University of Waterloo
English 342: American Literature to 1860
Fall 2002
Tues/Thurs 2:30-4:00
HH 150

Prof. V. Lamont
Office: HH 226, 888-4567 ext. 6873
vlamont@watarts.uwaterloo.ca

Availability (effective Sept. 10-Dec. 3)
Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 1:00-2:30, and at other times by appointment. If you do not find me in my office at these times, I am probably running an errand and will be back within a few minutes.
Teaching Schedule: Tues/Thurs 11:30-1:00; 2:30-4:00, Wed 1:00-4:00

Students are welcome to contact me in my office at any time, although I cannot guarantee that I will be available unless you come during my office hours or make an appointment in advance. I am usually on campus all day on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. I also check my email at least once a day (usually in the late afternoon) during the week. I am usually not on campus on Fridays (my research day). Please note that I do not check my email on weekends.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course will survey important developments in American literary history from the late 1700s until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. During this period, when the American Revolution (1783-87) was still in recent memory, the United States was in an early stage of defining itself as a nation; indeed, its geographical boundaries were still growing as the nation expanded westward. As the instability of the Revolutionary period subsided, Americans had more resources to devote to cultural pursuits, making the early 19th century a period of extraordinary growth and development in American literary activity, when some of the most recognizable names in American literature—Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, Stowe—emerged. Much of the literature of this period focussed upon self-consciously defining American identity, isolating its key values, and finding appropriate literary vehicles for expressing a uniquely "American" culture. This process was highly conflicted; thus, the objective of the course is not to arrive at some exclusive or prescriptive definition of "American" identity, but to understand the conflicts involved in early-19th century debates about national identity, and the role that literature played in this process.
TEXTS
Required
Lydia Maria Child, *Hobomok* (Rutgers University Press)
*Norton Anthology of American Literature* vol. I (6th ed.)

Highly Recommended
Note: All royalties earned from the sale of *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook* will go to the Department of English Scholarship Fund.

ASSIGNMENTS AND DISTRIBUTION OF MARKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Seminar Presentation:</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Sign Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay:</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Nov. 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam:</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation:</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>see below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Important: If you experience difficulty with any of the assignments described below, it is crucial that you talk to me early on in the process. Students are also encouraged to see me for guidance on any aspect of the course.

1. Group Seminar Presentation
This assignment will give you the opportunity to meet each other and work as a team. The goal of your seminar is to facilitate class discussion about the primary text, using the content of your seminar as a launching-point. The seminar questions ask you to focus on various topics in American cultural history that will serve as interpretive frameworks for the primary texts. **60 minutes of class time will be set aside for your seminar, including class participation and discussion. Facilitation of audience participation is a central requirement of this seminar.** Students will sign up for seminar topics (listed in the schedule of classes, below) during the first week of class. The questions accompanying each topic are intended to facilitate brainstorming only and are not meant to be prescriptive; you are responsible for formulating your own original research questions, editing your content to fit the time allotted, and organizing your material coherently.

This assignment requires research. **Start your research early** to allow time for interlibrary loans and recalls. Your research resources should reflect the most recent scholarship available, and should be peer-reviewed (i.e. published in scholarly journals and books).

Everyone in the group will receive the same mark, and it is the group’s collective responsibility to ensure that everyone contributes his or her fair share; however, the instructor reserves the right to reduce the grade of individual students who have clearly
not made an adequate contribution to the project. If you experience problems with group dynamics, it is important that you bring them to my attention as soon as they arise.

Additional Requirements
1. A handout summarizing the content of your presentation in enough detail to serve as study notes for the final exam, to be distributed to the class on the day of your presentation.
2. An annotated bibliography of works consulted for the presentation, formatted using correct MLA style as explained in the Little Brown Handbook. Do not make up your own citation style; doing so will result in the loss of marks. Each entry must be accompanied by a brief (1-3 sentences) summary of the major argument of the text.
3. A copy of the notes and any additional aids (e.g. overheads) you use for the presentation. This material will not be formally evaluated. I will use it to help jog my memory when grading the content of your presentation, and to come up with questions for the final exam.

