

620:284 sec. 28

## Seminar in Literature: Origins of the American Novel

Fall 2006

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**Instructor:** Dr. Anne Myles  
**Time:** Weds. 5:30-8:20 p.m.  
**Room:** Lang 208

**Office:** Baker 213  
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**My home phone:** 833-7094 (OK for weekends or emergency, before 10:30 p.m.; I'd prefer you to contact me via my office phone or e-mail otherwise)

### Office hours:

My regular office hours are Wednesdays from 3:30 or 4:30 to 5:00 (start time depends upon whether or not I have a Department or other meeting 3:30-4:30) and Thursdays 1:00 to 3:00. If these times don't fit your schedule, please contact me and we can arrange something else. I am frequently in my office at other times besides scheduled office hours; feel free to knock anytime you see my door cracked open.

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### Required Texts:

- William L. Andrews, ed., *Journeys in New Worlds: Early American Women's Narratives*
- Carla Mulford, ed. *The Power of Sympathy* and *The Coquette*
- Tabitha Tenney, *Female Quixotism*
- Charles Cohen, ed., *The Female Marine*
- Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland* [not at bookstore; order Penguin ed. online]
- Charles Brockden Brown, *Ormond*
- James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*
- Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie*
- Martin McQuillan, ed., *The Narrative Reader*
- Cathy Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* [listed as Recommended, but strongly so; more copies available online]
- Articles and extracts available on reserve, and articles available to download through electronic databases.

### Course Description:

This course examines the emergence of fiction in early America, from popular narratives of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, through the appearance of novels as a form

in the 1780s and 1790s, to the historical romance of the 1820s, just prior to the beginning of the American Renaissance.

The course will attempt to bring together (or at least provide opportunities for) two approaches to this material. Centrally, we will consider just what American fiction was, what precursor forms contributed to it, and what kind of cultural and political work a variety of more or less fictive narratives were doing. (Fiction and truth were, as we will see, loaded terms in the period and not easy to define.) While in a purely literary-historical sense early American fiction is clearly both rooted in and closely linked to eighteenth-century British fiction, critics of the novel contend that it is no accident that the novel, that most “democratic” of art forms, emerged more or less simultaneously with the new nation. Thus we will examine how early novels in the sentimental, gothic, and romance modes help articulate American nationhood, and how they respond to cultural and political conflicts in the new nation, including questions of female education and women’s role, private and public virtue, rationality and its limits, and the place of racial “others.” If novels help define the meaning and defining values of nationhood in the early republic, do they also at times provide a means of challenging cultural institutions?

Yet also, because I know there are students who are interested in fiction as a genre or in literary theory rather than in a cultural approach, we will attempt to pay close attention to the various narrative strategies in play in the works we read, and we will read some selected extracts from twentieth-century narrative theory, to consider how theory may (or may not) be applied to fiction of a rather different sort.

**Assignments (see further on in this syllabus for detailed guidelines):**

- **Two short (approximately 3-page) papers.** Due September 27 and October 25.
- **An in-class presentation/discussion leading** on issues and textual cruxes in one week’s readings. You will sign up for your slot in the second week of class.
- **A bibliographic survey** of 2-4 additional critical articles/chapters on one work that we’re reading, copied as a handout for all members of the class. You will sign up for this in the second week, too.
- **A final essay on a topic of your choice**, approx. 15 pages in length. This should deal with one or more texts we read in class (or other appropriate primary material we did not cover), and show mastery of a significant range of recent scholarship relevant to your topic.

**Grading:**

First short paper	25 pts.
Second short paper	25 pts.
Presentation/discussion	25 pts.
Bibliographic discussion	35 pts.

Final essay	100 pts.
Attendance	20 pts.
Active participation	20 pts.
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<b>Total possible</b>	<b>250 pts.</b>

Your semester grade will be calculated based on the following standard percentage scale out of the total points possible:

A	95%	B-	80%	D+	67%
A-	90%	C+	77%	D	64%
B+	87%	C	74%	D-	60%
B	84%	C-	70%		

If you are unable to complete all the work by finals week and wish to receive a grade of I (Incomplete) you must request this of me specifically before the beginning of finals week. However, I will not give Is to people who have vanished for much of the semester and make a sudden late reappearance. According to University policy, the final date you may drop the class and receive a W on your transcript is Friday, October 27.

#### **Deadlines:**

Work is due on the date specified. There will be subtractions from your grade for late work, increasing with the length of time the paper is late. In those cases I will give the paper a “merit grade” which lets you know how I responded to the paper in itself, and the official “recorded grade” which factors in the lateness. E-mail submission is acceptable if (but only if) you can’t make it in to campus.

