

Fall 8-15-2007

ENG 3700-001: American Literature, 1450-1800

Angela Vietto
Eastern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2007



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Vietto, Angela, "ENG 3700-001: American Literature, 1450-1800" (2007). *Fall 2007*. 116.
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2007/116

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2007 at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fall 2007 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

American Literature, 1450-1800

Fall 2007

Dr. Angela Vietto

3345 Coleman Hall

avietto@gmail.com
217-549-3203 (cell)

Office hours:
M 1:30-3:00, T 10-12, W 1:30-3:00

This is a class in early American literature, spanning several hundred years, roughly from the period just before Columbus's voyage in 1492 to 1800 (just after the end of the American Revolution).

The careful, culturally informed reading that will help us make sense of the texts of early America requires very advanced reading skills, so we will focus a great deal on the skills that will help you move from being a competent reader to being an expert reader. That is to say, we will spend time reading together and talking about the ways in which an expert reader approaches a new text; we will discuss and practice strategies for reading aloud and taking notes; and we will discuss and practice using resources that will help you research the answers to questions that arise as we read. The course also has other specific learning objectives, listed below.

A note about "back then": In this class, I will ask you to think very consciously about the generalizations you have been taught about early America, its culture, people, and literature. Be prepared to find that some of our readings will challenge some of those generalizations.

Objectives

This course is designed to help you:

- * Identify and use reading strategies that expert readers use
- * Identify and describe the major genres of early American literature
- * Appropriately use characteristics of major genres and knowledge of literary, cultural, and historical context to help you understand texts from early America
- * Research literary, cultural, and historical context to help you understand a text
- * Describe and summarize the best-known texts of early American literature
- * Improve your skill in writing analytically and expressively

Texts

Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland, or the Transformation*

Cotton Mather, *Wonders of the Invisible World*

Carla Mulford, ed., *Early American Writings*

Carla Mulford, ed., *The Power of Sympathy* (by William Hill Brown) and *The Coquette* (by Hannah Webster Foster)

Attendance

I do not *automatically* penalize you for missing class. This does not change the fact that coming to class is one of the best-hidden secrets for succeeding in college literature classes. Important stuff happens in class. Really. Moreover, please note the following specific policies:

- ◆ On days you are absent—for any reason—you cannot earn or make up participation points.
- ◆ On days you are absent—for any reason—it is *your* responsibility to check with a classmate to find out what you missed in terms of assignments. Missing class is *not* an excuse for not having an assignment (reading or writing) completed and ready to turn in when it is due.

- ◆ Students who do not appear for the mid-term or final exam on the scheduled dates will only be allowed to make up the exam if they present me with written documentation from a credible source that indicates that an unexpected, serious illness or emergency prevented them from being present for the exam.

Disability Information

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodation, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Electronic Writing Portfolio

This is a writing-intensive course, so you may submit a paper from this course for your second-year or third-year Electronic Writing Portfolio submission. (First-year submissions must come from Engl 1001/1091/1002/1092; fourth-year submissions must come from the EIU senior seminar.) A link to the EWP submission form can be found on the class web site.

The English Department's Statement on Plagiarism

“Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—‘The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work’ (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.”

My Statement on Plagiarism and Other Forms of Academic Dishonesty

If you *know* it’s cheating or plagiarism, don’t do it. It is not at all difficult for a Ph.D. in English to tell the difference between student writing and professional writing. I have, alas, had to turn in at least one student for plagiarism each year I have been at Eastern.

If you’re *not sure* whether what you’re doing might be considered plagiarism or cheating, *ask me, before you ask me to grade the assignment about which you’re in doubt*. When we reach an assignment for which you need to use sources, we’ll review acceptable use.

Grades and Projects

Grade Breakdown

Commonplace book/blog	250 points
Participation	200 points
Mid-Term Exam	100 points
Essays (3 @ 100 points)	300 points
Final Exam	150 points

Final Grading Scale

A	920-1000
B	840-919
C	760-839
D	680-759
F	679 and below

Commonplace book/blog. You will need either a notebook or binder (separate from the one in which you take notes in class) that is dedicated only to this assignment, or an on-line blog dedicated only to this assignment. Whether you choose to write on paper or online, assignments for the commonplace book/blog will be the same. I will collect paper commonplace books without notice (and examine blogs at the same time), or I may ask you to share from notebooks or blogs during class, so they need to be up to date and available during every class session.

Participation. Discussion is a central component of how we learn in the humanities. Research on learning shows that you are able to retain and apply what you learn better when you discuss it than when you merely listen to others. Listening to others discuss is like watching other people lift weights; it might be interesting, but you won't get stronger that way.

Please note, though, that *quality* counts. One well-considered comment can be worth more than 10 minutes of pointless talk. I will also ask for other kinds of participation: reading aloud, acting out scenes, participating in structured debates, etc. Some of these activities require as much thought and more courage than discussion.

On the other hand, activities like sleeping during class, arriving late, giving little effort to in-class writings or small group discussions or generally acting like a high school student can earn you negative participation points.

For each person who's present, I assign between 1 and 5 participation points for each class session.

Three essays will ask you to write analytically in response to early American literature.

The ***mid-term and final exams*** are designed to test your success in achieving all of the course objectives except research. You will be presented with short (less than 1 page) selections from early American literature that we will *not* be reading in class and asked to analyze those passages using what you have learned in the class. You will also be asked to describe / summarize key texts that we have read.

Late Work. It is your responsibility to find out what work you have missed when you miss class. You need a classmate you can contact; being unable to reach me at any time of day or night does not absolve you of responsibility for finding out what you have missed. If you miss a deadline for a formal essay, I will deduct 5 points for every class period the essay is late, unless you asked for an extension *before the deadline*. No late work will be accepted after the final exam.

First Week Schedule

Note carefully: The reading and homework schedule for this class will be developed as we go. Every few weeks I will distribute a reading schedule for the next few weeks, and I may adjust the schedule through announcements made in class. If you miss class, you should check with a classmate to find out whether assignments were made or modified.

M Aug 20 In class: Overview of the course; class member introductions; introduction to *The New England Primer*.

Homework: Finish reading and annotating the excerpts from *The New England Primer* distributed in class. If you are going to use a blog for your commonplace book, set up the blog and email its address to me.

W Aug 22 In class: Discussion of *The New England Primer* and critical cultural reading

Homework: In your commonplace book (notebook or blog), reflect on your own reading habits in relationship to the characteristics of “novice readers” and “expert readers” discussed in class. Do you ever use the practices of expert readers? Which ones? When are you more likely to use them? Why?

F Aug 24 In class: Baseline reading comprehension assessment

Homework: Review visual portfolio of late 18th-century Philadelphia; note questions and observations in your commonplace book

Important Dates

(subject to change)

M Sept 3 No Class—Labor Day Holiday

M Sept 24 Essay One Due

W Oct 10 Mid-Term Exam

F Oct 12 No Class—Fall Break

M Oct 29 Essay Two Due

M Nov 19-
F Nov 23 No Class—Thanksgiving Break

F Dec 7 Essay Three Due

W Dec 12,
10:15-12:15 Final Exam
