

**University of Massachusetts Lowell
Department of English**

Syllabus for 42.331: American Novels to 1900

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:

Instructor: Dr. Melissa M. Pennell, Professor of English

Instructor Availability: Office Hours: Mon. 11-12, Wed. 11-12 and 3:30 to 4:30 and by appointment

Office Location and Telephone Number: O'Leary Library, Rm. 483, x. 44198

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COURSE INFORMATION:

Course Number/Title/Credits: 42.331 American Novel to 1900, Sect. 201 (3 Cr.)

Meeting Time and Place: 12:30 to 1:45 MW, O'Leary 500M, South Campus

Catalog Description: A study of the American novel from the colonial period to 1900.

Prerequisites for the course: 42. 101 and 102--College Writing I and II

Students for whom course is intended: Undergraduates at the sophomore level and above who are majoring in English, who may be considering an English major or minor (or an English concentration in the BLA program), who are fulfilling a course for the American Studies major or minor, or who simply enjoy reading 19th-century American literature.

COURSE PURPOSE, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES:

Throughout the nineteenth century, American novelists engaged in a debate over the nature of American life and how to represent the experience of that life within fiction. They explored the role of the frontier, the shift from an agrarian to an industrial society, the rise of social reform movements, the impact and legacy of slavery, the influence of science and technology, the debate over gender roles and expectations, and the role of the artist/writer within American culture. Those who wrote in the form often labeled "romance" were interested in the impact of America's past upon the present. Those who identified themselves as "realists" believed that their work was faithful to American belief in democratic equality through its attempts to represent ordinary individuals and the conflicts they experience. Novelists who have often been labeled "naturalists" sought to expose what they felt were the limits of realism and the truths of human experience, often influenced by the debates over evolution and determinism. Our readings in this course will allow us to explore the issues that a number of major American writers treat within their fiction as well as to consider the debates that occurred over the nature of narrative.

This course is also designed to encourage students to develop or improve skills and habits of thought that will contribute to personal learning and to successful performance in other courses and/or disciplines. Thus students will be encouraged to:

- articulate observations clearly
- trace a thought to its logical conclusion in discussion and in written work
- read texts critically
- write organized and accurate responses to exam questions
- present thoughtful, analytical, well written essays that reflect critical reading

By the end of our semester, students will be able to

place a variety of American novels within their historical and social contexts
 discuss how these novels address issues of gender, race, and class in 19th century America
 trace changes in narrative method across the 19th century
 identify relationships among and influences upon a number of major American authors

Relationship of Course to General Education Requirements:

This course does not fulfill Gen Ed requirements in the Gen Ed 2000 program.

Relationship of Course to Program in English:

42.331 is an upper level course that will help students develop a historical context for the study of literature, a better understanding of the American tradition as expressed through a variety of literary movements and sub-genres of the novel, and a wider familiarity with the work of major and minor writers. This course will assist students in continuing to develop skills in critical reading and in analytical writing.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

This course relies heavily upon class discussion and group discussion as well as background notes/lectures to cover material. You are responsible for any material assigned or discussed. Your attendance is important; if you miss class discussions and activities, you will find it difficult to prepare for exams and develop the material for your papers.

You are expected to read all of the assigned material. You are encouraged to keep a reading/discussion journal to assist you in preparation for class and for papers. In this journal you should record your responses to characters, ideas you have about themes, insights you have about symbols, motifs, etc. You can also jot down questions you have as you are reading and that come to mind as you reflect upon material.

Brief quizzes on assigned readings may be given at any time; these are intended to encourage completion of reading assignments and class attendance. There are no "make-ups" on these quizzes. Short writing activities (response papers) will occur during class or be assigned for outside class. We may also try a discussion board on the class wiki to respond to questions and set up groundwork for discussion ahead of class time.

There is take home exam due at mid semester. The exam consists of essay questions that test your ability to synthesize ideas and analyze the readings as you develop your response. The exam will be due on **March 12**. There will be a **final exam** given during the exam period. It will follow the same format as the midterm exam and will cover the second half of the course material. The date and location for the exam will be announced on the registrar's exam schedule. This exam will be written as an “in-class” exam.

There are two formal papers required. The first, a 5-7 page paper, is due **Monday, Feb 24**. For this paper we will do a **peer review session on Feb 19**--you must bring a draft to class! The second, a 10-12 page paper, is due **Wednesday, April 23**. A handout of suggested topics for each paper will be distributed. A handout on documentation style (MLA format) and helpful hints will be distributed before the first paper to assist you in preparing your essay. Late papers will be penalized; no paper will be accepted after the last day of class unless you have taken an incomplete in the course.

In accordance with University policy and the ADA, I will provide accommodation for students with documented disabilities. If you have a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible. Their office is on North campus, in Cumnock Hall C6, phone: 978-934-4574, e-mail: Disability@uml.edu. This documentation is confidential. I cannot provide accommodations without an official notification.

I assume that all students in my classes are adults and will behave accordingly. This means exhibiting professional and respectful behavior that is conducive to a beneficial learning environment in the classroom. Examples of inappropriate behavior include: text messaging, listening to music, cell phone use (other than the campus alert system), late arrivals, early departures, use of laptops for other than class purposes, disrespectful comments or behavior, intentional disruptions, failure to follow faculty directives. Students in violation of these standards may be asked to leave class and/or be referred to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action.