#### **Format for written work:**

All written work should be in a standard font/size, double spaced (with the exception of the bibliographic discussion, which you may single-space for more economical photocopying). You are expected to follow MLA style in your in-text quotations and bibliographic citations. Include a Works Cited page with all papers. Note that I have asked you to download a number of articles from electronic databases; please review an MLA handbook to make sure you know the correct form for citing articles published in print journals but accessed in electronic form. If you have a question about how to cite something, ask me.

#### **Attendance and participation policy:**

This is a graduate seminar, so your regular attendance and active participation in class discussion is presumed. It is also a class that meets just once a week, so

missing a class means missing a significant chunk of the semester's work. That said, I know that people can fall ill, face family or work crises, etc. Rather than evaluate the merits of each individual case, the following will be my attendance policy: You may be absent one week of the semester without grade penalty (of course, it would be better not to be absent at all!). However, you will lose 10 points each from your 20-point attendance score for a second or third absence. If you miss more than three classes, you will lose points from your participation score.

**Participation:** If you participate regularly (at least a couple of times within the three-hour class) and constructively in class discussion, you will receive 20 points. If you rarely speak up in class but are paying attention and behaving appropriately, you will receive 10 points. Presumably you can extrapolate other possibilities from there. Note that if you miss a lot of classes you will lose your participation points, since obviously you can't participate if you're not present.

### **Academic Ethics:**

All students are expected to abide by the University's official policy on academic ethics. You can review this policy at <http://www.uni.edu/pres/policies/301.html>. If you have any question about what would constitute plagiarism in relation to your use of a particular source, please consult with me or, if I am not available, with another faculty member. Keep a record of the sources you consult while doing research for a piece of writing; you should be able to retrieve all sources consulted if an issue should arise. You will automatically fail the course for any plagiarism that is more than minor and clearly either accidental or the result of legitimate misunderstanding of appropriate writing practices.

### **Students with Disabilities:**

If you have a disability requiring special accommodation in the classroom or for exams or other assignments, please contact me early in the semester so we can work out the appropriate adjustments. Please bring some kind of official documentation if possible; I should receive this directly from the university, but I may not have it at hand.

## Guidelines for Class Assignments

*(This is it! I won't be giving you additional handouts on these unless a problem arises.)*

**First short paper. Due September 27. Approximately 3 pages (a bit longer isn't a problem, but keep it short and focused). Include a Works Cited page.**

Choosing one of the primary texts assigned so far, identify and explore what seems to you a distinctive feature or problem of narrative strategy or style in that text. This might involve such questions as, how is the story being told? By whom, to whom? What challenges of perspective or intention arise? How is the narrative structured; where does it start and end? Does it have a shape, and is that shape significant? Are there inconsistencies or tensions in the narration? What is not said, and so what? Or anything else along these lines that presents itself. You are encouraged to draw on one or more theoretical perspectives from McQuillan if they lead you towards something interesting to say, but you do not have to do so. You do not have to have a specific thesis about the narration—your discussion might well be in a more exploratory spirit, rather than stating an argument as such—but be sure to organize your paper around a coherent question or area of inquiry.

**Second short paper. Due October 25. Length as above.**

Drawing on the assigned secondary reading so far (or additional secondary reading, if you've completed your bibliographic assignment for example), bring a cultural/historical perspective to bear on a particular passage within one of the novels or other primary texts we've read. I am asking you to choose a limited passage (a chapter at most, or a scene, or one or two letters from an epistolary novel—at any rate, no more than a few pages) because it is impossible to analyze a whole novel with any kind of intensity in a short paper. Find a passage that seems rich to you (one with several things going on, and/or some tensions or contradictions?) and see how closely you can read it, from the standpoint of how it reflects, mediates, or challenges early American concerns about such issues as women, marriage, fiction, virtue, nationhood, race, class, etc. You should establish in the beginning of your paper the coherent set of issues that will be the focus of your reading of the passage, but you don't need a formal thesis. You should explicitly cite (and may wish to discuss/quote from) the secondary sources that inform your analysis.

**Class presentation/discussion leading (individual dates).**

Every student will begin one class (or a section of the class) by leading off and helping direct discussion on (at least some of) that week's readings. Note that this is not a "background presentation" but an opening-up of ideas or questions you have derived from the reading. Here is an outline of elements I'm looking for:

1. You might begin with a general discussion of your response as a reader to the primary text and (if you wish) one or more of the secondary texts: what seemed

- engaging, strange, confusing, noteworthy? What did this text make you think about as juxtaposed with whatever we read and discussed last week?
2. Identify 2-4 issues that stood out to you from the week's readings. What do you find particular important for all of us to understand, or think further about? I'll expect you to touch on one or more of the secondary readings, historical or theoretical, in addition to the primary text. It would be good to type these up in a list or outline and project them on the Elmo as you discuss them. [Note: use at least 14-point font when preparing an Elmo projection; it is needed for adequate enlargement without cutting off the edges.]
  3. Identify 2-4 key passages in the primary and/or secondary texts for reading and discussion. It would be good for you to type these out or photocopy them to project on the Elmo. These passages might be directly linked to the issues you've chosen, or they might be somewhat separate.
  4. Based on the issues and/or passages you've chosen, try to open up a period of discussion, and direct it as it develops. I will help here as needed. Note that one or two rich, open-ended questions are typically more effective-discussion starters than a series of very specific questions. If you want, you can assign the rest of us to discussion groups, give us short writing exercises, or whatever else seems useful.

