LIT 315 – MANY VOICES OF THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE

SYLLABUS & SCHEDULE – FALL 2015

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Be sure to read this syllabus and schedule carefully, print a copy, bring it daily to class, and refer to it throughout the semester.

Office hours:
T 2:00-3:00pm, W 3-4pm; and many other times by appointment. Please note: be sure to confirm an appointment time even during posted office hours. Otherwise I might be with another student or at the copy machine.

DESCRIPTION:
The antebellum emergence of a distinctive American literature can be understood as more than an external American dialogue with or against European literary masters – though those dialogues play a crucial part in this study. The period prior to the Civil War was filled also by an internal dialogue toward defining "America" and "American" among diverse national voices, a conversation among various ethnicities, races, genders, and classes. For instance, there were exchanges between Iroquois and EuroAmerican women in the antebellum establishment of the modern women's movement. There were exchanges between African Americans, slaveholders, and abolitionists, both men and women; and between these voices and more canonical figures such as Emerson, Whitman, Thoreau, Melville, and Dickinson. Thus other voices were in the conversation and were equally a part of this formative period of America: for instance, the Native American writer William Apess; the African American writers Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs; or the Boston Brahmin, writer and journalist Margaret Fuller. Through selections from a variety of such voices, addressing issues like abolition, wage slavery, women’s rights, and Indian Removal, the course explores how those dialogues shaped social terms for descendants of those groups in our contemporary context. The course is divided into four units that follow the Introduction via American Transcendentalism: Perspectives on Antebellum Native American Issues; Perspectives on Antebellum African American Issues; Perspectives on Antebellum Gender Issues; and finishes with a study of the Transcendentalists and the poetry of Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson in light of those three perspectives. Prerequisites, LIT 210 or 21; and LIT 300.

A NOTE ON REQUIREMENTS, OUTCOMES, ASSESSMENTS:
The following list of activities tries to quantify your expected work. Ultimately, no one can “quantify the quality” of your writing or discussion. Grading in arts and humanities courses inevitably entails subjective criteria. Because of that subjectivity, more dialogue between student and faculty can be part of the process of creating and grading “performance” in humanities subjects. Literature is a conversation. Literary criticism grows out of conversation. I
hope you come to feel that I am open for you to get to know me in the classroom and in my office. Please come see me to talk through assignments or anything else. On written work, both form and content will be graded, and explicit writing standards will be part of each assignment. Grades are based on a combination of 1) 80% written work (content & form); 2) 10% discussion questions, participation, and 3) 10% attendance.

If you are working with Disability Services and have any certifiable disability that requires accessibility steps for you to meet the course requirements, be sure to let me know in the first week of class. I will be glad to work with you on a strategy for success.

OUTCOME CRITERIA & GOALS
1) Recognition of the diversity of American literatures in the antebellum period.
2) Recognition of key historical and literary issues of the period as they are addressed by those diverse voices.
3) Recognition and exercise of different methods – literary and historical, artistic and social, aesthetic and ethical, textual and contextual – for considering texts.
4) Engagement with themes of the course as they apply to 21st-century lives.

OUTCOME ASSESSMENTS & GRADES
Grades are based on a combination of 1) 75% written work (content & form); 2) 15% discussion questions, participation, pop quizzes, other in-class writing; and 3) 10% attendance (max. 3 absences before grade drops). If you have any certifiable disability that makes meeting the course requirements difficult, I will be glad to work with your needs.

Discussion and Attendance:
I’m strict on attendance. You are grownups, and can make your own decisions, yet the class runs on a combination of readings, discussions, and lectures. Lectures and discussions both are founded on your attendance; so more than two unexcused absences (totals one week of class) can drop the final grade. An excused absence generally requires a medical crisis, but avoid scheduling visits to doctor or dentist during class time. Notice of any absence should be given in advance when we can pre-arrange for your make-up work. Late arrivals and early departures can mean an absence. Thus the goal here is to participate as both a listener and speaker in class discussions. NB: Do not be absent on due dates for papers. “I stayed in the computer lab to finish my essay” is not an excuse for missing that class day’s further study and peer review. (Verbal assessments of Criteria 1-4:)

Discussion Questions:
On Moodle, there will be a Forum for each required reading and an extra credit Forum for recommended readings. Discussion questions are due online by noon of the day the reading is listed on the class schedule [&/or let’s negotiate the timeline as a class]. Each student will be responsible for generating at least two questions on each required reading (usually two or three authors). Good idea: if possible, each question should be anchored to a passage with a page number in the text. Each student is also responsible for responding to at least two questions on the Moodle Forum, also by 9am before class.