Pointers
1. Stay within the time allowed.
2. Work as a group. Presentations consisting of four or five loosely connected—or unconnected—topics will receive lower marks than those showing solid evidence of team-work at all stages of the project.
3. Avoid information overload. The most common weakness in group presentations is that they present too much detailed material without clearly emphasizing key points. Talk about the forest, not the trees. Rehearse your seminar to make sure you can deliver it within the time allowed.
4. Problems with group dynamics (usually related to unfair division of workload) should be brought to my attention immediately. There is nothing I can do about them once the project reaches its final stages.
5. Creativity is encouraged. Role playing, dramatizations, multi-media aids, class exercises, and debates are just a few of the alternatives to the traditional lecture as means of delivering the content.
6. Remember, the main goal of your presentation is to generate intellectual discussion.

Tips for Public Speaking
1. Do not constantly lecture or read from a written text. Unless you are “natural” at public-speaking, you will probably need to equip yourself with a script, but your delivery should be informal and “speakerly.”
2. Make eye contact with everyone in the room. Do not fix your gaze on one person; this tends to exclude everyone else from the discussion.
3. Create spaces for exchange with your audience throughout your presentation. An audience can only listen for so long before they get bored and start to tune out. It’s a good idea to “wake up” your audience occasionally through some kind of participation exercise (a writing exercise, a discussion question, a poll, a quiz, etc.)
4. Ask good questions (not as easy as it sounds!). A good question should be open-ended (i.e. it should solicit elaboration rather than a “yes/no” answer). A good question should not look for the “right” answer; rather, it should be an invitation for the audience to
contribute their own ideas. When asking questions, it’s a good idea to write student responses on the board. This validates student responses, and makes it easier for you and the class to analyze the responses.

5. Go with the flow! Remember, the point of your presentation is to engage the audience. If you get a good discussion going, don’t shut it down prematurely so you can get through all of your material. While every member of your group should have an equal chance to participate in the presentation, it’s not the end of the world if you don’t get through everything you have prepared.

Evaluation

Presentations will be evaluated as follows: intellectual challenge of the content, evidence of ample background preparation, equal division of labor of all group members in both preparation and presentation of material, integration of individual contributions into a coherent whole, ability to facilitate class participation and discussion, attention to broader issues raised in the course, commitment to and enthusiasm for the project. Everyone in the group will receive the same mark. It is the group’s collective responsibility to ensure that all members contribute equally, and to contact me to mediate if there are problems with the division of labor or other aspects of group dynamics that cannot be resolved within the group. **In circumstances where a student clearly does not complete his or her fair share of the group assignment, I reserve the right to assign that student an individual grade.**

2. Essay

Required Length: 8-10 pages presented according to these specifications:

• typed or word processed, single-sided, on 8 1/2” x 11” white paper;
• double-spaced, with three lines of type per inch.
• body text in a 12 pt font. No fancy fonts please.
• all margins set at 1”—no more and no less; do not use right justification;
• number all pages 1/2” down from the upper-right hand corner with your last name before the number;
• on the first text page, provide your name, the date, and course number one inch down from upper-left corner. Double-space between this identification and the essay title, center the title, and double-space between title and first line of text.

Topics: Devising an original topic within the following parameters: it should compare and contrast two texts on the syllabus, and the topic should address the course’s focus on the role literature played in broader social, political, and cultural conflicts in early 19th-century American culture, paying particular attention to the text’s structure and language. Try to make the topic as unique and specific as you can. Once you have devised a topic, you must make an appointment to discuss it with me. I will not accept essays from students who have not done so.

Evaluation

Essays will be evaluated according to the following components: originality, interest, and level of intellectual challenge of the thesis; coherence and persuasiveness of the
argument; analysis and integration of supporting evidence; and mechanics (organization, sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, correct use of MLA citation format). First-class (85-100%) marks will be awarded only to essays that excel in every category. Note that, because the composition and content of an essay are interdependent, problems with the composition of an essay are likely to impede the clear expression of the content.