#### **Bibliographic discussion (individual dates).**

You will find and read 2-4 additional critical articles or book essays/chapters on the text you have been assigned. (You will find plenty in the MLA Bibliography; many of these writers have additional bibliographies online as well, which you can find by Googling.) I expect these articles to be serious scholarship, published in academic journals or in books from academic presses; they should be recent, almost certainly written since 1980 and most likely written since 1990, since before that there's not much quality work on early American fiction. (If you've found an article that looks good but you're not sure about its status, check with me.) Together your articles should represent a minimum of 40 pages of critical discussion, not counting endnotes. Try to choose articles containing discussions that seem interesting and relevant to the concerns of the class.

Begin your paper by listing the full citation information for each piece you will be discussing. (If it's available electronically, indicate where.) Follow this with a discussion that offers A) a synopsis of the main arguments in each piece and B) an indication of how the perspectives in each piece fit with, extend, contradict, or critique both each other and the articles the rest of the class has read. In other words, your discussion will go beyond the standard annotated bibliography in that it will contrast and relate pieces to one another.

Aim for at least a full page of discussion on each article you address, for a total of 3-6 pages. You will need to bring to class copies of your discussion for every class member as well as for me. To save on printing/photocopying, you may single-space this paper (when single-spacing, please add an extra space between paragraphs, for ease of reading).

In class, I will probably ask you briefly talk about what you found in your research, and will expect you to share perspectives from your additional reading in that night's discussion.

**Final paper:**

Stay tuned! Basically you're expected to develop a topic of your own here (a topic proposal will be due before Thanksgiving), but I'm sure we'll discuss the possibilities and requirements more as the semester progresses. The best thing to do, though, is to talk to me individually about interests or ideas you have.

## Preliminary reading and assignment schedule

### August

- W 23 Course introduction. In class reading/discussion of seventeenth-century Puritan spiritual confession and witchcraft relation.

### Unit I: Popular Narrative Before Novels

#### W 30

- *The Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682), in *Journeys in New Worlds*. Be sure to read introduction to text as well.
- 'Abraham Panther' (pseud.), "The Panther Captivity" (1787), (photocopy).
- Armstrong, Nancy, and Leonard Tennenhouse. "The American Origins of the English Novel." *American Literary History* 4.3 (1992): 386-410 (available on JSTOR)
- Michelle Burnham, "Between England and America: Captivity, Sympathy, and the Sentimental Novel," from *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature, 1682-1861* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997), 41-62 [also reprinted in Lynch and Warner, eds. *Cultural Institutions of the Novel*, 47-73] (both on reserve in UNI library)

### September

#### W 6

- *Journal of Madam Knight* (written 1704-5, pub. 1825) and *An Account of the Fore-Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge* (1774) in *Journeys in New Worlds* (plus introductions).
- In McQuillan, *The Narrative Reader*, read Forster (44-46), Benjamin (46-53).
- Homer Brown, "Why the Story of the (English) Novel Is an American Romance (If Not the Great American Novel)," *Cultural Institutions of the Novel*, ed. Deidre Lynch and William B. Warner (Durham: Duke UP, 1996), 11-43.
- Etta Madden, "Quaker Elizabeth Ashbridge as 'The Spectacle and Discourse of the Company.'" *Early American Literature* 34.2 (1999): 235-62. (Available online via EBSCOHost and others.)

#### W 13

- *The Declaration and Confession of Esther Rodgers* (1701), *A Short Account of the Life of John \*\*\*\* Alias Owen Syllavan* (1756), and *A Faithful Narrative of Elizabeth Wilson* (1786), all from Daniel E. Williams, ed., *Pillars of Salt: An Anthology of Early American Criminal Narratives* (Madison, WI: Madison House Publishers, 1993)
- In McQuillan, read Bakhtin (53-58), Booth (69-74).
- Daniel E. Williams, "Behold a Tragic Scene Strangely Changed into a Theater of Mercy': The Structure and Significance of Criminal Conversion Narratives in Early New England." *American Quarterly* 38.5 (1986): 827-847. (Available online via JSTOR) **[one more reading listed next page]**



- Kristin Boudreau, "Early American Criminal Narratives and the Problem of Public Sentiments." *Early American Literature* 32.3 (1997): 249-69. (Available online via EBSCOHost and others.)

