

# American Literature Before 1865

English 4306

Split web  
Room D116

Donald W. Walden, Ph.D.  
Office: B106; 758-5018  
Office hours: Wednesday, 1-4:30  
dwalden@sulross.edu

## Goals

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This course is about what Americans thought about the human condition at various times up to the Civil War. After taking it, you should be able to:

- recognize styles of each period and most authors.
- discuss major ideas and works.
- enjoy reading, watching, listening to, and discussing literature.
- decide what you think: respond to literature actively and constructively.
- see how literature both reflects and affects society.
- think critically about literature and life by using evidence and inferring and comparing.
- understand how literary devices help set the tone of a piece and convey emotional meaning.
- select from various kinds of literature.
- understand how history affects form.

## Text

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*The Heath Anthology of American Literature, Volume B*

## Grading

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You will be graded on your knowledge of the literature, on your understanding of the writers' insights, and on your ability to develop and support your own insights. Specifically, you will take exams and quizzes, write response papers and a term paper, and participate in class discussion. You will accumulate points, up to a possible 1,000, and if you have 900, you will make an A and so on.

Exams. 250 points. A mid-term exam on October 28, worth 100 points, and a final exam on December 9, worth 150 points. You will need to identify ideas, literature, characters, etc. and write a couple of short essays on topics you select from a list. The object will be to show that you can analyze and synthesize evidence and produce a conclusion and a coherent argument to back it up.

Assignment sheets for the following are on Blackboard.

Weekly question. 130 points. Each week you will submit a question to Blackboard regarding that week's readings and respond to one of your peers' questions. Each question will be worth 5 points, and each answer will be worth five points.

Response papers. 300 points. You will write two papers, of one to two pages, responding to questions that I give you or to questions that you ask. Basically, they will ask what a piece of literature indicates about human nature or about American culture. You will submit a rough draft of each paper, and I'll tell you what you need to do to make an A.

A list of response questions is on Blackboard. You may respond to questions on any of the literature we have covered up to the time you write a paper. If you wish, you may write all the response papers about the same topic and then put them together with appropriate polishing for the term paper.

Term paper. 170 points. You have a choice. You may select a topic regarding American literature, develop a position, and write a six- to eight-page paper to support that position. Or you may emulate a type of literature. I will look over your work at various points to assure that you are doing acceptable work.

Author report. 150 points. You will research an author's life and literary interests and submit a report to me, which I'll look over, return to you for corrections, and post online.

## **Submitting assignments**

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Submit your assignments to Blackboard.

### **Punctuality**

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All assignments must be submitted on time. I will read them eventually, but I do not feel responsible for seeing late assignments so you may not get helpful comments early enough to help on future assignments.

I shall read one paper at a time. In other words, if you fall behind, you must submit one paper at a time, and if you are too far behind, you will not have enough time to finish. Any paper I have not seen, I will treat as a rough draft and return it to you with my comments.

### **Plagiarism**

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Plagiarized work will not be accepted. Plagiarism means turning in someone else's work for credit. We will discuss plagiarism as well as ways to avoid it by citing others' work correctly. If I find you have plagiarized work, I will drop you from the course with an F and turn your name over to the Dean.

### **Distance Education**

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Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, library resources, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should submit online assignments through Blackboard or SRSU email, which require secure login information to verify students' identities and to protect students' information. The procedures for filing a student complaint are included in the student handbook. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website.

## **Tentative Schedule**

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In addition to the literature, the quizzes will also cover the editors' introductory essays.

August 25

Introduction to the course  
Indian oral poetry

August 26

**Due: weekly question**

August 27

**Due: response to weekly question**

September 1

Tales from the Hispanic Southwest  
La Llorona, La Malinche, and the Unfaithful Maria  
Olmsted  
    San Antonio  
    The Missions  
    Town Life

September 8

Emerson  
    Nature  
    The American Scholar  
    Self-reliance

September 15

Whittier  
Fuller

September 22  
Thoreau

September 29  
Walker  
Garrison  
Douglas  
Harper  
Jacobs

September 30  
**Due: Draft of your first response paper**

October 6  
Irving

October 7  
**Due: your first response paper**

October 13  
Cooper  
**Mid-term examination.**

October 17  
**Due: draft of your second response paper**

October 20  
Hawthorne: Kinsman, Brown, Veil, Birth-mark, Rappaccini's Daughter

October 21  
**Due: final draft of your second response paper**

**October 27**  
**Hawthorne: The Scarlet Letter**

October 28  
**Due: the proposal for your term project**

November 3  
Poe

November 4  
**Due: annotations for your term project**

November 10  
Melville: Bartleby, Paradise and Tartarus, Benito Cereno, Billy Budd

November 11  
**Due: outline of your term project**

November 17  
Bryant: Thanatopsis

Longfellow  
Osgood

November 18

**Due: First draft of your term project**

November 24

Whitman: Song of Myself, One's-Self I Sing, Astronomer, Drum-Taps

Your weekly question should not ask about one particular poem. Ask about a topic that Whitman discusses frequently or that you are particularly interested in. Or ask about a technique that intrigues you.

November 25

**Due: Second draft of your term project**

December 1

Dickinson. Read her poetry; you will not be responsible for the letters.

Your weekly question should not ask about one particular poem. Ask about a topic that Dickinson discusses frequently or that you are particularly interested in. Or pick a technique that intrigues you.

December 2

**Due: Final draft of your term project**

December 8

**Final Examination**