

**Rhode Island College**  
**English 303**  
**The American Novel to 1914**

Why this transformation should be so important for the birth of the imagined community of the nation can best be seen if we consider the basic structure of two forms of imagining which first flowered in Europe in the eighteenth century: the novel and the newspaper. For these forms provided the technical means for 're-presenting' the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation.

— Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities*

I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead.

— Mark Twain

**Texts:** available at Off Campus Book Store, 1017 Smith Street (861-6270).

Charles Brockden Brown	<i>Wieland</i>	Penguin
James Fenimore Cooper	<i>The Last of the Mohicans</i>	Signet
Nathaniel Hawthorne	<i>The Blithedale Romance</i>	Oxford
Herman Melville	<i>Moby Dick</i>	Penguin
Catherine Maria Sedgwick	<i>Hope Leslie</i>	Penguin
Harriet Beecher Stowe	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>	Penguin
Mark Twain	<i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i>	Pocket Books
Harriet Wilson	<i>Our Nig</i>	Dover

**Electronic Course Reserve:** I have placed a number of articles on electronic reserve that deal with the novel as a form, literary criticism of these novels, and historical analyses of this time period.

M. H. Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms*

Bedford *Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*

Lawrence Buell, *The Rise and Fall of the Great American Novel*

Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Traditions*. "Norris and Naturalism"

Mary Chapman, "'Living Pictures': Women and *Tableaux Vivants* in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction and Culture."

Cathy Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The rise of the Novel in America*

Ralph Ellison, "The Novel as a Function of American Democracy."

Judith Fetterley, "'Not in the Least American '": Nineteenth Century Literary Realism."

Charles Fourier, "The Impact of Industrialization," "The Benefits of Association," "The Condition of Women."

D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature*

Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*

Jane Smiley, "Say it Ain't So, Huck: Second thoughts on Mark Twain's 'Masterpiece.'" "

Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860*

Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*

Edward Wagenknecht, *Cavalcade of the American Novel*. "Mrs. Stowe and Some Contemporaries."

**Description:**

This course will offer the student of American literature the opportunity to read novels central to the American literary canon as well as those generally less known, but which contributed to the rise of the American novel in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We shall identify some major types of novels as well as the relationship between these categories (Romance, Gothic, Sentimental, and Realist) as we think about the novel as a particular form — as opposed to short stories, personal narratives, or histories. We shall ask throughout about the nature of the cultural, political, and aesthetic work that these novels accomplish at this time in American history. To help us frame the historical and philosophical context of our study we will read selections from various theorists and historians regarding the rise and nature of American literary movements to 1914. Our list of authors will include Charles Brockden Brown, James Fenimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Catherine Maria Sedgwick, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mark Twain, and Harriet E. Wilson.

**Attendance:**

Much of your grade depends on your class participation; therefore, non-attendance will lower your grade. You are allowed two unexcused absences. For every absence after two, your *final grade will decrease by 1/2 letter grade* (ex: if you have 3 total absences, 2 are allowed, and 1 is unexcused. If your *FINAL* grade is a "B", one unexcused absence will decrease it to a "B-"). **If you arrive late or leave early on two occasions, you will have earned one unexcused absence.**

**Classroom etiquette:** Once class is in session, leave the room **ONLY FOR EMERGENCIES**. A constant flow of traffic in and out of the room is disruptive and disrespectful to your class mates. **No Lap Tops, Cell Phones, or Texting in Class.** Take notes with pen and paper, and turn cell phones off while class is in session. Texting is very obvious from the front of the room and certainly detracts from your participation.

**Contact:** For any course business or announcements that must be communicated outside of class, I will use your RIC email accounts exclusively. Please check your RIC email regularly.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of someone else's words or ideas as your own. If you plagiarize someone's words or ideas you will receive a "0" on the assignment and you may either fail the course or be asked to leave the class. ***Every case of plagiarism will be reported to the English Department.*** Depending on the nature of the plagiarism, you may also be asked to leave the college. Do not pass off the ideas you get from Wikipedia, *Cliff Notes*, or *Sparks Notes* (or ANY on-line or printed material) as your own. If you are indebted to any outside source (including a paper you've written for another class) you must cite that source. The consequences for not doing so are serious. Do cite the sources of your information in oral presentations as well as written work. **Cutting and pasting material from the internet as well as paraphrasing too closely to the original language (even with proper citation) is plagiarism.**

<b>Grading:</b>	Paper 1	25%
	Paper 2, Research Paper:	40%
	Presentation:	15%
	Class Participation:	20%

**Late Papers:** All papers must be completed on time. **I do not accept late papers.** If you suffer a major illness or death in the family, you may submit missed assignments but only if you can verify your absence. Late paper grades will be reduced ½ letter grade for each school day late.

