

English 2613: Survey of American Literature I

Spring 2025

Professor Todd Giles

Bea Wood 232

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Class meets TR in PY 202 (2:00–3:20)

Office Hours: MWF 10:00–11:00 & TR 12:30–2:00 & by appointment

“The things taught in colleges and schools are not an education, but the means of education.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

“It is only when we forget our learning that we begin to know.”

Henry David Thoreau

Texts

There are no textbooks for this course. All our readings are provided for you as PDFs on D2L. It is your responsibility to print them off, mark them up, and bring them to class.

Course Description

In this section of 2613, we will read representative works of the early period of American literature through the theoretical lens of ecocriticism, a way of reading that explores the relationships between authors (and their characters) and the landscapes they depict and inhabit. We will also examine the cross-fertilization of the arts and culture by listening to some music and exploring the visual arts. To cover this immensely rich period in our literary history at all adequately in one semester is literally impossible and means leaving out much that is undeniably important; it also means reading a lot. Although I have made a point of keeping our reading load very light, we will be covering a fair amount of material in each class session, some of which we might not actually address depending on where our discussions lead us. What we do not cover in discussion will often be covered in your daily in-class writings and homework.

***My courses are organized around the Academic Seminar model pioneered in German universities in the 19th century, in which faculty and students work together to strive for new knowledge based on five pillars: interdisciplinarity; academic freedom; critical thinking; seeking knowledge as an end in itself; and integrating new knowledge while at the same time preserving and interpreting the past.**

***My pedagogy is founded on the intrinsic value of questioning and reflection, including the questioning of my own assumptions. As a student in my class, you will develop your higher-order thinking skills through active learning—clarifying and challenging your own perspectives and those of others through the critical analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of theoretical and literary texts. We will examine and discuss challenging questions and complex realities, learn to think for ourselves, and connect to the world in rich, subtle ways.**

Course Requirements (Alternative 1)

Assignments	Grade Percent
Daily Writing/Homework/Participation	25%
Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
Final Exam	25%

Course Requirements (Alternative 2)

Assignments	Grade Percent
Daily Writing/Homework/Participation	100%

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%.

In-Class Writing & Homework

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 (80%); **(√)** 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. A few minuses or checks will not kill your grade, so breathe easy.

Class Preparation and Participation

To succeed on 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. Read the assigned material by the date listed on the schedule of readings. 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!**

Late Paper and Assignment Policy

Unless arrangements are made *in advance* for extenuating circumstances, you will automatically lose a letter grade for each day a paper is late, including weekends. If you can't make it to class on the day a major assignment is due, email me in advance and hand it in either during my office hours or into the main English office (216 Bea Wood Hall) by 5:00 the day the paper is due to avoid losing a letter grade for a late paper. A paper that is more than a week late will automatically receive an F, regardless of the quality of work. ***All major assignments must be turned in to pass the class. You will not be able to make up daily work and there is no extra credit.**

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's thoughts, words, ideas, or lines of argument in your own work without appropriate documentation (a parenthetical citation at the end and a listing in "Works Cited")—whether you use that material in a quotation, paraphrase, or summary. It is a theft of intellectual property and will not be tolerated, whether intentional or not. I have a zero tolerance for any type of plagiarism. ***All incidents of plagiarism will be penalized (the paper will receive an automatic F), reported, and kept on file. The 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.

Safe Zone Statement

I consider this classroom a place where you will be treated with respect as a human being – regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, or ability. Additionally, diversity of thought is appreciated and encouraged, provided you can agree to disagree. It is my expectation that ALL students consider the classroom a safe environment.

Attendance Policy

Because this is a writing and discussion course and the work we do in class is designed to help you understand the readings and improve your writing skills, you must attend class to do well. Although I do not take daily role, your in-class writing and participation grades should ensure your attendance and preparedness. By failing to regularly attend class you will not understand the critical terminology and concepts necessary to successfully complete the daily writing assignments and larger papers. 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. Likewise, they will not be allowed to hand in their daily reading questions.

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 or test they will automatically receive a zero on it. Likewise, each time a student is seen playing with his or her cellphone or ipod during class they will automatically lose credit for the day—any in-class writings, quizzes, homework assignments due that day will receive a minus. 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 tests, 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 cell phones and other recording or electronic devices is strictly prohibited during class unless it is part of a reasonable accommodation under ADA. 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. The bottom line is that you have to take responsibility for your own education.

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.

Writing Proficiency Requirement

All students seeking a Bachelor's degree from Midwestern State University must satisfy a writing proficiency requirement once they have 1) completed 6 hours of Communication Core and 2) earned 60 hours. Students may meet this requirement by passing the Writing Proficiency Exam, passing two Writing Intensive courses, or passing English 2113. If you have any questions about the exam, visit the Writing Proficiency Office website or call 397-4131.

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

- 1/21 Introduction
- 1/23 Philip Freneau, poems (**handout**)

Week 2

- 1/28 Merriweather Lewis, *Journal* selections; John James Audubon, from *Ornithological Biography*
- 1/30 James Fenimore Cooper, from *The Pioneers*; Susan Fenimore Cooper, from *Rural Hours*

Week 3

- 2/4 Washington Irving, "Rip Van Winkle"
- 2/6 William Cullen Bryant, poems; Thomas Cole, poems

Week 4

- 2/11 Lydia Sigourney, poems; William Apess, "An Indian's Looking-Glass . . ."
- 2/13 Early Native American poetry

Week 5

- 2/18 Ralph Waldo Emerson, poems; Ralph Waldo Emerson, from *Nature*
2/20 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance"

Week 6

- 2/25 Frederick Douglass, from *Narrative of the Life . . .*
2/27 Early African American poets; Frances Harper, poems

Week 7

- 3/4 Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" & "The Birth-Mark"
3/6 Edgar Allen Poe, "The Black Cat," "The Tale-Tell Heart" & "Alone"

Week 8

- 3/11 & 3/13 **Spring Break!**

Week 9

- 3/18 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, poems
3/20 Margaret Fuller, from *Summer on the Lakes*; Frederick Douglass, "Niagara"

Week 10

- 3/25 Henry David Thoreau, Ch. II "Where I Lived, and what I Lived For" from *Walden*
3/27 Henry David Thoreau, Ch. IV "Sounds" from *Walden*

Week 11

- 4/1 Henry David Thoreau, Ch. V "Solitude" from *Walden*
4/3 Walt Whitman, from "Preface" to *Leaves of Grass*, "Song of Myself" #s 1-14

Week 12

- 4/8 Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself" #s 48-52, "I Sing the Body Electric"
4/10 Walt Whitman, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," "When Lilacs Last . . ."

Week 13

- 4/15 Walt Whitman, "As I Ebb'd . . .," "This Compost"
4/17 **Break**

Week 14

- 4/22 Herman Melville, from *Moby Dick* (1)
4/24 Herman Melville, from *Moby Dick* (2) & (3)

Week 15

- 4/29 Herman Melville, from *Moby Dick* (4)
5/1 Emily Dickinson, poems

Week 16

- 5/6 Emily Dickinson continued
5/8 Course wrap-up