American Literature

“The American Experiment … an experiment statistically skewed from the outset, because it wasn’t the people with sociable genes who fled the crowded Old World for the new continent; it was the people who didn’t get along well with others.” – Jonathan Franzen, National Book Award Winner

Dr. Joshua Myers Fall 2025 in Burris #202

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**Office Hours:** **M** 11-12 Noon **&** 1-5 p.m., **T** 12:30-4:30 p.m., **W** **& F** 11-12 Noon.

*“The American Literature course begins with literature of the [so-called] New World and ends with contemporary period literature. There is an emphasis on critical thinking, close reading, and the development of writing skills. The course is organized by theme, by genre, or by literary and historical period, depending on the approach of the teacher. Students will have a wide variety of writing assignments, opportunities for oral participation, and other activities connecting literature, history, and culture.”* – Indiana Academy Course Catalog.

Moreover, this course will immerse learners in the fascinating history and diverse cultures of the North American continent, primarily the United States, as reflected in varied written expressions of prose, poetry, and drama. Through our critical explorations of stories in these different forms, we will consider what it truly means to be *American* and how each of our own unique stories is shaped by the environment, region, nation, and even the world of which we are a part.

LEARNING OUTCOMES & GOALS

* Utilize reading and discussion to develop critical thinking, reading, and listening skills.
* Communicate thoughtfully, professionally, and kindly to contribute to civic discourse.
* Situate American literature in its historical and cultural contexts.
* Appreciate the role and relevance of culture and entertainment to everyday life.
* Compose formal academic writings and conduct scholarly research.

REQUIRED TEXTS & SUPPLIES

*The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, Volumes B-E. Editor Nina Baym, 2007 editions. These books are provided by The Indiana Academy.

* Occasional short works not included in the Norton anthologies will be provided to students by the instructor.
* Notebook and a writing implement (pencil, pen, etc.). Electronic note-taking is not permitted unless student has learning accommodations.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Participation 15%

(Graded monthly – see next page for specifics)

In-Class Activities / Shorter Writings/ Reading Quizzes 15%

(Several – agglomerate score)

American Canon Development 20%

(Students will prepare a canon of American works and justify their choices)

Semester Long American Novel Research Project 25%

(An individual reading completed in addition to course readings, with monthly

requirements entailing use of library resources, conferences with instructor, usage

of the writing lab, and writing completed in stages).

Final Exam 25%

**Grade Scale:** A (94-100%); A – (90-93%); B+ (87-89%); B (84-86%); B – (80-83%); C+ (77-79%); C (74-76%); C – (70-73%); D (69% and below)

* Assignment sheets with specific graded instructions and requirements for each project will be made available at the appropriate time during the semester.
* You will have plenty of time to complete all assignments and plenty of opportunity to receive assistance from me. **Thus, there are no re-writes/revisions of an assignment *after* the grade for that assignment is returned to you – no exceptions!**
* **You can always talk to me about your individual work and progress throughout the semester, so please do not hesitate to reach out. However, if you are having difficulty with any aspect of the assignment then please reach out BEFORE you submit the project for a grade (not after).**

EXTENSIONS & LATE WORK POLICY

* IfI decide to extend a deadline, I will make that extension available to the entire class. I do not grant requests for individual extensions.
* I will accept late work with an accompanying loss of points. The amount of missed points ultimately depends on the circumstances AND how late the assignment is. In such situations, I will give the student notification of a specific timetable via email.
* Getting sick or missing class only on the day something is due is NOT a valid excuse for being unable to submit an assignment that you’ve had weeks to complete.

