. OR: seriously flawed with technical errors. No research.

F -- Plot summary with some errors, no organizational strategy, technical errors make the paper incoherent, or plagiarism (including unattributed phrases from literary criticism and use of recycled -- high school?-- papers).

A paper grade will be lowered by a full letter grade for each day it is late. Even if the paper is too late to pass, however, it must be turned in to complete (i.e., pass) the course.

2. Midterm and Final: Short answer tests will be given. They are similar in format to the quizzes and give students an opportunity to demonstrate close reading of assignments and an ability to identify the works and authors according to literary movements and historical periods.(Goals 1-3)

3. Participation (all goals): Participation enables students to practice the skills needed to write papers and to present ideas for discussion. It also provides opportunities to review reading assignments. Most importantly, it is essential to make the literature one's own.

Since it is impossible to participate if you are not there, full and prompt attendance is required. If an emergency prevents you from attending class, it is your responsibility to get notes and notices from a classmate and to return to the next class fully prepared to participate. If you miss more than three classes, your final course grade may be lowered 1/3 for each additional day.

Reader's Journal: (Optional but highly recommended) Write a one-page journal for each class period. Since some entries will become the basis for your 2 1/2- 3 page essays, these journals should respond to the questions for papers outlined in the Bedford Handbook. Journals will also be the prompts for class discussion, so be prepared to read aloud from your journal in class. (Otherwise, you might find yourself doing some on-the-spot thinking.) During conferences about paper topics, bring your journal. Journals will not be collected or graded. However, participation will be graded as will papers, both of which build on journal entries.

Quizzes are based on readings for the day and material from previous classes. **Quizzes cannot be made up for any reason.** Grade for a missed quiz is "F." Lowest quiz grade

(1) will be dropped.

Read assigned work prior to the class in which it will be discussed. The path of serious, engaged dialogue is not always predictable. We may spend more time on some material than on others. If we are behind schedule in discussions, continue to follow the syllabus: keep up with the readings in preparation for our “catching up” and for quizzes. You are responsible for understanding the readings, whether or not the instructor reviews them. If there is anything you do not understand and we do not cover it in class, e-mail your question after class so I can introduce it in class next time.

Reports Work with a partner. Each report counts as a double quiz. Reports on headnotes are presented orally before the works to be discussed. (If you are absent on the date we discuss your author, the instructor will introduce the author.) Study the headnote. Identify recurring themes, style, authorial project, influences. Be selective about other biographical material-- anything you say may be included on a quiz. In general, 3- to 5-minute reports will be graded this way:

A = engaged presentation making the author memorable and **concluding with a link to the work being studied**. Paraphrases all difficult sentences from the headnote. Uses only own notes and does not merely read them. Quotes only author’s comments and explains them. May use internet links or other A-V presentations. Can answer questions based on headnote.

B = Reads more from own notes, but neither quotes (plagiarizes) nor reads from the headnote. Paraphrases difficult sentences; quotes and explains author’s comments. Answers questions.

C = “wings it” or reads from headnote. Quotes author’s comments, but may misunderstand them. May seem baffled when asked to explain terms or phrases from headnote.

D = reads from headnote, fails to explain difficult passages, shows no real outside preparation

F = unprepared, misses class on day of presentation.

NOTES:

Other students use the classroom, so please ask only the very short or very urgent

questions before or after class in the classroom. The instructor will be glad to talk with you during office hours or by appt.

All grades for participation, quizzes, tests, and papers will be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

READING AND DISCUSSION SCHEDULE

(Read the assigned works before attending class on the day for which they are assigned. Read period headnotes as they occur in the text.)

Wednesday, January 18

Puritans

Anne Bradstreet (1612?-1672) Author to Her Book
(Prologue to be read in class)

Edward Taylor (1642-1729) Upon Wedlock and the Death
of Children (To be read in class)

Reason and Revolution

Friday, January 20
an Angry God

Jonathan Edwards (1702-1758) Sinners in the Hands of

Monday, January 23
Ephemera

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790). Almanack, Polly Baker,

Wednesday, January 25

Crosscurrents

Phillis Wheatley (1752-1784) To the University of Cambridge, On Being Brought, On
the Death of the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield

Philip Freneau (1752-1832) Indian Burying Ground,

The Wild Honey Suckle

Romantic Temper and the House Divided

Friday, Jan 27

Washington Irving (1783-1859) Rip Van Winkle

Monday, January 30

Transcendentalism

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) Self Reliance

Wednesday, February 1

Romanticism

Sonnet- To Science

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) The Cask of Amontillado,

Friday, Feb 3

Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) Rappaccini's Daughter

Monday, February 6

Herman Melville (1819-1891) Bartleby the Scrivener

Wednesday, February 8
Life

Frederick Douglass (1817?-1895) Narrative of the

Essay #1 due

Friday, February 10

An Age of Expansion: 1865-1915

Monday, February 13
Bloom'd

Walt Whitman (1819-1892) When Lilacs Last . . .

