



UNSW
A U S T R A L I A

**Faculty of Arts and Social
Sciences**

School of the Arts and Media

ARTS2035

American Literature: Past and Present

Session 2, 2015

UNSW Course Outline

Staff Contact Details

Position	Name	Email	Availability	Location	Phone
Course Authority	Julian Murphet	j.murphet@unsw.edu.au	Thursday 10-11	Webster 246C	93854521

School of the Arts and Media Contact Information

Room 312, level 3 Robert Webster Building

Phone: 9385 4856

Email: sam@unsw.edu.au

Website: <https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au>

Attendance Requirements

- A student is expected to attend all class contact hours for a F2F or blended course and complete all activities for a blended or fully online course.
- A student who attends less than 80% of the classes/activities and has not submitted appropriate supporting documentation to the Course Authority to explain their absence may be awarded a final grade of UF (Unsatisfactory Fail).
- A student who arrives more than 15 minutes late may be penalised for non-attendance. If such a penalty is imposed, the student must be informed verbally at the end of class and advised in writing within 24 hours.
- If a student experiences illness, misadventure or other occurrence that makes absence from a class/activity unavoidable, or expects to be absent from a forthcoming class/activity, they should seek permission from the Course Authority, and where applicable, should be accompanied by an original or certified copy of a medical certificate or other form of appropriate evidence.
- A Course Authority may excuse a student from classes or activities for up to one month. However, they may assign additional and/or alternative tasks to ensure compliance. A Course Authority considering the granting of absence must be satisfied a student will still be able to meet the course's learning outcomes and/or volume of learning. A student seeking approval to be absent for more than one month must apply in writing to the Dean and provide all original or certified supporting documentation.
- A student who has submitted the appropriate documentation but attends less than 66% of the classes/activities will be asked by the Course Authority to apply to discontinue the course without failure rather than be awarded a final grade of UF. The final decision as to whether a student can be withdrawn without fail is made by Student Administration and Records.
- For more information about the SAM attendance protocols, see the SAM policies and guidelines webpage: <https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/>

Essential Information For SAM Students

For essential student information relating to: attendance requirements; requests for extension; review of marks; occupational health and safety; examination procedures; special consideration in the event of illness or misadventure; student equity and disability; and other essential matters, see the SAM Policies and Guidelines webpage: <https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/>

Course details

Credit Points: 6

Summary of the Course:

Subject Area: English This course can also be studied in the following specialisations: Americas Studies & Creative Writing This course provides a rich survey of the major movements and dynamics of American literature, situating some of the most significant works of American prose and poetry within historical and social frameworks. The course is structured around coherent modules that juxtapose contemporary and historical texts, and argue for a distinctive national tradition. Themed modules such as 'Roads' and 'Outsiders' will blend primary with secondary reading materials and construct a compelling literary and critical portrait of the world's most powerful nation.

Aims of the Course:

This course will:

- examine the evolution of literary themes and forms from the period of European exploration of the Americas through to the present
- explore different notions of national and individual identity as they evolved and changed in "America" and the United States
- discuss the deep economic, political, and cultural changes that were occurring in 19th and 20th century America and consider the ways writers responded to these events

Student learning outcomes:

At the conclusion of this course the student will be able to:

1. Identify, describe and critically evaluate major developments in American literature
2. Gain insight into the concept of 'America' in a variety of its applications
3. Develop an awareness of the relationship between American literature and other dynamics in 19th and 20th century American society, including racial, sexual and class inequality
4. Explain key themes in American literary studies
5. Write and speak about American literature in a way that is appropriate to the academic discipline of English

Graduate Attributes:

At the conclusion of this course the student will be able to:

1. Develop the skills associated with scholarly inquiry
2. Engage in independent and reflective learning.
3. Locate, evaluate and use relevant information.
4. Show enterprise, initiative, and creativity.
5. Develop the capacity for ethical practice and social responsibility.
6. Communicate effectively.