a. I will incorporate some of your perspectives into the next day’s lecture, so take the time to write thoughtful, critically driven discussion questions focused around a close reading of one or more of the texts. (See Moodle resource on How to Write
Discussion Questions.) Plus we will project some of the Forum questions for use during the in-class discussions. This means you need to schedule your study time carefully to meet those Moodle Forum deadlines. We will discuss and do close readings in class on some of the required primary readings (poetry, fiction, prose, etc.) and on some of the required secondary material (introductory and editorial commentary), and you are welcome to offer questions for discussion on any of these materials.

b. **Discussion groups** and full-class discussions:

Participation in discussion of daily readings will be in small groups and with the full class. The course is designed for your input. Some of the best lectures happen when there are good questions or comments from the floor. “Participation” can be both vocal and silent, both speaking and listening, but not all of one or the other. Discussion is one of the best ways to learn, and the class can hardly flow without you there. This pedagogy is so crucial to the course that I’ll take a few more lines here to explain: Everyone’s idea is important. When you speak, try to give your idea away to the group. You don’t need to defend it once it’s out there. And equally, when you listen, give each speaker respect. Humor helps too. We don’t need to have everyone agree, but perhaps we can build a community in the classroom where each of us can feel engaged with the questions.

c. **Pop quizzes**

as well as other in-class exercises on daily readings loom on the horizon of time. Surprising to say, students sometimes don’t get the reading done, and in turn the discussion falters. Student on class evals say this helps fix that.

**Writing Skills and Critical Thinking**

Writing skills and critical thinking in analyzing diverse literary texts through various methods:

Note that the UM Writing Center is open for coaching writers at all levels. Writing assignments will be a combination of reading journals, microthemes, thesis exercises, and take-home essays with library references and bibliography. On most writing assignments, I expect days of work on rough drafts which should be turned in (via a separate electronic file) with the final draft (electronically). Generally, if you try to write the paper the day of class or even the night before, you will get a lower grade, so think of this as a writing class designed to help boost your time-management as well as critical thinking skills. It’s all writing. See handouts for more info on my grading criteria. In addition, writing skills require an understanding of how to avoid plagiarism (see note below in “Legalities”).

Final drafts of all written work must be handed in to me by email as Word.doc attachments (&/or we will explore submission of electronic copies via Moodle.) . My written responses to your papers will be on the electronic copy which I will email back to you with a different file name, so keep a clean electronic copy, plus a hard copy, on file in case you want to revise it. NB: When you email me, be sure to put the exact spelling of the class rubric, LIT 315, at the front of your email’s subject line. Because of the overload in my inbox, I cannot guarantee that you will get credit for your online work unless you are clear about email subject lines and electronic file names.

(Written assessments of Criteria 1-4:)
Reading Journal:

Use a separate, dedicated spiral journal, or do this on computer. For each reading, on one side of a page, record the author’s ideas, facts, quotes, or note other important info; on the other side, record your questions, impressions, responses, and feelings as you read. These responses might develop into discussion questions or toward your essays as well. I will ask for the total of journal pages at least twice in the semester. If you only write in the books’ margins, where you should be as thorough as the journal format, you will need to add up those marginalia for page totals.

Take-Home Essays:

One response paper, two microthemes, and two essays combine personal response and critical analysis, graded on content and form. Depending on the assignment, response papers and microthemes are as short as one-page essay answers to a question or questions on the readings. Essays are longer versions (3-6 pp) of similar writing, with discussion of more examples. Both microtheme and essay formats should not only quote from the text(s) but also explore close reading. Skills in thesis development and in integrating quoted citations into your argument are crucial in written work. Plan on including a Works Cited with each assignment, with proper in-text citations and bibliographic form. After the response paper, all of the assignments expect some library research in academic journals or monographs, and thus a Works Cited. In addition, those skills require an understanding of how to avoid plagiarism.

Here’s more coaching on the writing. Focusing on literary analysis, the essays should build three elements of a workable thesis statement that goes beyond summarizing or retelling a piece of literature: 1) narrow topic 2) assertion (not description) 3) preview. Generally, a thesis is preceded (in drafts if not in the final essay) by a focused question. The goal of literary analysis is to (gently) take apart and put back together some dynamic aspect of a text, so that the reader may understand it more fully and deeply and acutely, with more insight into form and/or content. Such literary criticism looks beyond what is said to ask how, why, or so what? Writing about literature is one of the best ways to read it, and it indeed can intensify the pleasure of reading. Too often, students write about a piece of literature without coming to a thesis, i.e., without really knowing what they have to say about it. Toward the “W” part of this course, we will do some focused work on thesis development apart from the labor of essay writing, and then bring this skill to the essays.