### Unit II: Seduction Fiction and the Seductions of Fiction

#### W 20

- Selections from Susannah Rowson, *Charlotte Temple; or, a Tale of Truth* (1790) (available in the *Heath Anthology of American Literature*, vol. 1/vol. A; copies on reserve; the complete text is available online at Project Gutenberg)
- William Hill Brown, *The Power of Sympathy* (1789)
- Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*, chapter 2 and chapter 5
- In McQuillan, read Bal (81-86), Chatman (96-98), Prince (99-104).

#### W 27

- Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette, or The History of Eliza Wharton. A Novel Founded on Fact* (1797)
- Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, chapter 6.
- In McQuillan, read Eco (115-120), Todorov (120-127).
- ***Short paper 1 due in class***

#### October

#### W 4

- Tabitha Tenney, *Female Quixotism: Exhibited in the Romantic Opinions and Extravagant Adventures of Dorcasina Sheldon* (1801)
- Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, chapter 7.
- Steven Carl Arch, "Falling into Fiction: Reading *Female Quixotism*." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 14.2 (2002): 177-198. (Available online via EBSCOHost.)

### Unit III: Gender Trouble and the Gothic

#### W 11

- Daniel Cohen, ed., *The Female Marine: Narratives of Cross-Dressing and Urban Vice in America's Early Republic* (1815-1818), including Cohen's introduction.
- Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990, 1999), chap. 1 (on reserve)
- In McQuillan, read de Lauretis (204-212) and Roof (212-219).

#### W 18

- Begin Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland: Or, the Transformation* (1798).
- In McQuillan, read Miller (231-238), Cohn (250-255).

- One or more of the following selections: Jerrold E. Hogle, "Introduction: the Gothic in Western Culture" (1-20), Robert Miles, "The 1790s: The Effulgence of the Gothic" (41-62), Eric Savoy, "The Rise of American Gothic" (167-188), all in Jerrold E. Hogle, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2002). (On reserve)

### W 25

- Wieland, finish; begin reading Charles Brockden Brown, *Ormond, or the Secret Witness* (1799)
- Elizabeth Barnes, "Loving with a Vengeance: Wieland, Familicide and the Crisis of Masculinity in the Early Nation." *Boys Don't Cry?: Rethinking Narratives of Masculinity and Emotion in the U. S.* Ed. Millete Shamar and Jennifer Travis. (New York: Columbia UP, 2002), 44-63. (On reserve)
- Another article TBA
- **Short paper 2 due in class**

F 27 Last date to withdraw from course without an F

## November

### W 1

- *Ormond*, continued. Be sure to read Chapman's Introduction.
- Julia Stern, "The State of 'Women' in *Ormond*; or, Patricide in the New Nation." *Revising Charles Brockden Brown: Culture, Politics, and Sexuality in the Early Republic.* Ed. Philip Barnard, Mark L. Kamrath, and Stephen Shapiro. (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2004), 182-215. (On reserve)
- Kris Comment, "Charles Brockden Brown's *Ormond* and Lesbian Possibility in the Early Republic." *Early American Literature* 40.1 (2005): 57-78 (available online via Project Muse and other databases)

## Unit IV: Romancing National Origins

### W 8

- I will be away at a conference. In class there will be a screening of the film version of *The Last of the Mohicans* (dir. Michael Mann, 1992). Work on reading the novel.
- Recommended: Diane Price Herndl, "Style and the Sentimental Gaze in *The Last of the Mohicans*." *Narrative* 9.3 (2001): 259-82 (available online via Expanded Academic ASAP). [This article deals with both the book and the film.]

### W 15

- James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826).
- In McQuillan, Said (284-88) and Bhabha (292-97).

- Janet Dean, "Stopping Traffic: Spectacles of Romance and Race in *The Last of the Mohicans*." In Susan Strehle and Mary Paniccia Carden, eds., *Doubled Plots: Romance and History* (Jackson, MS: UP of Mississippi, 2003), 45-66 (on reserve)
- Mitzi McFarland, "'Without a Cross': The Carnivalization of Race, Sex, and Culture in *The Last of the Mohicans*." *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 48.4 (2002): 247-73 (on reserve).
- ***Final paper proposal due today, or by Monday 11/21, 5 p.m., at the latest.***

W 22 Thanksgiving break

W 29

- Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts* (1827).
- In McQuillan, Minh-Ha (297-308).
- Possible article(s) TBA

December

W 6 No regular class scheduled; time to work on your final paper. I will hold individual meetings with all students either during class time or at other times this week.

W 13 5:00-6:50 exam period. Panel presentations of final papers. **Final paper due in class (possible extension until Thursday 12/14, but not beyond!).**