7. Engage deeply with the relevant disciplinary knowledge in its interdisciplinary context.

Rationale for the inclusion of content and teaching approach

Teaching strategies

Rationale:

This course introduces students to some of the major works of the American canon - as well as some less respectable and more challenging texts - from the period of early European exploration to the later half of the 20th century. We have chosen texts that seem exemplarily to promote an understanding of key social and political trends in American cultural life. The course uses the theme of a road-trip as an organizing point to explore topics such as the Puritan experience, American exceptionalism, revolution and the Civil War, the philosophy and aesthetics of American transcendentalism, the Gilded Age, industrialism and the rise of consumerism, suburbia, multiculturalism and other issues. Particular attention will be paid to questions of race and gender as well as authorship and representation. The idea of the course is that by examining the literary record through the lens of American "place" in different historical periods, we can note the persistence, mutation and transformation of genres, styles and forms.

Teaching Strategies:

The teaching methods used and the assessment components you are required to complete have been developed to reflect a philosophy of learning and teaching which

- fosters an engaging and inclusive learning experience
- promotes dialogical teaching through tutorial discussions
- seeks to give every student a stake in, and an opportunity to contribute to, the course as a forum for learning.

Lectures, tutorials and assessment in this course should give you the skills necessary to perform intelligent, independent readings of American literary texts and to communicate those readings in cogent speech and prose

Assessment

The focus of your assessment activities in this course is the writing of critical discourse appropriate to the discipline of literary studies. This will be divided into three components: an early short exercise dedicated to a specific formal issue in texts from the first part of the course; a longer research essay asking you to demonstrate wider reading and a more sophisticated approach to the subject, and to compare two texts from the course; and a final examination in two parts, requiring you to demonstrate an ability to discuss the overarching themes and topics peculiar to American literature and to answer questions on two further texts from the course.

Assessment task	Length	Weight	Learning outcomes assessed	Graduate attributes assessed	Due Date
Minor Writing Assignment (15%)	1000 words	15%	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,6	August 20, 2015
Research Essay (45%)	2500 words	45%	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	September 30, 2015
Exam (40%)	2 hour examination, 2 questions.	40%	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,6,7	During examination period after end of classes.

Submission of Assessment Tasks

Students are expected to put their **names** and **student numbers** on **every page** of their assignments. If you encounter a problem when attempting to submit your assignment through Turnitin, please telephone External Support on 9385 3331 or email them on externalteltsupport@unsw.edu.au. Support hours are 8:00am – 10:00pm on weekdays and 9:00am – 5:00pm on weekends (365 days a year). If you are unable to submit your assignment due to a fault with Turnitin you may apply for an extension, but you must retain your ticket number from External Support (along with any other relevant documents) to include as evidence to support your extension application. If you email External Support you will automatically receive a ticket number, but if you telephone you will need to specifically ask for one. Turnitin also provides updates on their system status on Twitter.

Generally in SAM there will no longer be any hard-copy submission; assessments must be submitted electronically via either Turnitin or a Moodle assignment. In instances where this is not possible it will be stated on your course's moodle site with alternative submission details.

All tasks are to be submitted via Moodle, under the appropriate conditions and adhering to all requirements of word length and plagiarism.

Late Submission

PLEASE NOTE THAT THESE RULES APPLY FOR ALL COURSES IN SAM.

If your assignment is submitted after the due date, a penalty of 3% per day (including Saturday, Sunday and public holidays) will be imposed for up to 2 weeks. For example, if you are given a mark of 72 out of 100 for an essay, and your essay were handed in two days late, it would attract a penalty of 6% and the mark would be reduced to 66%. If the same essay were handed in seven days late (i.e. a penalty of 21%) it would receive a mark of 51%. If your assignment is not submitted within 2 weeks of its due date, it will receive a mark of 0. For more information on submission of late work, consult the SAM assessment protocols at <https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/>

Extension Procedure

- A student seeking an extension should submit a SAM extension application form (found in Forms on SAM

website) to the Course Authority before the due date.