Emerson says: “There is a time in every man’s education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better, for worse, as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till. The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried.” Needless to say, plagiarism and cheating violate this principle and will not be tolerated. Please see the UML catalog for additional explanations of academic integrity and academic dishonesty and the penalties that may be incurred:

http://www.uml.edu/catalog/undergraduate/policies/academic_dishonesty.htm

GRADING POLICIES:

Your grade will be determined as follows:

quizzes and response papers = 5%
 first paper = 25%
 hour exam = 20%
 second paper = 30%
 final exam = 20%

CONTENT OUTLINE:

We will begin our reading with *The House of the Seven Gables*, a novel that is published in the mid 19th century, but looks back to the colonial period and the early decades of the 19th century to establish some of the conflicts that define the novel's time present. We will then read the remaining novels on the course list in loose chronological order. We can consider the changing nature of narrative and style between those novels written before the Civil War and those written after. We will explore how all of the writers we encounter, whether they are writing "romances" or see themselves as realists or naturalists, interrogate and critique assumptions about American life. We will attempt to discern how the novels selected for discussion reflect the contexts out of which authors write and how these authors respond imaginatively to the experiences of American life.

All books for the course should be available in the campus bookstore. They are also available at area bookstores and in public libraries.

Required Texts:

Charlotte Temple, Susanna Rowson (1791)
The House of the Seven Gables, Nathaniel Hawthorne (1851)
Uncle Tom's Cabin, Harriet Beecher Stowe (1852)
Clotel, or The President's Daughter, William Wells Brown (1853)
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain (1885)
Rise of Silas Lapham, William Dean Howells (1885)
Washington Square, Henry James (1880)
The House of Mirth, Edith Wharton (1905)

COURSE CALENDAR: Approximate Discussion and Evaluation Schedule for Course**Wk 1**

Jan 22 Intro to Course
 Brief Overview of the Emergence of Novels in America –
 who and what were people reading?

Wk 2

Jan 27 - 29 Read and Discuss: *The House of the Seven Gables*
 Some background on Hawthorne and the Definitions of Romance
 For Monday: To Chapter 9
 For Wednesday: To Chapter 14

Wk 3

Feb 3 -5 Finish *Seven Gables* and begin discussion of *Charlotte Temple*
 For Monday: To end of *Seven Gables*.
 Background on Rowson and early American novels
 For Wednesday: *Charlotte Temple*, Volume I

Wk 4

Feb 10 Read and Discuss *Charlotte Temple* and begin *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
 For Monday: *Charlotte Temple*, Volume II

Feb 12 Background on Stowe and the Anti-slavery Movement
For Wednesday: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to Chapter 9

Wk 5

Feb 17 UML Closed – Presidents' Day

Feb 18 **Monday Class Schedule**
Uncle Tom's Cabin to Chapter 18

Feb 19 *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to Chapter 25
Peer review session for Paper #1

Wk 6

Feb 24-26 For Monday: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to Chapter 34

Paper # 1—Due Date Feb 24

For Wednesday: Finish *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Wk 7

March 3-5 Background on Brown and the traditions of African American Lit
For Monday: Read *Clotel* to Chapter 14

For Wednesday: Read *Clotel* to Chapter 21

Wk 8

March 10-12 For Monday: Read *Clotel* to end.

Background on Twain and Realism
For Wednesday: Read *Huck Finn* through Chapter 7

Midterm exam due March 12

March 15-23 Spring Break

Wk 9

March 24-26 Read and Discuss *Huckleberry Finn*
For Monday: Read *Huck Finn* through Ch. 21

For Wednesday: Read *Huck Finn* through Ch. 31

Wk 10

Mar 31-Apr 2 Read and Discuss *Huckleberry Finn* and begin *Silas Lapham*

For Monday: Read *Huck Finn* to the end.

Background on Howells and Realism
Begin *Rise of Silas Lapham*

For Wednesday: Read *Silas Lapham* to Ch. 6

Wk 11
Apr 7-9

Read and Discuss *Silas Lapham*
For Monday: Read *Silas Lapham* to Ch. 14

For Wednesday: Read *Silas Lapham* to Ch. 20

Note 4/9: Last day to drop with W

Wk 12
Apr 14-16

Finish *Silas Lapham*
For Monday: Read *Silas Lapham* to end

Background on James, innovations in realist technique and the psychological novel

For Wednesday: Read *Washington Square* to Chapter 15

Wk 13
Apr 21

UML closed – Patriots' Day

April 23

Washington Square to end.

Paper #2 due

April 25

Note Friday class meeting!

Background on Wharton, realism with naturalist shadings
Read: *House of Mirth* to Chapter VII.

Wk 14
Apr 28-30

Read and Discuss *House of Mirth*

For Monday: *Mirth* through Chapter XV

For Wednesday: *Mirth*, Bk II to Chapter VIII

(Finish *Mirth* to use for exam – study questions will be provided)

Wk 15
TBA

Final Exam