

# **Introduction to American Literatures: Writing Seduction, Travel, and Adventure**

English 10500-06

TTh 5:25 – 6:40 PM in Friends 301

Instructor: Toni Wall Jaudon

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Office hours: Tuesday 2-4 PM, Thursday 3-4 PM, and by appointment

## **Course Description**

In this course, we will examine two narratives that have recurred repeatedly throughout the U.S.'s literary history: stories of seduction and tales of travel and adventure. As we track the shifting forms these plots have taken over time, we will think about how writing seduction, travel, and adventure allowed authors to define key concepts in the U.S.'s literary history, including the nature of "America," the outlines of personhood, and the relations between religions, races, and cultures.

To help us with these questions, we will read a selection of fiction written in the United States between the Revolution and the present. We will also use a new anthology, *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, to spur our thinking.

## **Course Format**

English 10500 is a discussion-intensive course. Though I will lecture periodically, the majority of our class time will be spent in thoughtful collective analysis of the course texts in question. We will do this because the give and take of an informed, intelligent conversation models the way in which sound scholarship builds on the insights of others.

As this course is discussion-intensive, its success will depend on your consistent preparation for and engagement with class discussion. I encourage you to think of your contributions to class discussion as a dialogue with your fellow readers first, and with me second. I hope that you will take our class sessions as an opportunity to sharpen your ability to engage with, respond to, and build upon your peers' insights.

## **Required Materials**

Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler, eds. *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* (NYU Press, 2007). ISBN: 978-0-8147-9948-2

Royall Tyler, *The Algerine Captive; or, The Life and Adventures of Doctor Updike Underhill* (Modern Library Paperback, 2002). ISBN: 978-0-375-76034-1

Hannah Foster, *The Coquette* (Oxford UP, 1986). ISBN: 0195042395

Herman Melville, *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (Penguin, 1996). ISBN: 0-14-043488-7

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Norton Critical Edition, 2000). ISBN: 0393976378

Stephen Crane, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (Bantam Classic, 1986). ISBN: 0553213555

Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Norton Critical Edition, 3rd, 1998). ISBN: 0393966402

Kate Chopin, *The Awakening and Selected Stories* (Simon and Schuster, 2004). ISBN: 0743487672

Sandra Cisneros, *Woman Hollering Creek* (Vintage, 1992). ISBN: 978-0679738565

Louise Erdrich, *Tracks* (Harper Perennial, 1989). ISBN: 0060972459

The books above are available for purchase in the college bookstore; you may also buy them online. **Please purchase the editions listed above**; there are multiple versions of *Typee*, and if you don't get the one listed you'll read a somewhat different book. The Norton Critical Editions of *Huck Finn* and *Incidents* have extra material in the back that we will also read and discuss.

You will also need regular access to your Ithaca College email account and to our course websites:

Blackboard: Go to [courses.ithaca.edu](http://courses.ithaca.edu) ; look for English 10500-06

Blog: <http://english10500-06.blogspot.com>

### **Participation and Attendance**

Attendance at all course meetings is **mandatory**. Attendance includes not just your physical presence but also your careful preparation for class. More than two unexcused absences will negatively affect your final grade; **more than four absences for any reason** will cause you to fail the course.

**Tardiness is exceptionally disruptive** in a discussion-intensive course. Arriving more than ten minutes late will cause me to mark you absent.

Participation in class discussions is a course requirement. Please remember that **there is no such thing as neutral silence** in a group discussion. Over time, protracted silence or nonparticipation can register as indifference, or worse, deliberate withholding to the group's other members. This impression, no matter how unintended, has the tendency to chill discussion and limit conversation to only the most outgoing of students. Conversely, when many voices participate in discussion, students often feel it easier to join in. It is my fervent wish that everyone participate actively in our conversations.

Remember also that **participating in a discussion is a skill** that can, and should, be learned. If you are having difficulty getting a word in edgewise in our conversations, you should consult with me in office hours about strategies that will help you participate.

As important as the quantity of your participation is its quality. **Quality participation involves thoughtful engagement** with the course texts and, more importantly, with the other members of the course. Often, the most productive comments build on or draw together what the others around you are saying. Essential to participating well is not just your willingness to talk, but also your willingness to listen to those around you. It should go without saying that rude, sarcastic, or derogatory comments constitute unacceptable forms of participation.