3. Participation
Students are expected to prepare for class by carefully reading the assigned text, and to participate in class discussion. Each student is responsible for keeping track of his or her participation in a participation journal. In this journal, you will record the comments and questions you contributed to class discussion, explain what prompted you to offer these comments or questions, and describe the outcome of your contribution to the discussion. You may be asked to write journal entries in class to prepare for discussion. At the last class of every month, I will ask you to hand in your journals, which I will read and keep until the end of the term, when I will re-read them in order to determine your mark for class participation.

Evaluation
Student participation will be evaluated on the basis of the following evidence, as recorded by students in their participation journals: preparation (careful reading of assigned text before class), contributions to ongoing critical conversations in class (are they constructive? productive? intellectually stimulating?), private reflection on readings, class discussion, and lectures (does it demonstrate intellectual engagement with content of the course?).

4. Final Exam
The final exam will take place during exam week and will cover the entire course, including material covered in lectures, class discussions, and group presentations. You will be required to write about texts other than those examined in presentations and essays.

NOTE ON AVOIDANCE OF ACADEMIC OFFENCES
All students registered in the courses of the Faculty of Arts are expected to know what constitutes an academic offense, to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for their academic actions. When the commission of an offense is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the summary of Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline) which is supplied in the Undergraduate Calendar (section 1; on the Web at http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/info/cal/UW/policy_71.html). If you need help in learning how to avoid offenses such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask your course instructor for guidance. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your academic advisor and the Undergraduate Associate Dean.

I reserve the right to run student essays through plagiarism detection software.
LATE POLICY
In order to ensure that all students receive fair and equal treatment with respect to lateness or absence, the policy for this course regarding late or missed assignments is as follows:

Group Presentations: A student who fails to attend a group presentation day when his/her group is scheduled to present, or who misses a substantial part of the presentation because of lateness, will receive a failing grade for the group presentation assignment. If an emergency arises, be sure to contact all involved (me, your group members) as soon as possible. Depending on the circumstances, we will either reschedule the presentation or come up with an alternative basis for evaluating your grade for the presentation, provided you supply reliable documentation to explain and justify your absence.

Term Papers are due at the beginning of class on the designated deadline date. Extensions will be considered provided the student consults with me in a reasonable amount of time before the deadline. The penalty for late assignments is a deduction of 3% per day or part thereof, including weekends. Assignments submitted on the deadline date, but after class has started, will be considered late. Submit assignments outside of class at your own risk. Assignments submitted outside of class should be signed and dated by the English Department secretary (HH 252) and submitted to the English department drop-box; otherwise, they will be dated according to when I receive them.

*Exceptions will be made in the case of an emergency, provided you contact me (by phone, email, or in person) within three working days of the assignment due-date, and are able to provide reliable documentation to explain and justify the missed/late assignment. Documentation requirements for medical emergencies are outlined in the University of Waterloo calendar (p. 1:8; form available from the Web, http://wwwadm.uwaterloo.ca/infos/illness.html). Non-medical emergencies will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, and must be verified with reliable documentation; to be reliable such documentation should be issued by an objective third party (not a friend or relative) who can substantiate claims that an emergency occurred. Students are also expected to know University and Faculty regulations regarding exams and assignments (University Calendar p. 1:7-1:11 and 7:8-7:12). While I sympathize with students who encounter computer/printer malfunctions, I do not consider these to be emergencies.

I will not accept any essays at all after the last class of the term. All term marks are considered final as of the final exam date. Requests for review of final exam marks must be made on or before the last day of classes for the Winter, 2003 term.
SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Please bring your texts to class.

Week 1
Sept. 10: Introduction and Seminar Presentation sign-up
Sept. 12: Benjamin Franklin, The Autobiography (Part One); “meet your group”
assignment based on today’s reading.

