

AML2070: Survey of American Literature
“American Mythologies”
Fall 2016 | 8599
Turlington 2354 | T 2-3, R 3

Instructor: Rebecca McNulty

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Office Hours: Tuesday periods 4-5, or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will what it means to be “Mythological” in American life and American literature over the course of the past two centuries. Our texts will span time from the nation’s founding to the 21st century, and their authors will come from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences. We will also read across genres and forms, looking at literature for both children and adults, and novels, short stories, poetry, plays, graphic novels, and criticism. The American mythos is diverse and wide-ranging; our reading and discussion will aim to reflect that diversity throughout the semester. In doing so, we will investigate the way that the myths of American culture have evolved throughout American history, and how these myths have been used to celebrate, challenge, and critique the American identity from generation to generation. By reading and analyzing these texts, students will emerge from the class with a broad knowledge of American literature and its historical contexts. Moreover, they will improve their writing and research skills and learn how to effectively create and shape arguments about literature.

REQUIRED TEXTS

To Purchase:

(Any version is acceptable.)

Anderson, M.T. *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Volume I: The Pox Party*.

Hamilton (Original Broadway Cast Recording). (2015)

Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself*.

Leeming, David and Jake Page. *Myths, Legends, & Folktales of America: An Anthology*.

Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Available Online or Via Course Reserves:

Alexie, Sherman. “Crow Testament”.

---. “How to Write the Great American Indian Novel”.

---. “On the Amtrak from Boston to New York City”.

---. “The Powwow at the End of the World”.

---. “What You Pawn I Will Redeem”.

Bradbury, Ray. “There Will Come Soft Rains.”

Doherty, Thomas. “Harriet Jacobs’ Narrative Strategies: ‘Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl’”.

Fiedler, Leslie, “The Eye of Innocence.”

Hamilton, Alexander. "Observations on certain documents in 'The History of the United States for the year 1796" (1797).

Honeyman, Susan. "Trick or Treat? Halloween Lore, Passive Consumerism, and the Candy Industry".

Irving, Washington. "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow".

Jefferson, Thomas. *Declaration of Independence*.

---. Selections from *Notes on the State of Virginia*.

Melville, Herman. "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street"

O'Connor, Flannery. "A Good Man is Hard to Find".

Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Fall of the House of Usher".

Smith, Andrew. "The First Thanksgiving".

Ulanowicz, Anastasia. "American Adam, American Cain: Johnny Tremain, Octavian Nothing, and the Fantasy of American Exceptionalism".

Vandenberg, Katrina. "Jack O'Lantern".

Whitman, Walt. "Song of Myself"

Grading and Course Credit Policies

Grading for this course will be rigorous. If an assignment illustrates disregard for spelling, grammar, citation guidelines, or a general carelessness in the writing, the assignment will be failed. Do not rely on your instructor for copyediting, even on drafts.

The writing assignments for this course are designed to meet the minimum requirements of the University Writing Requirement credit. To satisfy this requirement, **every** assignment's word count must be fulfilled. **Submitted assignments short of the minimum word count will receive a major point deduction.**

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	GPA	Percentage (Point %)
A	4.0	93–100 (95)
A-	3.67	90–92 (92)
B+	3.33	87–89 (88)
B	3.0	83–86 (85)
B-	2.67	80–82 (81)
C+	2.33	77–79 (79)

C	2.0	73–76 (75)
C-	1.67	70–72 (71)
D+	1.33	67–69 (68)
D	1.0	63–66 (65)
D-	0.67	60–62 (61)
E	0.00	0–59 (0)

Grade Meanings

- A Student did what the assignment asked at a high quality level, meeting all of the composition objectives required of the assignment. Additionally, his or her work shows originality, creativity, and demonstrates that the student took extra steps to be original or creative in developing content, solving a problem, or developing a style. Since careful editing and proofreading are essential in writing, papers in the A range must be free of typos and grammatical or mechanical errors.
- B Student did what the assignment asked at a quality level, meeting most of the composition objectives required of the assignment. Work in this range needs revision; however, it is complete in content, is organized well, and shows special attention to style.
- C Student did what the assignment asked, but overlooked some of the composition objectives. Work in this range needs significant revision, but it is complete in content and the organization is logical. The style is straightforward but unremarkable.
- D Student neglected some basic requirements of the assignment, and completed it at a poor quality level. Work in this range needs significant revision. The content is often incomplete and the organization is hard to discern. Attention to style is often nonexistent or chaotic.
- E An E is usually reserved for students who do not do the work or do not come to class.

