

English 2613: Survey of American Literature I

Fall 2026

Professor Todd Giles

Bea Wood 211

940-397-4124

todd.giles@msutexas.edu

Class meets TR in Dillard 342 (9:30-10:50)

Office Hours: MWF 10:00-11:00 & TR 11:00-12:00 / and by appointment

Course Description

“Survey of American Literature with emphasis upon historical background as well as important writers from the beginnings through the rise of Realism.”

Course Requirements

Assignments	Grade Percent
In-Class Writing/Quizzes/Homework	90%
Final Essay Exam	10%

Assessment of THECB core objectives for LANGUAGE, PHILOSOPHY & CULTURE

Final Essay Exam

Each student will compose an end-of-semester Final Essay Exam exploring what they have learned throughout the semester about American literature and culture that will demonstrate the four core objectives listed below.

- **Critical Thinking Skills**—creative thinking; innovation; inquiry; and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.
 - To assess the student’s critical thinking skills, the Final Essay Exam rubric will be applied to the Final Essay Exam.
- **Communication Skills**—effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.
 - To assess the student’s written communication skills, the Final Essay Exam rubric will be applied to the Final Essay Exam.
- **Social Responsibility**—intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.
 - To evaluate social responsibility, the Final Essay Exam rubric will be applied to the Final Essay Exam.
- **Personal Responsibility**—ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making

- To assess ethical use of sources as a measure of personal responsibility, the Final Essay Exam rubric will be applied to the Final Essay Exam.

Grading Policy

In this class, the following numerical equivalents for final grades are used: A = 100-90%; B = 89-80%; C = 79-70%; D = 69-60%; F = 59-0%.

Daily Writing and Class Activities

Your course grade is directly tied to keeping up with the readings, which means we will have daily in- and out-of-class writings, including brief in-class writing prompts, reading quizzes, in-class small group work, and various short homework assignments. These will be graded on a plus/x/check/minus scale: **(+)** for doing a thorough job (100%); **(x)** for a good job (85%); **(√)** for completing the work in an acceptable fashion (70%); **(-)** for not completing the work or for obvious lack of effort (0%). On occasion, some assignments might, depending on length, count for more than one daily grade. As your grade is determined by your presence and attention to the daily readings, you cannot make up in-class writing or homework.

Class Preparation and Participation

To succeed at your daily writing, you must show that you've closely read, have at least a cursory understanding of the material, and address, to the best of your ability, the writing prompts. I do not expect you to remember exact quotations, but specific examples from the work always help get the point across. It is also good to try to tie in any relevant terminology or critical concepts from class discussions. As you read, take notes and underline/highlight what you believe are key passages in the text (a climactic scene, crucial lines for understanding the work, a summary of the argument, etc.), or things you have trouble understanding. ***Come to each class with comments and questions!**

Plagiarism / Artificial Intelligence Policy

Plagiarism (including AI-generated writing) is the use of someone else's thoughts, words, ideas, or lines of argument in your own work without appropriate documentation, whether you use that material in a quotation, paraphrase, or summary. ***All incidents of plagiarism will an automatic F, be reported to the department chair, and kept on file. A second incident of plagiarism in class by the same student will result in the student receiving an F for the course.**

Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Disability Support Services in Room 168 of the Clark Student Center, 397-4140.

Attendance Policy

Because this is a discussion-oriented course and the work we do in class is designed to help you understand the readings and improve your critical reading, thinking and writing skills, you must attend class to do well. By failing to regularly attend class you will not understand the critical terminology and concepts necessary to successfully complete the daily writing assignments. You are in college; come to class.

Tardiness Policy

Your behavior in the college classroom should be no different than what will be expected of you as a working professional. Regularly arriving late to class is disruptive to your instructor and your classmates; as such, it will not be tolerated. Students who arrive after the daily writing assignments have begun will automatically receive a minus.

Electronics Policy

Cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. If a student is caught using an electronic device during a quiz, they will automatically receive a zero. Likewise, each time a student is seen playing with their cellphone or iPod during class, they will automatically lose credit for any in-class writings, quizzes, homework assignments due that day. I will tell students they are losing credit for the day for the first few weeks of class, after which time it is not my responsibility to alert them.

Other disruptive behavior, including coming in late on a regular basis, chatting with classmates during class discussion or in-class writing, sleeping, or any other behavior not conducive to a mature learning environment, will first receive a warning; if the behavior continues, an instructor drop will be initiated.