Week 2
Sept. 17: The Autobiography (cont’d); Olaudah Equiano, The Interesting Narrative of the
Life of Olaudah Equiano

Sept. 19: No Class

Week 3
Sept. 24: Lydia Maria Child, Hobomok
Sept. 26: Hobomok (cont’d);
Participation Journals Due.

Week 4
Oct. 1: Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass
Oct. 3: Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl;
Seminar – Race and Reading: Find out about the experience of slavery in the 19th
century. Then, use this historical information to analyze the strategies of representation
used by Jacobs and/or Douglass to represent the experience of slavery for a white reader.
Tell us what you learn from your historical research and textual analysis.

Week 5
Oct. 8: Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (cont’d)
Oct. 10: Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance”; Henry David Thoreau, “Resistance to
Civil Government”

Week 6
Oct. 15: Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom’s Cabin
Oct. 17: Uncle Tom’s Cabin
Seminar – Uncle Tom in the 20th Century: Research the history of Harriet Beecher
Stowe’s literary reputation from the first appearance of Uncle Tom’s Cabin to the present
(be selective – focus on key shifts in the way her work has been regarded by critics,
academics, and general readers). How and why has her reputation changed over time?
How might these changes be linked to changing definitions of “good” literature or
ideological shifts in American society? How are literary values connected to social
values?

Week 7
Oct. 22: Uncle Tom’s Cabin

Engl 342/Fall 2002
Oct. 24: Herman Melville, *Bartleby, The Scrivenor*  
**Seminar – Wall Street:** Melville subtitled *Bartleby, The Scrivnor* “A Story of Wall-Street.” Find out as much as you can about the history of Wall Street up to the 1840’s and 1850’s, and use this information as a framework for interpreting the story.

**Week 8**  
Oct. 29: *Bartleby, The Scrivenor*  
**Seminar - Women’s Rights:** What were some of the key events and arguments of the early-19th century women’s rights movement and how does *The Scarlet Letter* respond to them? How do contemporary arguments about women’s rights compare to 19th century ones? How do ideas about gender inform the way that women’s rights are conceived?

**Participation Journals Due.**

**Week 9**  
Nov. 5: *The Scarlet Letter*  
Nov. 7: *The Scarlet Letter*  
**Essay topics must be discussed with me no later than Nov. 8**

**Week 10**  
Nov. 12: no class; I will be available for essay consultation  
Nov. 14: Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself* (1881 version); **Essays Due**

**Week 11**  
Nov. 19: *Song of Myself*  
**Seminar – The Anthologized Walt Whitman:** Walt Whitman is one of the most widely anthologized American poets. Through the selection and arrangement of his poetry and introductory material written about him, anthologists construct images of Whitman which can be influenced—consciously or unconsciously—by the values and beliefs of the anthologists, and the purposes the anthology is intended to serve. Find out as much as you can about Whitman and his work. Then, gather as many American literature anthologies as you can (especially older ones) and examine their selection and arrangement of Whitman’s poetry. What poems are routinely included/excluded? What values and beliefs might be underlying these choices? (Consider researching the historical context in which the anthology was produced; e.g. an anthology from the 1950’s might be influenced by McCarthyism, while one from the 1960s might be influenced by the “flower child” movement). How have anthologies contributed to the way Whitman and his poetry is remembered and interpreted?

Nov. 21: Emily Dickinson

**Week 12**  
Nov. 26: Emily Dickinson, #528, 709, 712, 754  
**Seminar – The Edited Dickinson:** Because Emily Dickinson did not write her poetry with publication in mind (indeed, most of her poetry was published after her death), she
did not follow many of the conventions for published poetry. Since her death, editors of her work have taken various approaches to presenting her work to the public. Research the most important editors of Dickinson’s work and analyze the various ways in which her poetry has been selected, edited, and arranged for publication. How have various editors attempted to influence the public reception of Dickinson’s poetry? To illustrate your arguments, select two or three poems to discuss with the class.

Nov. 28, Dec. 3: catch-up, review, course evaluations

Participation Journals Due Nov. 28