However, if work is shoddy, shows little understanding of the needs of the assignment, and/or an inability to meet the composition objectives, he or she will receive a failing grade

Assignment Descriptions (Total Points Possible: 1000)

Paragraph (200 -300 words) 50 pts

Students will write a complete paragraph describing a single theme, with a specific and focused topic sentence.

Presentation and Paper (900 - 1200 words) 150 points: 50 pts for presentation; 100 pts for paper.

Once during the semester, you will partner with a fellow classmate and present on a selection from *Myths, Legends, & Folktales of America*. During this 20-minute presentation, you will briefly summarize the myths represented in your selection. Then you will choose one myth to discuss in more detail, tracing its development throughout American history and its current representation (or lack thereof) in American culture. Each student will separately write a paper that formally details her presentation.

Close Reading (600 - 900 words) 100 pts

Choose a passage from a novel or short story we have read in class, or a poem/lyric (or section of a poem/lyric) to read closely. Students will analyze the passage by paying close attention to its composition (diction, syntax, rhyme, rhythm, meter) and will make an argument about the way in which the author's composition influences your thematic reading.

Critical Article Analysis (800 – 1200 words) 150 pts

For this essay, you will find an academic article related to one of the texts we have read this semester and write an essay in response to the author's argument. You must provide a brief summary of the argument, as well as a detailed analysis of its effectiveness and validity.

Midterm Paper (1200 - 1500 words) 200 pts

This paper will consist of a thematic analysis of one of the texts we are reading for class. The essay will incorporate at least two critical sources that speak to similar issues and themes you are exploring in your texts. Consider the ways in which criticism can help you to build your own original arguments on the text. As always, I encourage you to consult with me before you begin the writing process.

Annotated Bibliography (500 words minimum) 50 pts

In this assignment, you will explore **AT LEAST** five sources that will be useful in establishing context for your final research paper. You will both summarize the source but also, more importantly, critically examine the strengths and weaknesses of the text and explicate the ways the source will support your overall argument. Each annotation will be at least 100 words **NOT INCLUDING** an MLA-formatted citation.

Final Paper (1800-2200 words) 300 pts

In this essay, you will use the skills we have built throughout the course and in our previous essays. Your paper should have a strong, clear, and creative argument about a text of your choosing, and should consult at least five critical sources. This should not be a regurgitation of the issues, ideas, and themes we have discussed in class, but should instead be a result of your own critical thinking and understanding of the text.

Classroom Policies

Attendance and Tardiness

Attendance is required. Each student is allowed four absences with no penalty. 50 points will be deducted from a student's final grade for each subsequent absence. If a student misses more than six periods during a semester, he or she will fail the entire course. Only those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, and religious holidays will be exempt from this policy. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with the instructor prior to the date that will be missed. Students are responsible for keeping track of their own attendance record. The instructor is not responsible for informing students of their attendance record; however, students are encouraged to ask the student for the number of absences they have accrued should they have any concerns.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this class are consistent with university policies that can be found at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Note: If students are absent, it is their responsibility to make themselves aware of all due dates. If absent due to a university-sponsored event, students are still responsible for turning assignments in on time.

Tardiness: Students who enter class after the start of class are late and are marked as tardy. Three instances of tardiness count as one absence. Additionally, if you arrive more than 15 minutes late to class, you will be counted as absent for that period. Tardiness disrupts the class and shows a disregard for your instructors and your classmates, so make it a habit to be in your seat when class begins.

