

# *English 2359: American Literature Before 1865*

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## **Instructor**

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## **Course Outcomes**

**General Education Core Curriculum (Code 090)**

**Component Area Option for Language, Philosophy and Culture**

**Component Outcomes**

Students will explore behavior and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, and events, examining their impact on the individual, society, and culture.

**Core Objectives/Competencies Outcomes**

- **Critical Thinking**
  - Students will demonstrate creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.
- **Communication**
  - Students will effectively develop, interpret and express ideas through written, oral and visual communication.
- **Social Responsibility**
  - Students will demonstrate intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.
- **Personal Responsibility**
  - Students will relate choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.

This syllabus supplements the Sophomore Literature Program Syllabus, available online at [www.english.txstate.edu](http://www.english.txstate.edu).

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## Learning Outcomes

The Department of English has adopted student-learning outcomes for general education courses in writing and literature and for degree programs in English. These outcomes are available for your review at [www.english.txstate.edu](http://www.english.txstate.edu). Pull down the *Student Resources* menu and go to "Learning Outcomes."

*If you are a student with a disability who will require accommodation to participate in the course, please contact me as soon as possible. You will be asked to provide documentation from the Office of Disability Services. Failure to contact me in a timely manner may delay your accommodations.*

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## Required Text

Baym et al., *Norton Anthology of American Literature*, Shorter 8th Edition, Volume 1: Beginnings to 1865, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-393-91886-1

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## Course Description

English 2359 is a survey of North American literature written between the mid-16th century and the mid-18th century. During that span of approximately 200 years, a loose band of colonies evolved into a formidable union of states. This course examines how the literature written during those 200 years reflected and influenced the emergence of a single national identity that has its roots in a religious heritage of divine calling as well as in individual expressions of self-hood. Specifically, this course will explore how different eras of American writers employed essays, letters, speeches, poetry, short stories, and other types of writing to define and redefine a single narrative of American identity distinct from the many voices that converged at the formation of the rapidly developing country.

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## Assignment Requirements

- Five (5) quizzes based on assigned selections from *Norton Anthology of American Literature*
  - Two (2) short answer exams (midcourse and final)
  - Two (2) essays 500 words minimum in length
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## Grade Breakdown

- Quizzes (1-5): 10%
  - Midcourse Short Answer Exam: 15%
  - Final Short Answer Exam: 15%
  - Essay #1: 30%
  - Essay #2: 30%
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## Assignment Details

The required assignments are given to assess students' retained knowledge of the text as well as initiate critical reflection upon the themes presented by the various authors. Students may use the course textbook to complete each of the course's assignments, including the short answer tests and essays.

The **five quizzes** are timed multiple choice assessments (30 minutes permitted per quiz) that cover the material from each of the five main lessons. Students who read the assigned texts should perform well on the quizzes.

The **two short answer tests** invite students to critically engage with the course material. While the quizzes are objective in their scope, the short answer tests are subjective in that there are no absolutely right or wrong responses. The short answers (which should range in length between 3-5 sentences) are intended to challenge students to make connections between the texts and the larger themes surrounding the respective historical periods. Students must complete each of the short answer tests (in the 2.5 hour time limit) before proceeding to write the respective essays.

The **two essays** (each 500 words minimum in length) require students to craft a formal, extended interpretation of one or two of the assigned texts. In some cases, students may choose to expand one of their short answer responses into the longer essay form. Each of the essays should be written in the tone of and with the same academic rigor of the standard college essay.

### Notes:

- You must wait until a completed short answer exam or essay is graded and returned to you before submitting a new written assignment.
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## Course Progression

Students will complete each of the five main lessons one at a time, following the below progression of assigned readings and required assignments:

## **Lesson 1 - The Roots of Freedom & Oppression**

- *Reading:* Christopher Columbus, Cotton Matther, Roger Williams, Anne Bradstreet
- *Assignments:* Lesson 1 Quiz

## **Lesson 2 - Founding Fathers and Farmers**

- *Reading:* Thomas Jefferson, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, Native American Resistance, Phillis Wheatley
- *Assignments:* Lesson 2 Quiz

## **Lesson 3 - Slavery & Oppression**

- *Reading:* Thomas Jefferson, Native American Conflict, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass
- *Assignments:* Lesson 3 Quiz

## **Lessons 1-3 Writing Assignments:**

- Midcourse Short Answer Test
- Essay #1

## **Lesson 4 - Humanity and Nature**

- *Reading:* Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Emily Dickinson
- *Assignments:* Lesson 5 Quiz

## **Lesson 5 - The American Short Story and Poetry**

- *Reading:* Edgar Allan Poe, Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson
- *Assignments:* Lesson 5 Quiz

## **Lessons 4-5 Writing Assignments:**

- Final Short Answer Test
- Essay #2

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## **Supplemental Instructional Materials**

I've included an introductory video (in which I casually introduce each lesson's content) and a screencast (that lays out the lesson's central themes and points to consider) at

the beginning of each lesson. Students who watch the introductory videos and view the screencasts will have a clear understanding of what to expect in the short answer tests and essay prompts.

Students also should read the three introductory essays in the Norton Anthology that provide commentary on the literature of this period. They are “Beginnings to 1700,” “American Literature 1700–1820,” and “American Literature 1820–1865.” I strongly suggest you read them before you undertake Lesson 1 and that you refer to them again as you go along through the course.

Finally, I included essay-writing resources that provide a clear understanding of my expectations for the essay assignments.

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## Faculty-Student Contact

According to “Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education,” faculty-student contact is very important. Even though this is a correspondence course, I encourage you to contact me if you have any concerns, questions, or problems. You are welcome to e-mail me by using the Canvas Inbox in the global navigation. (It is important to keep all mail related to this course contained within this Canvas site.) My policy is that during non-holiday breaks or announced away times, any email I receive between Monday morning and Friday at noon will receive a reply within 48 hours. Emails received between Friday at noon and Sunday night will receive a reply on the next business day.

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## Academic Integrity

[Be sure to follow the academic integrity policy for this course](#)

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## Technical Support

Texas State’s Information Technology Assistance Center can help you with Canvas question and other technical issues. See the [Technical Requirements and Support](#) page for details.

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## Correspondence Course Information

Make sure you're familiar with how [correspondence resources and policies](#).

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## Students with Special Needs

See [Students Requiring Accommodation Through the Office of Disability Services](#)

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## Free Tutoring Resources

A variety of free tutoring resources are available for students enrolled in correspondence courses. You may access tutoring through Tutor.com by clicking on Tutor.com: 24/7 Online Tutoring in the left menu of this course. Then just respond to the questions to start tutoring. If you need help with writing specifically, then choose Writing as your topic.

Free online tutoring for writing-related assignments is also available from the University Writing Center. For information on accessing these resources, please visit the Office of Distance and Extended Learning's Free Tutoring page. Currently-enrolled, degree-seeking students able to visit the Texas State campus are eligible for free in-person tutoring from the Student Learning Assistance Center (SLAC) on the fourth floor of Alkek Library