Wednesday, February 15 Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) 249,328,435,632,754,1129,
1624, and others

Friday, February 17 Realists and Regionalists

Mark Twain (1835-1910) Notorious Jumping Frog, (possibly) Man That Corrupted
Hadleyburg (video)

Monday, February 20 Henry James (1843-1916) The Real Thing

Wednesday, February 22 The Turn of the Century

Charles W. Chesnutt (1858-1932) Passing of Grandison

Friday, February 24 Edith Wharton (1862-1937) Roman Fever

Monday, February 27 Midterm exam

Wednesday, March 1 Literary Renaissance

Road Not Taken Robert Frost (1874-1947) Mending Wall, Home Burial,

Friday, March 3 T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) Prufrock

Amy Lowell (1874-1925) Patterns

Monday, March 13 Anecdote of the Jar	Wallace Stevens (1879-1955) Sunday Morning (excerpts),
Wednesday, March 15	Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953) The Hairy Ape
Friday, March 17	Claude McKay (1889-1948) America
Chaos	Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950) What Lips, I Will Put Langston Hughes. Harlem, Negro Speaks of Rivers
Monday, March 20	F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) Babylon Revisited
Wednesday, March 22	William Faulkner (1897-1962) Barn Burning
Friday, March 24	Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) Big Two Hearted River
Monday, March 27	Library Orientation <i>Essay #2 due</i>
Wednesday, March 29	Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979) The Fish, Sestina, One Art Robert Hayden (1913-1980) Those Winter Sundays
Friday, March 31	Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000) We Real Cool, The Lovers of the Poor, a song in the front yard

Robert Lowell (1917-1977) For the Union Dead

Monday, April 3

Ralph Ellison (1914-) Invisible Man

Wednesday, April 5

Bernard Malamud (1914-1986) The Mourners

Friday, April 7

Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964) Good Country People

Monday, April 10

John Barth (1930-) Lost in the Funhouse

Wednesday, April 12

John Updike (1932-) Separating

Wednesday, April 19
Begins

James Wright (1927-1980) A Note Left. . . , Autumn

Rita Dove (b. 1952) Dusting, Roast Possum

Cathy Song (b. 1955) Picture Bride

Friday, April 21

Tim O'Brien (1946-) Night March

Monday, April 24

Amy Tan (1952) Half and Half

Wednesday, April 26

Louise Erdrich (1954) The Red Convertible

Friday, April 28

Essay #3 due (must include research from at least two outside sources, at least one of them scholarly)

PROMPTS FOR ESSAYS

questions about Technique

Plot. What central conflicts drive the plot? Are they internal (within the character) or external (between characters or between a character and a force)? How are conflicts resolved? What events are revealed in a particular order?

Setting. Does the setting (time and place) create an atmosphere, give an insight into a character, suggest symbolic meanings, or hint at the theme of the work?

Character. What seems to motivate the central characters? Do any characters change significantly? If so, what--if anything--have they learned from their experiences? Do sharp contrasts between characters highlight important themes?

Point of view. Does the point of view--the perspective from which the story is narrated or the poem is spoken--affect our understanding of events? Does the narration reveal the character of the speaker, or does the speaker merely observe others? Is the narrator perhaps innocent, naive, or deceitful?

Theme. Does the work have an overall theme (a central insight about people or a truth about life)? If so, how do details in the work serve to illuminate this theme?

Language. Does language--such as formal or informal, standard or dialect, prosaic or poetic, cool or passionate--reveal the character of the speakers? How do metaphors, similes, and sensory images contribute to the work? How do recurring images enrich the work and hint at its meaning? To what extent do sentence rhythms and sounds underscore the writer's meaning?

questions about social context

Historical context. What does the work reveal about the time and place in which it was written? Does the work appear to promote or undermine a philosophy that was popular in its time, such as social Darwinism in the late nineteenth century?

Class. How does membership in a social class affect the characters' choices and their successes or failures? How does class affect the way characters view -- or are viewed by -- others? What do economic struggles reveal about power relationships in the society being depicted?

Race and culture. Are any characters portrayed as being caught between cultures: between the culture of home and work or school, for example, or between a traditional and an emerging culture? Are any characters engaged in a conflict with society because of their race or ethnic background? To what extent does the work celebrate a specific culture and its traditions?

Gender. Are any characters' choices restricted because of gender? What are the power relationships between the sexes, and do these change during the course of the work? Do any characters resist the gender roles society has assigned to them? Do other characters choose to conform to those rules?

Archetypes. Does a character, image, or plot fit a pattern--or archetype--that has been repeated in stories throughout history and across cultures? (For example, nearly every culture has stories about heroes, quests, redemption, and revenge.) How does an archetypal character, image, or plot line correspond to or differ from others like it?