

## English 340: The American Novel before 1920

Spring 2010 (#34805)  
MW 5:00–6:30 pm; Parlin 306

Professor Matt Cohen  
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Office Hours: M and W, 3:00-4:30pm, and by appointment

### Description

The story of novels written in the United States to 1920, told in relation to major political and aesthetic movements in the Anglophone world. Fundamental questions about the genre and its contentious development will be raised as we explore the relationship of US-based long fiction to movements such as the Gothic, Realism, Utopianism, and Naturalism, and to modes such as the picturesque, the sublime, and the sentimental. We will ask, among other things, how the novel changed peoples' ideas about themselves, sent people to war, and built or broke down ideas about “America,” race, gender, and religion.

### Objectives

The course will:

- survey the American novel between the late eighteenth- and early twentieth-centuries
- model methods of literary and cultural interpretation
- help students improve critical thinking, writing, and reading skills

### Requirements and Evaluation

#### Participation (25%)

Students are expected to be active participants in the classroom and active readers outside of it. Reading quizzes and occasional short assigned presentations (individual and group) will be required. Each week you will be asked to write something in response to that week's reading, which you will email to me before Monday's class meeting. Bring a copy of it to class, because sometimes I will ask you to read (or demonstrate) it to the class. Attendance is mandatory; repeated unexcused absences will affect your grade negatively.

#### Examinations (50%)

You'll take two examinations during the term. The midterm exam will be worth 20% of the final grade; the final exam will be 30% of the final grade. Both exams will include identifications, short answer and essay questions.

#### Essay (25% of final grade)

Students will produce two 5-page essays during the course of the term; more specific instructions about these papers will be handed out in advance of the due dates, which are indicated on the schedule below.

NB: Plus/minus grades will be assigned for the final grade of the course. Grades will be determined on the following basis:

A = 94-100	C = 74-76
A- = 90-93	C- = 70-73
B+ = 87-89	D+ = 67-69
B = 84-86	D = 64-66
B- = 80-83	D- = 60-63
C+ = 77-79	F = 0-60

The University does not recognize the grade of A+.

### **Academic Integrity**

Each student is expected to abide by the University Code of Academic Integrity:

“The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.” Any work submitted for academic credit must be your own.

### **Accommodations for students with disabilities**

The University of Texas at Austin provides, upon request, appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (471-4641 TTY).

### **Email Protocol**

Email will be used as a primary means of communication in this course. You will be responsible for checking your email regularly. I will, in turn, do my best to respond to emails in a timely fashion. While I am more than happy to answer brief queries over email, Office Hours are the place for substantial discussions about course materials and assignments. Please do come by.

### **Common courtesy**

Please silence your cell phones, refrain from texting, and limit your use of laptop computers during class.

### **Course Texts**

All texts available at the Co-Op, 2246 Guadalupe; additional readings listed on the schedule will be available via Blackboard.

Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte Temple* (1791)

(Modern Library: 0812971213)

Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly* (1798)

(Penguin Classics: 0140390626)

Lydia Maria Child, *Hobomok* (1824)

(Rutgers University Press: 081351164X)

- Edgar Allan Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838)  
(Penguin Classics: 0140437487)
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance* (1852)  
(Modern Library: 0375757201)
- Mark Twain, *Puddn'head Wilson* (1893-4)  
(Signet Classics: 0451530748)
- Sutton Griggs, *Imperium in Imperio* (1899)  
(Modern Library: 0812971604)
- Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth* (1905)  
(Library of America: 1598530550)
- James Weldon Johnson, *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912/1927)  
(Hill & Wang: 0809000326)

### Course Schedule

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|-----------------|--|
| W Jan 20        | Introduction: The novel in America   |
| M Jan 25        | Susanna Rowson, <i>Charlotte Temple</i>  |
| W Jan 27        | Rowson, <i>Charlotte Temple</i>  |
| M Feb 1         | Charles Brockden Brown, <i>Edgar Huntly</i><br>M.M. Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel" (Bb)                                   |
| W Feb 3         | Brown, <i>Edgar Huntly</i>   |
| M Feb 8         | Brown, <i>Edgar Huntly</i>   |
| W Feb 10        | Lydia Maria Child, <i>Hobomok</i>  |
| M Feb 15        | Child, <i>Hobomok</i>  |
| W Feb 17        | Child, <i>Hobomok</i>  |
| <b>M Feb 22</b> | <b>First paper due</b>   |
| W Feb 24        | Edgar Allan Poe, <i>The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym...</i><br>Toni Morrison, from <i>Playing in the Dark</i> (Bb) |
| M Mar 1         | Poe, <i>The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym...</i>  |
| W Mar 3         | Nathaniel Hawthorne, <i>The Blithedale Romance</i>   |
| M Mar 8         | Hawthorne, <i>The Blithedale Romance</i>   |
| <b>W Mar 10</b> | <b>Midterm exam</b>  |

M Mar 22	Hawthorne, <i>The Blithedale Romance</i>
W Mar 24	Sutton Griggs, <i>Imperium in Imperio</i> Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture" (Bb)
M Mar 29	Griggs, <i>Imperium in Imperio</i>
W Mar 31	Griggs, <i>Imperium in Imperio</i>
M Apr 5	Mark Twain, <i>Pudd'nhead Wilson</i>
W Apr 7	Mark Twain, <i>Pudd'nhead Wilson</i>
M Apr 12	Mark Twain, <i>Pudd'nhead Wilson</i>
<b>W Apr 14</b>	<b>Second paper due</b>
M Apr 19	Edith Wharton, <i>The House of Mirth</i>
W Apr 21	Wharton, <i>The House of Mirth</i>
M Apr 26	Wharton, <i>The House of Mirth</i>
W Apr 28	James Weldon Johnson, <i>Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> Michel Foucault, "What Is an author?" (Bb)
M May 3	Johnson, <i>Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i>
W May 5	Final class; review, conclusions, evaluations
<b>M May 17</b>	<b>Final Exam (7-10 p.m.)</b>