

American Literature Before 1865

English 4306
Fall 2015

Del Rio, 101
Eagle Pass, B115
Uvalde, B111

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Goals

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

Websites and these books:

Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*
Hawthorne, *The House of Seven Gables*
Melville, *Typee*

Grading

Your grade will be based on your knowledge of the plays and how well you demonstrate your ability to discuss them. You will take exams and quizzes, write papers and contribute to class discussions and will accumulate up to 1,000 points. If you have 900 or more, you will get an A and so on. Specifically, the grading will be based on the following rubric.

Report, 40 points. You will make a report on some aspect of American literature. We will assign the reports on the first night of class, and you will submit an outline before making the report.

Daily quizzes, 260 points (10 points each x 26). Two quizzes of 10 questions each in each meeting. Questions will regard simply the facts of the readings, no analysis. The quizzes will be passed out at the beginning of class and after the break.

Weekly questions, 40 points. Questions on Blackboard for the first two weeks. See the assignment sheet under course content.

Online posting, 60 points. You will post two questions on Blackboard and then answer one of your peers' questions. Each post will be worth 15 points. See the assignment sheet in course content.

Response papers, 200 points. You will write two papers, of at least three pages, responding to questions that I give you or to questions that you ask. Questions ask about hermeneutics or poetics. You will write a rough draft of each paper; we will talk about it privately, and then you will revise it for the final grade. As a scholar, you must learn to ask questions, so you may make up your own questions, but they should be about poetics or about what Shakespeare says about human nature. You may write both papers on one topic, and you will have a start on your term paper.

If you prefer, you may emulate an American writer. You should talk to me about your plans so I can make sure you are proceeding correctly.

The assignment sheet for these papers is under course content.

Examinations. 250 points. A mid-term examination worth 100 points and a final examination worth 150 points. You will need to identify ideas, incidents, themes, 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.

Term paper. 150 points. You will select a topic, develop a position, and write a six- to eight-page paper to support that position. You may also emulate a writer's style. See the assignment sheet under course content.

As you work through the assignments, you should learn skills and apply them to the next assignment. Answering the weekly question should tell you how to state a thesis precisely and give at least one piece of evidence to support it and document that evidence in the MLA style. The online postings should give you the ability to write a scholarly question and, in answering a peer's question, more practice in thesis and evidence. By the time you have done those, you should be able to write the response papers: write a precise thesis and support it with evidence, presented coherently. The bulk of the examinations will consist of response questions like that. The term project will require you to ask a scholarly question and answer it with a longer, detailed argument.

Submitting work

Never write to me through Blackboard except when I specifically say to: answering the weekly questions and writing online questions and responses. For response papers, exams, and the term paper, open your e-mail program and send the paper to my e-mail address, dwalden@sulross.edu. For the subject line, use Shakespeare and something to indicate the subject: Shakespeare first response paper. This will help me keep better records and will make me think you are smart.

Late papers

Late papers will not be accepted without a legitimate reason.

Attendance

To participate in class, you must be present and on time. **If you are absent nine hours without good, documented reasons, you will be dropped from the course with an F.**

Plagiarism

Plagiarized work will not be accepted. Plagiarism means turning in someone else's work for credit. We will discuss documentation and citation so you will know how to submit work without plagiarizing. If you plagiarize work, I shall drop you from the class with an F and turn your name over to the dean.

Students with disabilities

Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. Students who need accessibility services should contact Kathy Biddick at 830-279-3003. The address is 2623 Garner Field Road, Uvalde, Texas 78801.
