

**ENGL 224: EARLY AMERICAN LITERATURE:  
SETTLER COLONIALISM, NARRATIVE, AND SOCIAL SUBSTANCE**

**9:30 – 10:45 TR  
NICELY 103**

**PROFESSOR ADAM WATERMAN  
FISK 321**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course explores relationships between multiple forms of literary narrative and the substance of settler coloniality in the Americas. Settler coloniality, in this rendering, names the materiality of settler colonialism as an asymmetrical social relation that obtains between settler populations and indigenous peoples, a materiality that manifests itself in the abrogation and transformation of multiple forms of life. While focusing primarily on the early literary cultures of the United States, we will situate that ostensibly national formation within a larger history of empire, one that takes into account the relationship between empire and modernity, race, capital, and the biopolitical administration of gender and sexuality.

As a framework for analysis, settler colonialism foregrounds the accumulation of past injuries as a substance that constitutes the terrain of the present. Literary narratives, from this perspective, should be understood not as ephemeral or transitory phenomena, but rather, as the refuse of the past that continues to litter the space of the here-and-now. Moreover, by understanding settler colonialism as an evolving constant, we hope to chart a history of US and American literatures that eschews the linearity of conventional literary histories, which replicate the conventions of liberal narratives of expanded liberties and spheres of citizenship.

**COURSE POLICIES:**

**ATTENDANCE**

Attendance will be taken. Because our time in class is limited, you are expected to be present, in your seats, at the start of each session. Tardiness will be noted and will hurt your overall class participation grade. In this matter, I will accept no excuses. If there is some personal matter so dire that you absolutely must attend to it, and this means that you are going to be late for class, it is probably better to miss class, deal with your situation, and return--promptly--for our next session. You may take three unexcused absences. After three, each absence will cost you one point off your final grade (and put your participation grade in doubt). The only legitimate excuses for missing a class are medical, but you must provide documentation of your medical condition. Students who miss more than one-fifth of the sessions in the first ten weeks of the semester will be dropped from the course.

**GRADING**

Grades are not given; they are earned. As such, I will not discuss your grade. I will provide comments on your written work and your classroom presence. I will gladly discuss ways to improve your academic performance. These discussions are for your benefit, and should not be taken as negotiations concerning the grade you will eventually receive. Please do not even

attempt to enter into negotiations with me, because it will only aggravate me, and you really do not want to make me unhappy.

#### **ASSIGNMENTS (SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE PROFESSOR)**

- 1) **Student Presentation:** Students will choose a reading from the syllabus that they will present upon. This presentation should highlight a specific passage from the assigned reading that illuminates larger themes and concerns of the reading as a whole, as well as the concerns that animate the course—specifically, the history and structure of settler colonialism in the United States and the Americas. Students should be prepared to present this passage (by reading it) then go on to explain why they selected it, and how it helps us to understand something about the reading, in general. This presentation will be the basis for the final assignment, so it is to your benefit to take it seriously.
- 2) **First “timed” essay:** This is not a timed essay in the conventional sense that it will be done in class. Rather, you will be presented with a question to which you will have to respond, in writing, but “from home” (or wherever you do your writing). The essay will be due March 1. The topic will be determined by February 16. The essay should be 1250-1750 words in length.
- 3) **Final assignment:** For the final assignment, students will use the critical reading they developed for their presentation to write an essay that relates that reading to the specific themes of the course; specifically, around questions of empire, colonialism, nation, race, gender, and sexuality.

#### **GRADE BREAKDOWN**

Participation 20%  
Presentation 20%  
First essay 25%  
Second essay 35%

#### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

*The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Volumes A & B*

#### **January 26**

Introduction

#### **January 28**

#### **February 2**

Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native”

#### **February 4**

Pope Alexander VI, “Demarcation Bull Granting Spain Possession of Lands Discovered by Columbus,” Rome, May 1493

Norton A: “Stories of the Beginning of the World,” 21-51

#### **February 9 ST. MAROUN’S DAY, NO CLASS**

**February 11**

Norton A: "First Encounters," 54-92

**February 16**

Norton A, "Of Plymouth Plantation," and "New English Canaan," 122-166

**February 18**

Norton A, "A Model of Christian Charity," and "The Journal of John Winthrop," 166-186

**February 23**

Norton A, "A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson," 257-288

**February 25**

Norton A, "Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America," and "The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, Part One," 477-526

**March 1**

Norton A, "Letters from an American Farmer," 605-625

**March 3**

Norton A, "Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano," 688-721

**March 8**

Norton A, "Selections from *Edgar Huntly*," 918-949

**March 10**

Norton B, "Selections from *The Pioneers*," and "Selections from *Hope Leslie*," 65-106

**March 15**

Norton B, "Selections from A Son of the Forest," and "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man," 131-159

**March 17**

Norton B, "Nature," 214-243

**March 22**

Norton B, "Native Americans: Removal and Resistance," 349-369

**March 24**

Norton B, "Selections from *The Scarlet Letter*," 476-531

**March 29**

Norton B, "Selections from *The Scarlet Letter*," 531-594

**March 31 ANNUNCIATION DAY, NO CLASS**

**April 5**

Norton B, "The Fall of the House of Usher," 654-667 and "The Tell-Tale Heart," 691-695 and "The Purloined Letter," 701-714

**April 7**

Norton B, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass," 1174-1204

**April 12**

Norton B, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass," 1204-1239

**April 14**

Norton B, "Leaves of Grass," 1314-1374

**April 19**

Norton B, "Selections from *Moby-Dick*," 1440-1483

**April 21**

Norton B, "Benito Cereno," 1526-1582

**April 26**

Rebecca Harding Davis, "Life in the Iron Mills," 1706-1732

**April 28**