Because active engagement on everyone's part is so important, **I strongly discourage the use of laptops in the classroom**, especially for notetaking. I do this because I recognize that the siren call of email and Facebook can be impossible for even the most conscientious of us to resist. Should you find it necessary to use your laptop in class, please keep your wifi turned off. I'll happily "borrow" your laptop for the remainder of any class session in which The Internet makes an uninvited appearance. **Cell phones, ipods, and the like should also be turned off during class.**

### **Assignments and Grading**

Because I am deeply committed to helping you improve your skills as a reader and writer, I have weighted the course assignments so that later work comprises a larger portion of your final grade. You will complete the following assignments:

Two quizzes	10%
Mid-term essay	15%
Take home examination	15%
Keyword presentation	20%
Final essay	25%
Participation and Blog Posts	15%

**You cannot pass this course unless you attend class regularly, submit all of the written assignments listed on the syllabus, and participate in our class and blog-based discussions.** If at any time you are curious (or concerned) about your progress in the course, please don't hesitate to come talk to me in office hours. Likewise, if there are family or personal difficulties that are interfering with your ability to complete your assignments or otherwise work to your potential in this course, please get in touch with me.

### **Preparation and Our Course Blog**

While it is, of course, essential that you complete all the reading before class, real preparation for a class meeting involves reflecting on what you've read. To that end, **you will post an informal response** to the prompt on our course blog once a week.

You will find our blog at: <http://english10500-06.blogspot.com> .

You get two "passes"—that is, you may take two weeks off, either at your choosing, because you forgot, because you got sick, or because you were otherwise disinclined. I won't excuse any other missed responses.

### **Keywords**

A *keyword* is a term that "solves a puzzle, breaks a code, or unlocks a mystery," according to the editors of our anthology *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*. Keywords are words that everyone seems to "know," and yet no one ever has to define—they are at once obvious and inexplicable, reassuringly self-evident and strangely impossible to pin down. Part of our work

will be to examine how a selection of literary texts define a series of keywords such as *America, nation, race, gender, literature, property, reform, and identity*. Doing this will help us understand the deep connections between literature and culture from the invention of the United States to the present.

I will assign you to a keyword working group, which will serve as a site for collaborative intellectual effort over the semester. Your group will become an authority on its keyword and will demonstrate its collective knowledge in three ways:

- 1) Throughout the semester, you will be responsible for paying particular attention to how different readings define your keyword. Periodically, I'll ask you to summarize your findings in blog posts or in comments in class.
- 2) You will give a group presentation that teaches the class about the history of your word at a particular point in time and in relation to one of our course texts. These presentations will take place over the second half of the semester.
- 3) Your final paper, written individually, will define your group's keyword in the context of this class.

### **Rewrites, Formatting, and Other Paper Guidelines**

If you choose, **you may rewrite your mid-term essay after I grade it**. A rewrite is not a cosmetic cleanup of an essay; it is, instead, a full rethinking of the entire essay's scope and argument. Before beginning a rewrite, you must meet with me in office hours to discuss your plans. I will average the rewrite's grade with the original grade. Rewrites will receive grades, but not comments. **Late papers may not be rewritten.**

Papers and citations should be formatted in MLA style. Your paper should be **double-spaced, in Times New Roman 12 point font, with one-inch margins on each side**. Please give your paper a title, number and staple your pages, and spell-check and proofread your text. You **must** cite all of your sources, including your primary text, in MLA format. If you have any questions about citations or formatting, please come to see me in office hours. The library also maintains a list of helpful links to citation guides at <http://www.ithaca.edu/library/research/citing.php#MLA>.

**Late papers will be penalized** 1/3 of a letter grade (for example, A- becomes B+) for each day past the due date. Should you find yourself in need of an extension, you must email me at least 48 hours before your paper is due. **There will be no extensions on take-home examinations or presentations.**

### **Plagiarism**

You are responsible to follow the standards outlined in the Ithaca College Policy Manual, section 7.1.4.1:

“Whether intended or not, plagiarism is a serious offense against academic honesty. Under any circumstances, it is deceitful to represent as one's own work, writing or ideas that belong to another person. Students should be aware of how this offense is defined. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's published or unpublished ideas, whether this use consists of directly quoted material or paraphrased ideas.

“Although various disciplines follow styles of documentation that differ in some details, all forms of documentation make the following demands:

- That each quotation or paraphrase be acknowledged with a footnote or in-text citation;
- That direct quotations be enclosed in quotation marks and be absolutely faithful to the wording of the source;
- That paraphrased ideas be stated in language entirely different from the language of the source;
- That a sequence of ideas identical to that of a source be attributed to that source;
- That sources of reprinted charts or graphs be cited in the text;
- That all the sources the writer has drawn from in paraphrase or direct quotation or a combination of paraphrase and quotation be listed at the end of the paper under "Bibliography," "References," or "Works Cited," whichever heading the particular style of documentation requires.