Late Work

Students should turn in a copy of his or her essay on the day that it is due, even if he or she cannot make it to class. The mailbox location is listed above; the mailroom is open during regular business hours. A student may e-mail his or her essay for the purpose of avoiding lateness but is still required to turn in a copy for grading. Computer or email problems are not valid excuses for late work; save documents frequently and on multiple disks.

Late work will not be accepted. Any other work that is not turned in by class time on

the due date will not be accepted and will automatically count as a zero. Exceptional circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Essay Submission

Students will submit essays BOTH as a hardcopy in class and through Canvas.

Hardcopies must be stapled before submission. A full letter grade will be deducted from every un-stapled paper (an A will become a B) and it is your responsibility to find a stapler before class; one will not be provided for you.

- Because I use the reviewing feature in Microsoft Word, papers must be saved in a Word-compatible format, generally .doc or .docx, or .rtf.
- Students should save your papers using your last name and the assignment name as the filename. For example: mcnultyexplication.doc
- Submit through the assignment tab by attaching the document to the assignment page.
- If you are experiencing technical difficulty with the website, print a hard copy of the paper and bring to class and/or email me your assignment. However, you will still need to attach the assignment once the website is running again.

Paper Maintenance Responsibilities

Students are responsible for maintaining duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course and retaining all returned, graded work until the semester is over. Should the need arise for a resubmission of papers or a review of graded papers, it is the student's responsibility to have and to make available this material.

Participation

Everyone is expected to participate in class. Be prepared to discuss the readings, answer questions about them, and have written questions about parts you did not understand to share. On these occasions, any disruptive or unconstructive behavior will be dealt with strictly. In any case, if students come to class unprepared (e.g., without the required materials) and unable to participate, his or her final paper grade will be penalized and he or she may be dismissed from class for the day.

Classroom Disruptions

Common courtesy is mandatory in our classroom. Silence all cell phones, pagers, alarms, and so on when you enter the classroom; unexpected noises interrupt everyone's concentration. *If a student is found text messaging in class, he or she will be asked to leave and will receive an absence for the day.* Sleeping, holding private conversations, and reading other material are also inappropriate behaviors during class time. *Students*

will not need to use a laptop for this class for anything but assigned texts, so please put it away before class begins and take it out only for accessing Canvas or Course Reserves. Disciplinary action (dismissal from the classroom, grade deduction, and beyond) will be taken if a student disrupts the learning environment in any way.

Technology

E-readers will be allowed; this does not include cell phones, which must be put away and on silent during class. Other devices, such as laptops and tablets, will be allowed on a provisional basis. I reserve the right to ban them from the classroom at any time.

Statement on Harassment

UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see:

<http://www.hr.ufl.edu/eo/sexharassment.htm>

Statement on Academic Honesty

All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/student.honor.code.aspx>

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits plagiarism and defines it as follows:

"Plagiarism. A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Quoting oral or written materials including but not limited to those found on the Internet, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
2. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student."

(University of Florida, Student Honor Code, 8 July 2011)

University of Florida students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire Student Honor Code.

Important Tip: You should never copy and paste something from the Internet without providing the exact location from which it came.

Email Correspondence

This is an English class, so I expect your emails to me to be professional and follow rules of grammar and etiquette. Please include proper salutations and a signature that includes your name.

Classroom Behavior

Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about may engage controversial topics and opinions.

Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from the class.

Final grade appeals:

After discussing any apparent grade discrepancies with the course instructor, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant in the English Department. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

Statement of Composition (C) and Humanities (H) credit:

This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition or Humanities. For more information, see:

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/advisinggened.html>

Statement of Writing requirement (WR)—formerly Gordon Rule:

This course can satisfy the UF requirement for Writing. For more information, see:

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/advisinggordon.html>

Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Tentative Course Schedule (Readings are due on the day that they appear. Readings are subject to change.)

Units:

Week One: Introduction to “American Mythology”

8/23/16: Course introduction

Diagnostic Essay

Suggested: Begin Reading *Octavian Nothing*

8/25/16: The Myth of American Founding Fathers

Read: Declaration of Independence; Selections from Thomas Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia*

Week Two:

8/30/16: Introduce *Hamilton*.

