

**COURSE and TITLE: ENG 241 U.S. Literature I**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

A conventional survey of American Literature would introduce you to the “major” literary movements of America, past and present. Ours is not a conventional survey in American Literature. Although we will consider an assortment of the nation’s early literatures, as well as general literary trends from the colonial period up to and through the American Revolution, we will also reevaluate what we already know about “America” as a nation and the various literatures its diverse peoples have produced.

**PREREQUISITES**

There are no prerequisites for this course. Note, however, that ENG 241 is not an introduction to the study of literature, a description that more fittingly applies to ENG 110. Rather, ENG 241 is an intermediate course that engages with concepts and subject matter that are more advanced than anything that would be described as “basic.”

**COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify and synthesize texts from a range of historical periods and cultures, relating them to each other through a variety of different perspectives, including form, theme, culture, history, politics, and ethics.
- Develop an individualized critical voice, one that enables you to interpret, analyze, and evaluate with originality and persuasiveness.
- Use a well-developed literary vocabulary to express clearly—in conversation and writing—your nuanced responses to a diverse body of literature.
- Apply your facility with literature to examine human differences and similarities (with respect to language, experience, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender) across historical, social, and cultural boundaries.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

\* Electronic copies of all reading materials are provided.

## TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

To successfully complete this course, you will need access to a computer with reliable, high-speed Internet access and appropriate system and software to support the Brightspace learning platform. Typical technical requirements for users are:

Windows 7 (XP or Vista) 64 MB Ram 28.8 kbps modem (56k or higher recommended) SoundCard & Speakers External headphones with built-in microphone Mozilla Firefox 9.0 or higher	Mac OS X or higher 32 MB Ram 28.8 kbps modem (56k or higher recommended) SoundCard & Speakers External headphones with built-in microphone Mozilla Firefox 9.0 or higher; Safari 5.0 or higher
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Also requires Word 2007 (PC) 2011 (MAC) or newer, PowerPoint, Excel, Adobe Flash, and Adobe Acrobat Reader.

## BRIGHTSPACE HELP

Here is the link to access Brightspace <https://brightspace.uri.edu> as well as the Brightspace resource page <https://web.uri.edu/brightspace/>.

## CLASSROOM PROTOCOL

For this online course, Brightspace is our “classroom.” Please refer to the [Brightspace YouTube video tutorials](#) before you get started and refer back to them as a resource as needed while you complete this course.

In the online learning environment, “attendance” is measured by your PRESENCE in the site as well as your CONTRIBUTIONS to the site. The importance of regular log-ins and active participation cannot be overstated.

## COURSE NAVIGATION

The emphasis in this course is on the critical analysis of ideas, group discussion and collaboration, and the application of unfamiliar interpretive skill sets to a diverse body of

early American literature. The success of learning in this course requires timely review of course materials and timely active participation within workshops and discussion forums. The best way to begin this course is to view the START HERE tab, read the syllabus, and course schedule. These items will act as your map to this online course.

## STUDENT PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

The modules for our course begin on Monday of each week and end on Sunday. Although the content and concepts of each module will relate to those of others, the coursework that is associated with each module needs to be **completed during the week for which it has been assigned**. It is thus important not to go missing from the course at any point of the semester. In short, the best way to achieve a meaningful experience in this course is to commit to an active and steady level of involvement.

In general, you should plan to spend a minimum of eight to ten hours per week on this course. This number may rise when you are working on a group assignment, preparing for a Midterm exam, or composing a formal essay.

## METHODS OF EVALUATION

**\*All assignments are graded on a traditional letter-grade scale:**

	87-89 B+	77-79 C+	67-69 D+	59 & below F
94-100 A	83-86 B	73-76 C	60-66 D	
90-93 A-	80-82 B-	70-72 C-		

Student Deliverables	Module	Weight
Introductory Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial Post</li> <li>• Responses to Classmates</li> </ul>	1	10%
Quizzes	1-4	10%
Discussion Forum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial Post</li> <li>• Responses to Classmates</li> </ul>	1-4	10%
Variable Assignments	1-4	10%