“A student is guilty of plagiarism if the student fails, intentionally or not, to follow any of these standard requirements of documentation.”

Cases of plagiarism will be referred to the Office of Judicial Review and will result in an automatic F. If you have any questions about your use of sources, don't hesitate to contact me.

### **Other Policies**

Getting in touch with me: I'm very happy to confer with you in office hours about your written work (both before and after you submit it), and to talk generally about the course texts, about American literatures, or about your interests. **If you send me email, please give me 24 hours to respond during the week and more time on the weekends.**

If you have a physical, psychiatric, or learning disability that affects your ability to access course materials or complete course work, please let me know early in the semester. You should also register with the Office of Academic Support and provide them with the relevant documentation so that I can make necessary accommodations. If you are having any difficulties accessing course materials or resources, or if other barriers to your full and effective participation arise, please contact me as soon as possible so that we can work things out.

### **Schedule**

**All of the readings listed below are required.** Reading must be done before class. Should it become apparent that a majority of the class is not keeping up with the readings, I may institute short reading quizzes (which will contribute to your course discussion grade).

**For the keywords listed, you should read the relevant entry in the *Keywords* anthology.** Some of them are listed more than once—just refresh your memory the second time around.

Th 8/27	First day
T 9/1	<i>Algerine Captive</i> pp. 1-92 (vol. 1, chapters 1- 29)
Th 9/3	<i>Algerine Captive</i> pp. 93-153 (through vol. 2, chapter 14) Keywords: America, slavery

T 9/8	<i>Algerine Captive</i> pp. 154 to end. Keywords: Citizenship, literature
Th 9/10	<i>The Coquette</i> pp. 1-106 (through Letter XLVIII) Keywords: gender, family
T 9/15	<i>The Coquette</i> pp. 107 to end Keywords: nation, sentiment
Th 9/17	<i>Typee</i> pp. 1-65 (chapters 1-9) Keywords: colonial, empire
T 9/22	<i>Typee</i> pp. 66-148 (chapters 10-19) <b>Quiz 1 in class</b>
Th 9/24	Research day
T 9/29	<i>Typee</i> pp. 149-216 (chapters 20-29) Keywords: orientalism, identity
Th 10/1	<i>Typee</i> pp. 217-258 (chapters 30-appendix) Keywords: white, race, nation
T 10/6	<i>Incidents</i> pp. 1-88 (chapters I-IX) Keywords: sentiment, slavery, body
Th 10/8	<i>Incidents</i> pp. 89-158 (chapter XX to appendix) <b>Mid-term essay due at the beginning of class</b>
T 10/13	<i>Incidents</i> pp. 161-200 (contexts and supplementary material in the Norton Critical Edition) Keywords: property, African
Th 10/15	<b>**fall break**</b>
T 10/20	<i>Maggie</i> pp. 1-61 Keywords: city, reform <b>Presentation: reform or identity</b>
Th 10/22	<i>Huck Finn</i> (see Blackboard for pages) Keywords: African, dialect, property
T 10/27	<i>Huck Finn</i> (see Blackboard for pages) <b>Quiz 2 in class</b> Keywords: race, identity

Th 10/29	<i>Huck Finn</i> (see Blackboard for pages) <b>Presentation: race</b>
T 11/3	<i>Huck Finn</i> (see Blackboard for pages)
Th 11/5	<i>The Awakening</i> pp. 1-72 (chapters I-XXII) Keywords: marriage, domestic, interiority <b>Presentation: gender</b>
T 11/10	<i>The Awakening</i> pp. 73-125 (chapters XXIII to end)
Th 11/12	Onoto Watanna, selected stories <b>**find these posted on our Blackboard site</b> Keywords: coolie, Asian, performance <b>Presentation: nation</b>
T 11/17	<i>Woman Hollering Creek</i> (see Blackboard for pages) Keywords: America, religion <b>Take home examination due at the beginning of class</b>
Th 11/19	<i>Woman Hollering</i> (see Blackboard for pages) <b>Presentation: America</b> Keywords: border, mestizo/a, region
T 12/1	<i>Tracks</i> pp. 1-95 (chapters 1-4) Keywords: Indian, property, nation
Th 12/3	<i>Tracks</i> pp. 96-164 (chapters 5 & 6) <b>Presentation: literature or property</b>
T 12/8	<i>Tracks</i> pp. 165- end (chapters 7-9) Keywords: modern, society
Th 12/10	Last day
	<b>Final paper due during exams (date TBA)</b>