Assign: Paragraph and Extended Close Reading

9/1/16: Myths Surrounding Slavery

Close reading; Discuss *Octavian Nothing*

Read: *Octavian Nothing*, Parts I and II

Week Three:

9/6/16: Organizational techniques; Example presentation – “Patriotic Heroes”

Read: “American Adam, American Cain: Johnny Tremain, Octavian Nothing, and the Fantasy of American Exceptionalism” by Anastasia Ulanowicz

9/8/16: Continue discussing *Octavian Nothing*

Read: *Octavian Nothing*, Parts III and IV

Due: Paragraph

Week Four:

9/13/16: Paper workshop

Due: Group One Presentation

9/15/16: Discuss papers

Due: Close Reading

Assign: Critical Article Analysis

Week Five:

9/20/16: Begin discussing *Incidents*

Read: *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Chapters 1-20

Due: Group Two Presentation

9/22/16: Introductions

Week Six:

9/27/16: Continue discussing *Incidents*

Read: Finish *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Due: Group Three Presentation
9/29/16: Continue discussing *Incidents*
Read: “Harriet Jacobs’ Narrative Strategies: ‘Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl’” by Thomas Doherty

Week Seven: The Myth of the American Child

10/4/16: Discuss Childhood
Read: “The Eye of Innocence.”
Due: Group Four Presentation
10/6/16: Paper Workshop
Suggested: Begin Reading *Huck Finn*

Week Eight:

10/11/16:
Read: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Chapters 1-15
Due: Group Five Presentation
10/13/16: Summary and analysis practice
Read: *Huck Finn*, Chapters 16-25

Week Nine:

10/18/16: Continue discussing *Huck Finn*
Read: Finish *Huck Finn*, Chapters 26-43
Due: Group Six Presentation
10/20/16: Conclusions
Due: Critical Article Analysis
Assign: Midterm Paper

Week Ten: Myths Surrounding Halloween

10/25/16: How to Read Short Stories
Read: “The Fall of the House of Usher” by Edgar Allan Poe, “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” by Washington Irving, “A Good Man is Hard to Find” by Flannery O’Connor
Due: Group Seven Presentation

10/27/16: Halloween (Is the Candy a Lie?)
Read: “Trick or Treat? Halloween Lore, Passive Consumerism, and the Candy Industry” by Susan Honeyman; “Jack O’Lantern” by Katrina Vandenberg

Week Eleven: Returning to the Myth of Founding Fathers and Rugged Individualism

11/1/16: Discuss paper proposals; Research techniques
Due: Midterm Paper
Assign: Final Papers

11/3/16: Reading Poetry
Read: Selections of “Song of Myself”

Week Twelve:

11/8/16: Discuss *Hamilton*

Listen: *Hamilton, Act 1*

Due: Group Nine Presentation

11/10/16: Discuss *Hamilton*

Listen: *Hamilton, Act 2*

Read: *Hamilton*, “Observations.”

Due: Paper Proposals

Week Thirteen: Myth of Thanksgiving

11/15/16:

Read: Discuss Sherman Alexie

“What You Pawn I Will Redeem”, “How to Write the Great American Indian Novel”, “On the Amtrak from Boston to New York City”, “The Powwow at the End of the World”, and “Crow Testament” by Sherman Alexie

Due: Group Ten Presentation

11/17/16: Incorporating sources; Review citations

Week Fourteen:

11/22/16:

Read: “The First Thanksgiving” by Andrew Smith

Due: **Annotated Bibliography**

11/24/16: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING

Week Fifteen: Myth of the American Self-Made Man

11/29/16: Discuss “Bartleby the Scrivener”

Read: “Bartleby the Scrivener”

12/1/16: Paper Conferences

Week Sixteen:

12/6/16: Final Thoughts

Read: “There Will Come Soft Rains.”

Final Papers Due Monday, December 12 by Noon