With the response paper articulating your take on introductory lectures and readings, the four essays match the four Units of the semester. At least one of the first three essays may be revised and handed in by the last class period (before finals week).

Response Paper:

a. On Friday of the second week of classes, a response paper is due on the opening themes. This is a one-page, informal essay, which can include a thesis statement or not, but which should give a clear reading of a fragment of one of the texts in relation to the context of Transcendentalism discussed in class.

Optional Research Essay:

b. One 6-8 pg. essay, revising and expanding one of your microthemes or the first essay (different from the earlier revision), using library resources and again emphasizing thesis development and integrated citations, is due the last day of class; a prospectus
is due three weeks earlier. [Possible, depending on needs: the class will consult as a whole with Humanities Librarian Sue Samson toward research on [date tba], so bring your topic on that date.]

Peer Editing:

  c. Study groups of 3 students will meet outside of class face-to-face or online during each of the take-home essays. Editing each others’ work can be one of the best ways to develop yourself as a writer.

nb:

Whether you’re a professional or a beginning writer, it’s always helpful to have a good editor. The Writing Center is available to students of all abilities: LA 144, phone 243-2266, with on-site tutoring; paper coaching; plus writing and test-taking workshops, etc. They do not provide proof-reading services; rather, their focus is on composition skills. Note that they require lead-time for revising your paper well before it’s due. They might turn you away if you come in so close to your deadline that you don’t have time to revise. Also online tutoring via http://www.umt.edu/writingcenter/

REQUIRED BOOKS
(In addition to essays and other handouts on Moodle)


2) William Apess, *A Son of the Forest and Other Writings.*

Note *Heath Anthology* websites, such as these:

http://www.georgetown.edu/bassr/heath  [re 3rd edition]


SOME LEGALITIES:
Pay attention to these 8 items.

1) See the Cyberbear website http://cyberbear.umt.edu/ for Important Dates such as these: last day to add/drop with refund on Cyberbear; last day to drop without refund by drop/add form; last day to withdraw. I’m open to late drops if you find it unavoidable, but Incompletes are rarely available; see next item.

2) Per general University policy, a grade of Incomplete is granted only for a medical emergency that interferes with the end of the semester, so plan your time carefully.

3) The Credit/No Credit option must be arranged at the beginning of the semester, not in retrospect toward the end. If the class is taken for Credit/No Credit option, an average grade of D- or above constitutes Credit, and a grade of F equals NCR. (This system replaces Pass/No Pass.)

4) Plagiarism is defined as using another’s words or ideas (outside of common knowledge) directly or indirectly without citing them. It is shocking, but students waste their own education and my time by plagiarizing off the Internet. If they can find it online, so can I, and I have no mercy on academic deception. Consequences of plagiarism can range from ostracism to rehabilitation training to zero credit to failing and being dropped from the
class to being expelled from the University. Please take this warning seriously. Do not plagiarize. Plagiarism is an affront to fundamental social and academic values, indicating a lack of respect for intellectual labor and a lack of responsibility for each student’s part in sustaining academic community. To avoid this breach of trust, acknowledge all work that has influenced your thinking, using accurate bibliographic citations. The University’s official warning can be found on pg. 22 of the Catalog, which refers you to the Student Conduct Code (Academic Conduct), available on the web: http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321. For more information on plagiarism, go to Plagiarism Online Handout: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html.

5) & is it necessary to mention that cell phones, text messaging, emailing, and Internet surfing are not acceptable in class? Laptops for notetaking are welcome, but surfing the Internet is not allowed, unless requested by the instructor in discussion. Participation does not equal distraction. There are limits to multitasking. This is one.

6) Departmental Assessment: The English Department¹s ongoing process of assessing its curriculum requires professors to read student papers to learn how students in general are progressing through the program. Thus your professor may choose a copy of one of your papers or ask for an electronic version of it to use in this assessment process. All identifying information will be removed and no evaluation of student work outside the boundaries of the course will play any role in determining a student¹s grade. If you do not want your work used in such a way, please inform your professor and s/he will not forward it to the Assessment Committee. Otherwise, we appreciate your tacit consent.

7) In addition to the departmental assessment process, this course might be involved in a university-wide assessment of the efficacy of UM’s writing instruction. Thus this course requires an electronic submission of an assignment with your personal author information removed, to be used for educational research and assessment of the writing program. Your paper will be stored in a database with no link to your name. A random selection of papers will be assessed by a group of faculty using a rubric that will be shared with you as part of the writing aspect of this course.