Midterm	3	30%
Analytical Essay	5	30%

## DESCRIPTIONS OF ASSIGNMENTS

- **Introductory Activity:** Participants will introduce themselves and reflect upon their understanding of “America” and “American literature.”
- **Quizzes:** Except for week 5, you can expect to take at least one quiz each week of the semester. The successful completion of this quiz—which will normally consist of short-answer and multiple choice-type questions—is to serve as an entranceway into each week’s discussion and any special assignments.
- **Discussion:** Our discussions will typically be in response to an assigned text and my accompanying “lecture” on the same. In most instances, your posts to the discussion forum will consist both of an original response and a reply to one or more of your classmates. I will grade each of your postings on a letter-grade basis, using the following criteria:
  - **Content:** Your responses should be thoughtful, substantive, and well enough developed to articulate a clear and well-supported claim. Avoid simply agreeing or disagreeing with what someone else wrote; be sure to write at least a paragraph’s worth of commentary.
  - **Evidence:** The evidence for your postings needs to come directly from our assigned readings. Use the text that we are reading in common to illustrate the argument that you are making, while taking care to properly cite page, chapter, or line numbers when you include a direct quotation.
  - **Style:** Contribute to our Discussion forum using Standard written English. At a minimum, that means correct spelling and grammar, proper punctuation, and the avoidance of digital shorthand.
- **Variable Assignments:** These assignments are my way of inviting you to think outside the proverbial box. If they can generally be described as offbeat, they are also an opportunity for you to rethink the way that you normally approach works of literature, even as you revise the very category of the “literary.”
- **Midterm:** You will take a Midterm exam at the end of the third week of the

course. This exam will consist of identification questions (in which you identify the title of a given work, along with its author and date of publication) as well as medium-length “thought” questions that ask you to analyze and draw synthesizing connections between our assigned texts.

- **Analytical Essay:** This is a critical literary essay on an assigned text, Phillis Wheatley’s “On Being Brought from Africa to America” (1773). Essays are to be three pages in length, with the due date coming at the end of the semester.

## ATTENDANCE AND OTHER CLASS POLICIES

Please be aware of the following attendance policies for our online course:

- Each Monday will typically be the first day of our class week. That same week will run through Sunday.
- Your regular attendance is expected for your success in this course. If you miss more than one week of engagement, you may well fail the course. This rule applies to all weeks of the course, including the first and last weeks.
- It is your responsibility to inform me of any temporary absence from our online class. With that said, the above one-week rule applies throughout the semester.
- Your engaged participation is a prerequisite in this course. Online participation may be demonstrated through posting to a discussion board or classroom meeting, completing real-time activities or quizzes, and performing other course-related activities (synchronous or asynchronous).

## NETIQUETTE FOR ONLINE COURSE

- Be polite and respectful of one another.
- Avoid personal attacks. Keep dialogue friendly and supportive, even when you disagree or wish to present a controversial idea or response.
- Be careful with the use of humor and sarcasm, which can be easily misinterpreted.
- Be helpful and considerate. Foster community, communication, and collaboration.
- Contribute constructively and completely to each discussion. Avoid short repetitive “I agree” responses, and don’t make everyone else do the work.
- Consider carefully what you write; re-read before sending or posting.
- Remember that e-mail is a permanent record that may be forwarded to others.

- Be brief and succinct. Don't use up other people's time or bandwidth.
- Use descriptive subject headings for your postings to the Discussion forum.
- Respect privacy. Don't forward a personal message without permission.
- Keep responses professional, educational, and pertinent to our course materials.
- Do not send large attachments unless you have been asked to do so.
- Two-word responses (e.g., "I agree," "Me too," etc.) do not count as postings.

### **AI Use Not Permitted**

In this class, it is essential that all submitted work reflects your own understanding and skills. The use of AI tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, or similar technologies is not permitted. This ensures that your submitted work genuinely represents your personal knowledge and capabilities. Any use of AI tools on submitted work in this course will be considered a violation of the university's [Academic Requirements in the University Manual](#) (see 8.27.10 – 8.27.22).