### Schedule

Week 1 1/25-1/27	Mon.	Introductions
	Wed.	Brown, <i>Wieland</i> to Chapter VII
Week 2 2/1-2/3	Mon.	Brown, Chapters VIII-XIII
	Wed.	Brown, finish <i>Wieland</i> Brown Presentations
Week 3 2/8-2/10	Mon.	<b>Response Paper 1 Due</b> Cooper, <i>The Last of the Mohicans</i> to 104 (through Chapter IX)
	Wed.	Cooper to 250 (through Chapter XX)
Week 4 2/15-2/17	Mon.	Finish Cooper
	Wed.	Cooper Presentations
Week 5 2/22-2/24	Mon.	Sedgwick, <i>Hope Leslie</i> (3-122)
	Wed.	<i>Hope Leslie</i> (123-246)
Week 6 3/1-3/3	Mon.	<b>PAPER 1 DUE</b>
	Wed.	<i>Hope Leslie</i> (finish) Sedgwick Presentations
Week 7 3/8-3/1	Mon.	Hawthorne, <i>The Blithedale Romance</i> Chapters I-XV
	Wed.	finish Hawthorne Hawthorne Presentations

Week 8 3/15-3/17	<b>SPRING BREAK</b> (read Melville)
Week 9 3/22-3/24	Mon. Melville, <i>Moby Dick</i> Chapters 1-19 Wed. Melville, Chapters 20-41
Week 10 3/29-3/31	Mon. Melville, Chapters 42-58 <b>Response Paper 2 Due</b> Wed. Melville, Chapters 59-83
Week 11 4/5-4/7	Mon. finish Melville Wed. Melville Presentations
Week 12 4/12-4/14	Mon. Stowe, <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> through Chapter 13 Wed. Stowe, through Chapter 19 <b>Response Paper 3 Due</b>
Week 13 4/19-4/21	Mon. Stowe, Chapters 20--32 Wed. finish Stowe
Week 14 4/26-4/28	Mon. Stowe Presentations Wed. Wilson, <i>Our Nig</i> (Chapters I- V)
Week 15 5/3-5/5	Mon. <b>Presentations</b> Wilson, finish <i>Our Nig</i> Wed. <b>FINAL RESEARCH PAPERS DUE</b>

## PRESENTATIONS

Once during this semester you shall present informally on one of the night's readings. For these presentations, however, *do not summarize the reading or rehash the biographical/historical details that we may already have covered in our introduction to the material or class discussion.* Choose one very specific but significant detail, character, issue, aspect of style or form to analyze during your presentation. For example, you may have noticed the strange way that Ishmael introduces himself in *Moby Dick* "Call me Ishmael." You may spend your entire presentation thinking about what it means for Ishmael's character to introduce himself this way. What does it say about his character or about characters in Melville? What does it say about names? (etc.). Or you may want simply to follow the character of Ishmael more closely. Who is he? How does he fit (or not fit) in with the rest of the novel? Think of your presentation as demonstrating a very close reading of a particular aspect of the text. Do make connections to broader questions or issues.

Do not simply read from Wikipedia or any other source on that author or text. If you are indebted to an external source, do mention that during your presentation.

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## RESPONSE PAPERS

A response paper is not a formal essay. So you have more freedom in terms of form, and you can take more risks with your ideas. Still, you should follow some guidelines and conventions of writing.

### I. Your Ideas:

**Engage the reading as well as your response to the literature.** Try out some interpretations. **Think about the deeper implications.** Start with something from the reading that intrigued, upset, pleased, or annoyed you. *But do not stop at your initial response.* From that response try to figure out why you felt a certain way about the readings or the characters. You might want to more carefully explore the themes that we have been developing in class, or you might want to take a different approach to the materials. In any case, think **thematically and philosophically.** **DO NOT SUMMARIZE THE READINGS.**

A good response paper is honest, original, and engages the reading in some detail. **Use quotes** to punctuate your own thoughts. While you do not need to do research, you must cite any outside source for language or ideas that are not your own. All the rules against plagiarism apply to response papers as well as more formal papers.

### II. The Format:

- 2-3 pages, typed
- Staple all the pages, Cite directly from the text according to MLA style.
- start making connections between texts (unless we've only covered one since the last response paper)

### III. The Language:

I view the response papers as a good place to work on your writing, especially in preparation for the formal papers. From here on out, I will make detailed grammatical and formal comments on your response papers. Please review the comments from earlier papers before you write the next one. Becoming a good writer requires the willingness to understand the marks on the page and developing an awareness of your particular writing issues