8) This syllabus and schedule may be subject to changes, which will be announced in class.
LIT 315 – MANY VOICES OF THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE
SEMESTER SCHEDULE, FALL 2015, T/TH

How to read this schedule:
1) In the Apess text, directions are straightforward. In both Apess and the Heath, be sure to read through the historical and literary introductions for each section and each writer so you can blend that info into your discussion questions and essay exams. Note that sometimes you will need to go back to the beginning of a volume or a section to read all the appropriate intro material. Any item below in “quotation marks” is a title of either an introductory passage or a primary text, but you should double-check the Heath Table of Contents, the Index, and the text itself for intro material on each reading.

2) Most of the Heath Anthology’s selections for particular authors are excerpts. Whenever you are wondering which passages of a particular author to read for class, read them all (sometimes in different locations, via index).

3) For specific page numbers, go to the Table of Contents or the Index, making sure you are in the appropriate Volume B of the Heath Anthology—Seventh Edition.

4) “Moodle” refers of course to the Moodle supplement for our course, which you should be able to access via umonline if you are registered for this course.

5) Note: Readings will be preceded on the page by either Req (= Required); or Rec (= Recommended). We will plan to discuss and do close readings in class on at least the Required readings, and students are welcome to offer questions for discussion on the Recommended readings as well.

6) Note: Some written assignments are due by email on a Monday or Friday, while classes are Tuesday/Thursday, so pay close attention to the schedule in advance.

Week 1 – Introductions
9/1 -- Questionnaire, Syllabus, Logistics
9/3 -- Introduction to Themes. Response Paper handed out online, due Friday, 9/11.

Week 2 – Perspectives on the Transcendental Materials of American Identity
9/8 -- [9/7 was Labor Day Holiday] Req: Emerson – “Self-Reliance”; “Experience”
9/10 -- Req: Emerson – “American Scholar”; Rec: Heath Intros “Early 19C”;
[& note Montana Book Festival in Missoula 9/10-12, Friday through Sunday.]

UNIT 1 –
Perspectives on Antebellum Native American Issues
Week 3

Week 4
9/22 --  Req: Apess – *Son of the Forest*: Chaps 1, 3, 4, 7, 9 + Appendix
9/24 --  Req: Thoreau – “Walking”; Req: Seattle; Rec: Gregg, from *Commerce of the Prairies*  Microtheme 1 handed out online, due Monday, 10/5, by email.

Week 5
9/29 --  tba [Class meets with Humanities Librarian Sue Samson in Mansfield Student Learning Center (MLib 283). Bring research topic.] Rec: Moodle : Lydia M. Child – “Appeal for the Indians”
10/1 --  Req: Emerson – “Nature”; (Cherokee unit:) Rec: Ridge; Lowery; Boudinot; Ross

UNIT 2 –
Perspectives on Antebellum African American Issues
Week 6
10/8 --  Rec: H. Jacobs – *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* Chapters XVI, XXI, XLI

Week 7
10/13 --  Req: H. Jacobs to Ednah Dow Cheney; Rec: Moodle: John Jacobs, *True Tale of Slavery*

Week 8
10/20 --  Rec: Garrison; Rec: Garnet; Req: Douglass *Narrative* Chapters I-X Microtheme 2 handed out online, due Monday, 11/2, by email.
10/22 --  Rec: Douglass – *Narrative* Chapter XI & Appendix; Req: Thoreau – “A Plea for Captain John Brown”

Week 9
10/27 --  Req: Melville – “Benito Cereno”

UNIT 3 –
Perspectives on Antebellum Gender Issues
Week 10
Microtheme 2 due Monday 11/2, by email.
11/3 --  Rec: Heath Intros “The Debate over Women’s ‘Sphere’”; Req: Fuller – from *Woman in the 19C*
Fuller (cont.); Req: Fuller – from “American Literature”; Req: Elizabeth Cady Stanton; Rec: Moodle: Sally Roesch Wagner, “The Iroquois Influence on Women’s Rights”

Week 11

11/12  --  [11/11 was Veterans Day.] Davis (cont.) Rec: Sarah Moore Grimké & Angelina Grimké.

Week 12

11/19  --  Melville (cont.) **Essay 1 handed out online, due Wednesday, 12/2.**

Week 13

11/26  --  [Student Travel Day was Wednesday] **Thanksgiving Vacation. No classes.**

UNIT 4 --
The Poetry of Transcendental America

Week 14

Essay 1 due Monday, 4/27 by email.


12/3  --  Whitman (cont.) **Essay 2 handed out online, due Monday, 12/14, by email**

Week 15

12/10  --  Dickinson (cont.) **Optional revised essay due.**

Finals Week

12/15  --  (no class) **Essay 2 due by email yesterday, Monday, 12/14.**
12/17  --  (no class) **Optional Research Paper due.**