Writing America
Survey of Anglophone Literatures (Focus America)

Lecturer: Univ.-Prof. Dr. Stefan L. Brandt  ·  Email: stefan.brandt@uni-graz.at
Room and time: Room HS 06.02  ·  Fri 1:30 - 3:00 p.m.  ·  Course number: ENL.0244  ·  First session: 13 October 2017

Course description: The course is conceptualized as an introductory lecture series to American literature from the Early Republic to the Postmodern Era. We will start by looking at the first major attempts to formulate a unique ‘American’ consciousness during and shortly after the Revolution. Hector de Crèvecoeur’s famous question “What then is the American, this new man?” (asked in his Letters from an American Farmer from 1782) has since led to a number of literary discourses either manifesting or challenging the idea of ‘American Exceptionalism.’ Among others, we will discuss texts by Susanna Rowson, Charles Brockden Brown, James Fenimore Cooper, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Stephen Crane, Ernest Hemingway, Saul Bellow, John Barth, and Jonathan Safran Foer.

Methods: Interactive presentations of crucial developments in American literature with close readings of representative texts.

Assessment: Reading assignments, Final exam. Note: Regular attendance will raise your chances of passing the final exam!

Important note: Alternatives to the scheduled exam dates are not possible!

Syllabus

13 October  Early American and Colonial Literature
(1490s-1780s – Genres: Narratives of Exploration, Sermons, Jeremiads, Spiritual Autobiographies)
Basic texts (recommended):
Hans-Peter Wagner, “The Colonial Period” and “From the Revolution to 1800” (2010).
Additional authors and texts (optional):
Mary Rowlandson, A Narrative of Captivity and Restoration (1682);
Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana (1702); J. Edwards, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God (1741).

20 October  Literature of the Early U.S. Republic -- Susanna Rowson and American Sentimentalism
(1780s-1850s – Genres: Novels of Seduction, Sentimental Fiction, Picaresque Novels, Political Texts)
Main text (required):
Susanna Rowson, Charlotte Temple, A Tale of Truth (1791/94) [excerpts].
Additional authors and texts (optional):
Susan Warner, The Wide, Wide World (1850);
Maria S. Cummins, The Lamplighter (1854);
Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1852).

27 October  The Age of Gothic -- Charles Brockden Brown and the Dark Side of the American Dream
(1790s-1820s – Genres: Short Stories, Frontier Novels, Historical Narratives)
Main text (required):
Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Huntly, or, Memoirs of a Sleepwalker (1799) [excerpts].
Additional authors and texts (optional):
Charles Brockden Brown, Wieland, or, The Transformation (1798);
Washington Irving, “Rip Van Winkle” (1819) and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (1819);
James Fenimore Cooper, The Last of the Mohicans (1826).

3 November  Stay at home and read PPT:
Dark and Light Romanticism – Edgar Allan Poe, Whitman, Emerson, and the ‘American Renaissance’
(1830s-1850s – Genres: Short Stories, Dark Romances, Travel Literature, Detective Fiction)
Main texts (required):
Edgar Allan Poe, “The Black Cat” (1843); Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass (1855/1892) [excerpts].
Additional authors and texts (optional):
Edgar Allan Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839);
Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Young Goodman Brown” (1835) and The Scarlet Letter (1850);
Herman Melville, Moby-Dick, or, The Whale (1851) and “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (1853/56);
Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Nature” (1836) and “Self-Reliance” (1841); Henry David Thoreau, Walden (1854).

10 November  American Realism I – Mark Twain and Local Color Writing
(1865-1890s – Genres: Local Color, Tall Tales)
Main text (required):
Mark Twain, “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” (1865).
Additional authors and texts (optional):
Mark Twain, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884); Sarah Orne Jewett, The Country of the Pointed Firs (1896).
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Key Figures/Study Material</th>
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<td>17 November</td>
<td><strong>American Realism II – Henry James and the Novel of Manners</strong></td>
<td>Henry James, <em>Daisy Miller</em> (1878); <em>The Portrait of a Lady</em> (1881); William Dean Howells, <em>The Rise of Silas Lapham</em> (1885).</td>
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<td>1 December</td>
<td><strong>Feminist and Emancipatory Literature – Charlotte P. Gilman and the ‘Separate Spheres’</strong></td>
<td>Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892); Kate Chopin, <em>The Awakening</em> (1899) and “The Story of an Hour” (1894); William Wells Brown, <em>Clotel, or, The President's Daughter</em> (1853).</td>
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<td>2 February</td>
<td><strong>Final Exam</strong> (between 1:30 and 6:00 p.m.)</td>
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