- The Course Authority should respond to the request within two working days of the request.
- The Course Authority can only approve an extension of up to five days. A student requesting an extension of more than five days should complete an application for Special Consideration.
- If a student is granted an extension, failure to comply will result in a penalty. The penalty will be invoked one minute past the approved extension time.
- This procedure does not apply to assessment tasks that take place during regular class hours or any task specifically identified by the Course Authority as not subject to extension requests.
- A student who missed an assessed activity held within class contact hours should apply for Special Consideration via myUNSW.
- For more information, see the SAM extension protocols on the SAM policies and guidelines webpage: <https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/>

Special Consideration

In the case of more serious or ongoing illness or misadventure, you will need to apply for Special Consideration. For information on Special Consideration please go to this URL: <https://student.unsw.edu.au/special-consideration>

Students who are prevented from attending a substantial amount of the course may be advised to apply to withdraw without penalty. This will only be approved in the most extreme and properly documented cases.

Academic honesty and plagiarism

Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of others and presenting them as your own. It can take many forms, from deliberate cheating to accidentally copying from a source without acknowledgement. UNSW groups plagiarism into the following categories:

- **Copying:** using the same or very similar words to the original text or idea without acknowledging the source or using quotation marks. This also applies to images, art and design projects, as well as presentations where someone presents another's ideas or words without credit.
- **Inappropriate paraphrasing:** changing a few words and phrases while mostly retaining the original structure and information without acknowledgement. This also applies in presentations where someone paraphrases another's ideas or words without credit. It also applies to piecing together quotes and paraphrases into a new whole, without referencing and a student's own analysis to bring the material together.
- **Collusion:** working with others but passing off the work as a person's individual work. Collusion also includes providing your work to another student before the due date, or for the purpose of them plagiarising at any time, paying another person to perform an academic task, stealing or acquiring another person's academic work and copying it, offering to complete another person's work or seeking payment for completing academic work.
- **Inappropriate citation:** Citing sources which have not been read, without acknowledging the "secondary" source from which knowledge of them has been obtained.
- **Duplication ("self-plagiarism"):** submitting your own work, in whole or in part, where it has previously been prepared or submitted for another assessment or course at UNSW or another university.

Details of what plagiarism is can be found on the Learning Centre's Website Plagiarism & Academic Integrity website (<http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/academic-integrity-plagiarism>), in the myUNSW student A-Z: Guide <https://student.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism> and in Appendix A of the Student Misconduct Procedure (pdf-<https://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/documents/studentmisconductprocedures.pdf>).

The Learning Centre also provides substantial education written materials, workshops, and tutorials to aid students, for example:

- Correct referencing practices;
- Paraphrasing, summarising, essay writing and time management
- Appropriate use of and attribution for a range of materials including text, images, formulae and concepts.

Individual assistance is available on request from The Learning Centre. Students are also reminded that careful time management is an important part of study and one of the identified causes of plagiarism is poor time management. Students should allow sufficient time for research, drafting and proper referencing of sources in preparing all assessment items.

Course schedule

Week	Topic	Lecture Content	Tutorial/Lab Content
Week 1: 27-31 July	Introduction	An introductory lecture that will provide an overture of some of the main topics and ideas of 'American' writing, and then offer a concise introduction to the poetry of Walt Whitman.	No tutorial in Week 1.
Week 2: 3-7 August	Frederick Douglass, <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave</i> (1845)	A discussion of the themes and contexts of Douglass' great text.	Walt Whitman, <i>Leaves of Grass</i> (1855)
<p>Essential Readings:</p> <p>Walt Whitman, <i>Leaves of Grass</i> (1855)</p> <p>Frederick Douglass, <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave</i> (1845)</p>			
Week 3: 10-14 August	Herman Melville, <i>Billy Budd and Other Tales</i> (1853-1891)	An introduction to the short fictional work of Herman Melville, and to his career in general.	Frederick Douglass, <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave</i> (1845)
<p>Essential Readings:</p> <p>Frederick Douglass, <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave</i> (1845)</p> <p>Herman Melville, <i>Billy Budd and Other Tales</i> (1853-1891); esp. 'Bartleby, the Scrivener', 'Benito Cereno', and 'Billy Budd, Sailor'</p>			
Week 4: 17-21 August	Emily Dickinson, selected poems	An overview of the work of the great American poet, Emily Dickinson.	Herman Melville, <i>Billy Budd and Other Tales</i> (1853-1891); esp. 'Bartleby, the Scrivener', 'Benito Cereno', and 'Billy Budd, Sailor'
<p>Essential Readings:</p> <p>Herman Melville, <i>Billy Budd and Other Tales</i> (1853-1891); esp. 'Bartleby, the Scrivener', 'Benito Cereno', and 'Billy Budd, Sailor'</p> <p>Emily Dickinson, selected poems (available on Moodle)</p>			
Week 5: 24-28 August	William Faulkner, <i>The Sound and The Fury</i> (1929)	A critical introduction to one of the great American novels of the twentieth century.	Emily Dickinson, selected poems
<p>Essential Readings:</p> <p>Emily Dickinson, selected poems: see Moodle for set poems</p> <p>William Faulkner, <i>The Sound and The Fury</i> (1929)</p>			
Week 6: 31 August - 4	Elizabeth Bishop, selected	An introduction to the	William Faulkner, <i>The</i>

