

Fall 2019 Course Descriptions

Instructor: Ira Dworkin

Course: ENGL 227

Title: American Literature: Beginnings to Civil War

Description: This course introduces students to major texts, figures, genres, movements, and themes of American writing, focusing on the literature and culture of North America (primarily within the current borders of the United States), from the Columbian and British colonial eras to the U.S. Civil War. The diverse body of work included in the course addresses a range of themes such as settler colonialism, national identity, captivity, slavery, revolution, indigeneity, women's rights, and political violence. Throughout the semester, we consider what makes this body of work a national tradition. How did different communities contest the settler colonial project of state building? How are stories of the origins and development of the United States contested and revised during the first century following its establishment? Students will acquire a broad foundation in pre-Civil War American literature, familiarity with the broader cultural contexts under which that literature was produced, and the ability to engage in critical conversations about this material.

Proposed Readings: Students will read a broad cross-section of primary texts. Writers may include Christopher Columbus, Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Mary Rowlandson, Jonathan Edwards, Cotton Mather, Anne Bradstreet, Samson Occom (Mohegan), James Albert Gronniosaw, Phillis Wheatley, Olaudah Equiano, James Fenimore Cooper, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, William Apess (Pequot), Jane Johnston Schoolcraft (Ojibwe), José Antonio Gutiérrez de Lara, José Álvarez de Toldeo, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, John Rollin Ridge (Yellow Bird) (Cherokee), Frederick Douglass, Herman Melville, Harriet Beecher Stowe, William Wells Brown, Harriet Jacobs, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman, and Emily Dickinson.