### **URI ACADEMIC WRITING STANDARDS**

Specific writing standards differ from discipline to discipline, and learning to write persuasively in any genre is a complex process, both individual and social, that takes place over time with continued practice and guidance. Nonetheless, URI has identified some common assumptions and practices that apply to most academic writing done at the university level. These generally understood elements are articulated here to help you see how you can best express your ideas effectively, regardless of the discipline involved or the particulars of any specific writing assignment.

Venues for writing include e-mail, electronic chat spaces, and interactive blackboards. URI is committed to guaranteeing that students can expect all electronic communication to meet Federal and State regulations concerning harassment or other "hate" speech. Individual integrity and social decency require common courtesies and a mutual understanding that writing—in all its educational configurations—is an attempt to share information, knowledge, opinions, and insights in fruitful ways.

Academic writing (as commonly understood in the university) always aims at correct Standard English grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

The following details are meant to give you accurate, useful, and practical assistance for writing across the curriculum of URI.

Students can assume that successful collegiate writing will generally:

- Delineate the relationships among writer, purpose, and audience by means of a clear focus (thesis statements and critical hypotheses are two examples of such focusing methods, but are by no means the only ones) and a topic that's managed and developed appropriately for the specific task.
- Display a familiarity with and understanding of the particular discourse styles of the discipline and/or particular assignment.
- Demonstrate the analytical skills of the writer rather than just repeating what others have said by summarizing or paraphrasing
- Substantiate abstractions, judgments, and assertions with evidence specifically applicable for the occasion, such as illustrations, quotations, or relevant data.
- Draw upon contextualized research whenever necessary, properly acknowledging the explicit work or intellectual property of others.
- Require more than one carefully proofread and documented draft, typed or computer printed unless otherwise specified.

## PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Cheating and plagiarism are serious academic offenses, which are dealt with firmly by the College and University. Scholastic integrity presumes that students are honest in all academic work. **Cheating** is the failure to give credit for work not done independently (i.e., submitting a paper written by someone other than yourself), engaging in unauthorized communication during an examination, or claiming credit for work not done (i.e., falsifying information). **Plagiarism** is the failure to give credit for another person's written or oral statement, thereby falsely presuming that such work is originally and solely your own.

If you have any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, visit the following website: <https://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/whatisplagiarism>, the URI Student Handbook, and University Manual sections on plagiarism and cheating at <http://web.uri.edu/studentconduct/student-handbook/>.

Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. A student's name on any written work, quiz, or exam shall be regarded as assurance that the work is the result of the student's own independent thought and study. Work should be stated in the student's own words, properly attributed to its source. Students have an obligation to know how to quote, paraphrase, summarize, cite, and reference the work of others with integrity. The following are examples of academic dishonesty:

- Using material, directly or paraphrasing, from published sources (print or electronic) without appropriate citation;
- Claiming disproportionate credit for work not done independently;
- Unauthorized possession or access to exams;
- Unauthorized communication during exams;
- Unauthorized use of another's work or preparing work for another student;
- Taking an exam for another student;
- Altering or attempting to alter grades;
- The use of notes or electronic devices to gain an unauthorized advantage during exams;
- Fabricating or falsifying facts, data or references;
- Facilitating or aiding another's academic dishonesty;
- Submitting the same paper for more than one course without prior approval from the Instructor.

Please take note of the following section from the University Manual:

**8.27.17.** Instructors shall have the explicit duty to take action in known cases of cheating or plagiarism. The instructor shall have the right to fail a student on the assignment on which the instructor has determined that a student has cheated or plagiarized. The circumstances of this failure shall be reported to the student's

academic dean, the instructor's dean, and the Office of Student Life. The student may appeal the matter to the instructor's dean, and the decision by the dean shall be expeditious and final.

Such action will be initiated by the instructor if it is determined that any written assignment is copied or falsified or inappropriately referenced.

Any good writer's handbook as well as reputable online resources will offer help on matters of plagiarism and instruct you on how to acknowledge source material. If you need more help understanding when to cite something or how to indicate your references, PLEASE ASK.

**Please note:** Students are responsible for being familiar with and adhering to the published "**Community Standards of Behavior: University Policies and Regulations,**" which can be accessed in the **University Student Handbook**.

## ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

### Office of Disability Services

#### Americans With Disabilities Act Statement

Any personal learning accommodations that may be needed by a student covered by the "Americans with Disabilities Act" must be made known to the university as soon as possible. This is the student's responsibility. Information about services, academic modifications, and documentation requirements can be obtained from the Office of Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity and Diversity (AAEOD).

<https://web.uri.edu/affirmativeaction/>

Any student with a documented disability is welcome to contact me early in the semester so that we may work out reasonable accommodations to support your success in this course. Students should also contact Disability Services for Students, Office of Student Life, 330 Memorial Union, 401-874-2098.

#### From the University Manual: 6.40.10 and 6.40.11 Accommodations for Qualified Students With Disabilities.

Students are expected to notify faculty at the onset of the semester if any special considerations are required in the classroom. If any special considerations are required for examinations, it is expected the student will notify the faculty a week before the examination with the appropriate paperwork.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Topics Discussed	Course Learning Objectives	Assignments/Deliverables
1a	Syllabus / Course Overview	Identify the principles/methods of early American literary study	Online Introduction, Discussion, Syllabus Quiz
1b	Literary Form and Function "Origin of Folk Stories" (Seneca)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize "form" as historical, aesthetic, and sociological category of literature</li> <li>Identify some of the primary literary forms of early America</li> <li>Conceive of form functionally, recognizing the "work" that literature performs in world</li> <li>Conceive of early America expansively, in spatial and temporal terms</li> </ul>	Plot "Mapping" Exercise, Quiz, Discussion
2a	Cultural Mapping Captivity Narrative  Cabeza de Vaca, <i>La Relación</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize the original instance in the Americas of the genre of the captivity narrative</li> <li>Identify and describe the formal traits of same</li> <li>Distinguish b/w narrative situation of reader and writer on one hand, reader and literary characters on the other</li> </ul>	Quiz, Discussion
2b	Racial / ethnic representation Intercultural communication  Cabeza de Vaca, <i>La Relación</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parse the politics of literary interpretation</li> <li>Distinguish between critical description and critical analysis</li> </ul>	Quiz, Discussion
2c	Narrative = storytelling strategy Nonfiction narrative = literature  Cabeza de Vaca, <i>La Relación</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize the sociopolitical functions of literary form</li> <li>Identify and apply new critical literary vocabulary</li> </ul>	Quiz, Discussion

3a	Colonial American literature: New England  John Winthrop, <i>A Modell of Christian Charity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize the traits of the sermon form of the jeremiad</li> <li>Explain the functions (literary and social) of the same</li> </ul>	Quiz, Summary/Diagram, Discussion
3b	Puritan Poetics  Anne Bradstreet, "The Prologue [To Her Book]," "The Author to Her Book," "To My Dear and Loving Husband"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize formal characteristics of Puritan verse</li> <li>Apply the rules of prosody</li> <li>Utilize appropriate critical vocabulary to interpret poetry</li> <li>Initiate a gendered interpretation of literature</li> <li>Appreciate relation b/w literary form and material format</li> </ul>	Recorded Poetry Recital, Scanned Poem, Discussion
<b>Midterm: must complete by Sunday, July 12, at 10:00 pm</b>			
4a	The Early American Novel Reading Revolution  Hannah Webster Foster, <i>The Coquette</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify main formal features of the novel in early America</li> <li>Interrogate the relations between genre and gender</li> </ul>	Quiz, Discussion (including assigned definitions)
4b	Seduction and Literary Form Epistolary Novel Audience Response  Hannah Webster Foster, <i>The Coquette</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze the rhetorical relation b/w the reader and the text</li> <li>Demonstrate through textual evidence the formal considerations of the same</li> </ul>	Quiz, Discussion
5	Racial Poetics in Colonial America  Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America" and selections from Honorée Fanonne Jeffers, <i>The Age of Phillis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Account for racial dynamics of early American verse</li> <li>Relate those dynamics to contemporary verse forms</li> <li>Register the aural components of lyrical meaning-making</li> </ul>	Analytical Essay, a comparative reading of Wheatley's poem and Honorée Fanonne Jeffers's <i>The Age of Phillis</i> (2020)
<b>Analytical Essay due by Friday, July 24, at 5:00 pm</b>			