September	poems	poetry of Elizabeth Bishop.	<i>Sound and The Fury</i> (1929)
<p>Essential Readings:</p> <p>William Faulkner, <i>The Sound and The Fury</i> (1929)</p> <p>Elizabeth Bishop, selected poems</p>			
Week 7: 7-11 September	Ralph Ellison, <i>Invisible Man</i> (1952)	A reading of Ellison's powerful novel of Black experience.	Elizabeth Bishop, selected poems
<p>Essential Readings:</p> <p>Elizabeth Bishop, selected poems</p> <p>Ralph Ellison, <i>Invisible Man</i> (1952)</p>			
Week 8: 14-18 September	Thomas Pynchon, <i>Crying of Lot 49</i> (1966)	How to read Pynchon's paranoid fiction.	Ralph Ellison, <i>Invisible Man</i> (1952)
<p>Essential Readings:</p> <p>Ralph Ellison, <i>Invisible Man</i> (1952)</p> <p>Thomas Pynchon, <i>Crying of Lot 49</i> (1966)</p>			
Week 9: 21-25 September	Kathy Acker, <i>Portrait of an Eye</i> (1973-74)	What on earth was Kathy Acker up to?	Thomas Pynchon, <i>Crying of Lot 49</i> (1966)
<p>Essential Readings:</p> <p>Thomas Pynchon, <i>Crying of Lot 49</i> (1966)</p> <p>Kathy Acker, <i>Portrait of an Eye</i> (1973-74)</p>			
Week 10: 6-9 October	Marilynn Robinson, <i>Housekeeping</i> (1980)	An introduction to Robinson's sombre modern classic.	Kathy Acker, <i>Portrait of an Eye</i> (1973-74)
<p>Essential Readings:</p> <p>Kathy Acker, <i>Portrait of an Eye</i> (1973-74)</p> <p>Marilynn Robinson, <i>Housekeeping</i> (1980)</p>			
Week 11: 12-16 October	Cormac McCarthy, <i>Blood Meridian</i> (1985)	What happened in the wild south-west?	Marilynn Robinson, <i>Housekeeping</i> (1980)
<p>Essential Readings:</p> <p>Marilynn Robinson, <i>Housekeeping</i> (1980)</p> <p>Cormac McCarthy, <i>Blood Meridian</i> (1985)</p>			
Week 12: 19-23 October	John Ashbery, <i>Selected Poems</i>	How to read Ashbery's whimsical verse.	Cormac McCarthy, <i>Blood Meridian</i> (1985)
<p>Essential Readings:</p> <p>Cormac McCarthy, <i>Blood Meridian</i> (1985)</p> <p>John Ashbery, <i>Selected Poems</i></p>			
Week 13: 26-30 October	NO LECTURE	No lecture this week.	John Ashbery, <i>Selected</i>

Essential Readings:

John Ashbery, *Selected Poems*

Course evaluation and development

This course is regularly surveyed and altered to improve both content and delivery.