



North American Literature Course Descriptor

Course Title	North American Literature	Faculty	English
Course Code	NCHEN610	Course Leader	Dr Peter Maber
Credit Points	30	Teaching Period	Michaelmas or Hilary
FHEQ Level	Level 6	Date Approved	June 2020
Compulsory/ Optional	Compulsory		
Pre-requisites	None		
Co-requisites	None		

COURSE SUMMARY

This course explores the variety of the huge body of literature written in English in the continent of North America, including Native American, Chicano, and Canadian literature, and postcolonial theory as appropriate. It is studied in the third year, after all four of the period papers largely concerning the British Isles have already been studied and have provided a vital context for this chronologically and geographically expansive paper.

COURSE AIMS

The course aims to:

- Present the variety of Anglophone literature written over centuries in the North American continent.
- Familiarise students with the cultural position of the English language in various of the contexts in which it is used in North America.
- Provide students with a solid historical understanding of the development of North American literary voices and genres.
- Encourage students to consider the extent and limits of the applicability of postcolonial theory to the variety of literature produced in the North American continent.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

On successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

- K1c Command a coherent and detailed knowledge of the variety of English literature written, over time, in the North American continent.
- K2c Systematically understand the diverse and changing relations between the English language, its literary uses, and the culture of its speakers and writers in the North American Continent over time.
- K3c Reflect critically on the relations between North American literary texts and discourses of nation, ethnicity, gender, class, and religion.

SUBJECT-SPECIFIC SKILLS

- S1c Systematically comprehend and develop concepts of a national tradition in the North American context.
- S2c Effectively present persuasive written and oral arguments about the literature of North America in its various cultural contexts.
- S3c Systematically understand and adjudicate between competing nationalist, postcolonial, and other discourses as frameworks for the understanding of North American literature.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

- T1c Effectively communicate information and ideas through written and oral arguments concerning literature and culture cogently and coherently.
- T2c Analyse and critically examine the concerns and values of a society or a period distant in time, place or culture from one's own.
- T3c Distribute time effectively by initiating personal responsibility in order to both get an overview of the culture and literature of the North American continent, and in order to develop their own specialist interests within it.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Students will have the opportunity to engage with:

- 1 x virtual learning environment (VLE)
- 30 x large-group hours
- 3.5 x tutorial hours (individual or group tutorial)
- Weekly office hours

Students are required to attend and participate in all timetabled sessions for this course and, with the ongoing support available, to manage their directed learning and independent study.

Total study hours for this course are: 300.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

- The ability to engage in discussions about both concrete and abstract ideas in 'lectinars' and group tutorials.

- The ability to listen and respond constructively to the ideas of one’s peers in group tutorials.
- The ability to present confidently and cogently to both one’s peers and a subject specialist and engage in discussion afterwards.
- The organisational skills necessary to negotiate a very wide range of material in a limited time period.

ASSESSMENT

FORMATIVE

Students will be formatively assessed during the course by means of set assignments. These do not count towards the end of year results, but will provide students with developmental feedback.

It is suggested that students write about the author/s discussed in the week preceding the writing of any given essay; flexibility beyond this may, however, be given. Essay writing compels the students to articulate their thoughts at an early stage of their engagement with the texts; makes them practise and develop their essay-writing technique; and provides a basis for a discussion with tutors in which their ideas will be taken further. The tutor will also give advice on further thought and reading, and on essay writing - all of which will constitute good preparation for the examination.

SUMMATIVE

Assessment will be in one form:

AE:	Assessment Activity	Weighting (%)	Online submission	Duration	Length
1	Take-home examination	100%	Yes	48 hours	N/A

The examination will consist of a number of questions from which the student will have the choice of answering a specified number. Both the examination and the written assignment will be assessed in accordance with the assessment aims set out in the Programme Specification.

FEEDBACK

Students will receive formal feedback in a variety of ways: written (including via email correspondence); oral (within one-to-one tutorials or on an *ad hoc* basis); and indirectly through discussion during group tutorials. Students will also attend the formal meeting, Collections, at the end of Michaelmas and Hilary in which they will receive constructive and developmental feedback on their term’s performance.

Feedback is provided on written assignments (including essays, briefings, and reports) and through generic internal examiners’ reports, both of which are posted on the College’s VLE.

INDICATIVE READING

Note: Comprehensive and current reading lists for courses are produced annually in the Course Syllabus or other documentation provided to students; the indicative reading list provided below is used as part of the approval/modification process only.

BOOKS

Berkovitch, Sacvan (ed.), *The Cambridge History of American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994-Present)

Brogan, Hugh, *The Penguin History of the United States* (London: Penguin Books, 2001)

Kolodny, Annette, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984)

Marx, Leo, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964)

Matthiessen, F.O., *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968)

Michaels, Walter Benn, *Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1995)

Tanner, Tony, *Scenes of Nature, Signs of Men* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987)

JOURNALS

American Literary History (Oxford University Press)

PMLA (Modern Language Association of America)

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES.

Bryan Carter, 'The Virtual Harlem Project', <http://ibryancarter.com/research/>

INDICATIVE TOPICS

- The Colonial Era
- The Eighteenth Century
- The Early Nineteenth Century
- Nature
- Reform
- The Later Nineteenth Century
- American Drama
- Modernism
- Post-War Literature
- Postmodern and Contemporary Fiction

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2.0	June 2021	June 2021	Catherine Brown	1 Academic Handbook > Course Descriptors 2 VLE	April 2025
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Modifications (As per AQF4)					
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2.0	June 2021	June 2021	Category 2: Change to 'Teaching and Learning Strategy'		
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