Recording Devices

The use of recording devices, including cellphones, is strictly prohibited during class unless it is part of a reasonable accommodation under ADA guideline. Reason: academia should provide a space for free-flowing ideas and discussion; surveillance of any sort infringes upon your classmates' and your professor's freedom of expression.

Grade Appeals

I will be happy to try to explain the rationale behind any grade; however, I absolutely do not negotiate, haggle, or argue about grades. Part of my job is to evaluate your work and to assign a written grade to it. I do that to the best of my ability the first time.

Tutoring Support

Tutoring and Academic Support Programs (TASP) provides free drop-in tutoring for MSU students. Located on the first floor of Moffett Library, TASP's Learning center provides tutoring support in a number of core courses and subject areas. Please see our schedule for more information about times and offerings. Remember that you don't need an appointment to utilize these services. Some departments also provide tutoring. Check the "Tutoring at MSU" tab in the portal for more information about all campus tutoring opportunities. For Distance Education students, TASP has partnered with Thinkingstorm, an online tutoring company that provides you with high-quality, 24/7

tutoring support. Located at the top of your D2L course page, select the Distance Education Tutoring course to book an appointment with a tutor. If you are a distance education student (i.e. you live more than 50 miles from MSU and are in all online courses), but you do not see this course pop up under your courses, please contact Ashley Hurst.

Access to Microsoft 365

All students are able to [download Microsoft Office 365](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/products/office?ms.officeurl=getoffice365?ms.officeurl=getoffice365) free of charge using their MSU Texas student email address. (<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/products/office?ms.officeurl=getoffice365?ms.officeurl=getoffice365>)

University Computer Labs

The University provides four open computer labs throughout the week that feature access to Microsoft Office Suite for writing and internet access for research.

Location	Hours
Clark Student Center	24 hours (Mon-Sun)
Dillard 146	Mon-Thurs 6:00 am–7:00 pm
Moffett Library	Mon-Thurs 8:00 am–10:00 pm; Fri. 8-5; Sat: 10pm-6 pm; Sun: 2:00 pm-10 pm
Legacy Hall	24 hours (Mon-Sun)

Reading Schedule

This schedule is tentative; I reserve the right to amend it with oral notice in class. If you anticipate a problem with due dates, please speak with me well in advance.

Week 1

8/25 Introduction

8/27 Philip Freneau, poems (**handout**)

Week 2

9/1 Merriweather Lewis, *Journal* selections; John James Audubon, from *Ornithological Biography*

9/3 James Fenimore Cooper, from *The Pioneers*; Susan Fenimore Cooper, from *Rural Hours*

Week 3

9/8 Washington Irving, “Rip Van Winkle”

9/10 William Cullen Bryant, poems; Thomas Cole, poems

Week 4

9/15 Lydia Sigourney, poems; William Apess, “An Indian’s Looking-Glass . . .”

9/17 Early Native American poetry

Week 5

9/22 Ralph Waldo Emerson, poems; Ralph Waldo Emerson, from *Nature*

9/24 Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance”

Week 6

- 9/29 Frederick Douglass, from *Narrative of the Life* . . .
10/1 Early African American poets; Frances Harper, poems

Week 7

- 10/6 Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" & "The Birth-Mark"
10/8 Edgar Allen Poe, "The Black Cat," "The Tale-Tell Heart" & "Alone"

Week 8

- 10/13 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, poems
10/15 Margaret Fuller, from *Summer on the Lakes*; Frederick Douglass, "Niagara"

Week 9

- 10/20 Henry David Thoreau, Ch. II "Where I Lived, and what I Lived For" from *Walden*
10/22 Henry David Thoreau, Ch. IV "Sounds" from *Walden*

Week 10

- 10/27 Henry David Thoreau, Ch. V "Solitude" from *Walden*
10/29 Walt Whitman, from "Preface" to *Leaves of Grass*, "Song of Myself" #s 1-14

Week 11

- 11/3 Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself" #s 48-52, "I Sing the Body Electric"
11/5 Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," "When Lilacs Last . . ."

Week 12

- 11/10 Walt Whitman, "As I Ebb'd . . .," "This Compost"
11/12 Herman Melville, from *Moby Dick* (1)

Week 13

- 11/17 Herman Melville, from *Moby Dick* (2) & (3)
11/19 Herman Melville, from *Moby Dick* (4)

Week 14

- 11/24 Emily Dickinson, poems
11/26 **Gobble Gobble**

Week 15

- 12/1 Emily Dickinson continued
12/3 Final Essay Exam due