**The *only* exceptions to any aspects of the above policy are cases that have been appropriately documented with the Academy (for example, a family emergency or a severe illness/injury of which the administration has been made aware).**

PARTICIPATION GRADING POLICY

In an attempt to be considerate of all personality types – those who feel comfortable talking and those who do not – the following is how I will grade your monthly participation:

* **If you actively participate by contributing to discussion (i.e., you talk):** then you are NOT required to take notes when I tell the class to write something down (though, certainly, I *strongly* recommend and encourage that all students always take notes).
* **If you do not actively contribute to discussion (i.e., you are quiet/shy/not a talker**): then you ARE required to take notes, especially when I tell the class to write something down. ALSO: to compensate for not talking, you should be visibly attentive with your body language to show that you are actively paying attention (nodding your head, giving thumbs up, etc.).

**ANY of the following behaviors will result in a loss of participation points for EVERY student (no matter which group, talker or non-talker, that you fall into):**

* Unauthorized use of electronic devices, laptops, phones, or any other sort of “smart” device (watches, glasses, shoelaces – whatever). This also includes blatant phone usage during class, such as texting when you are supposed to be listening – see more about all this in the official Indiana Academy Electronic Devices Policy, included later in this syllabus.
* Sleeping/nodding off/laying with your head down, etc.
* General refusal to participate (not taking notes, not working with groupmates, ignoring me when I speak to you, etc.)
* General disrespectful attitudes or behavioral problems (note: any such instances will also be documented with Dr. Schultz and, in such an event, she will likely require that you meet with her and other members of the administration).
* More than 1 **un**excused absence during the month. If you’re not in class, you cannot participate.

**Each time you engage in any of the above behaviors, you lose ten points from your monthly participation grade.**

**FOR EXAMPLE:**

* **One time usage of phones/electronic devices = – 10**
* **One time sleeping/nodding off = – 10**
* **One time refusal to engage in activity = – 10**
* **2 unexcused absences (1 unexcused absence *more than* the 1 that I permit) = -10**

**EQUALS: a monthly participation grade of 60/100.**

ATTENDANCE & ABSENCE POLICY

Attendance is mandatory. Students may receive excused absences at the professional discretion of the school nurse, the associate director of mental health services, the associate director of college counseling and student engagement, the director of academic affairs, and the executive director of the Indiana Academy. Unexcused absences occur when students miss class without prior approval from the aforementioned designated school officials. Continued absences (both excused and unexcused) from Academy classes increase the likelihood of unsuccessful completion.

Alongside steady attendance, students are expected to maintain consistent healthy habits of decorum, respect, and kindness towards their classmates, instructors, and teaching assistants. When students fail to meet these classroom behavioral standards and academic habits, it is the expectation faculty engage appropriately to bring quick and immediate resolution. When students consistently fail to meet these behavioral standards and academic habits in the classroom, an administrative consequence ladder will be adopted, and recorded, in attempt to administratively address, engage, and rectify ongoing challenges.

MAKE-UP ASSIGNMENT POLICY FOR THIS COURSE

* Makeup work for excused absences that have been documented with the academy are always permitted. The student must talk to the instructor upon their return to receive instructions regarding the make-up process and the schedule of due dates.
* If the absence was unexcused, I still permit a make-up for material missed that day, but I do so with the following strict guidelines:
  + **That the make-up assignment and/or scheduling of a make-up quiz be completed no later than one week from the student’s return.**
  + **Failure to submit any make-up assignment or to complete any make up of missed material within the one-week deadline (one week from the student’s return to class) will result in a zero on the assignment.**
* Again, as stated earlier in the grading policy, **there are no re-writes/revisions of an assignment *after* the grade for that assignment is returned to you – no exceptions!**

ELECTRONIC DEVICES POLICY:

Pursuant to Indiana Code 20-26-5-40.7, The Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics and Humanities prohibits student use of wireless communication devices for non-instructional purposes in the classroom. As such, any and all portable wireless devices, that have the capability to provide voice, messaging, or other data communication between two or more parties, must only be used for academic purposes directly tied to the classroom activity or related educational task. Exceptions to this wireless device policy are eligible through academic accommodations, individualized education programs, or with instructor approval permitting the use of a wireless device for justification related to health, safety, and/or well-being. The improper use of a wireless device in an active classroom setting is subject to disciplinary action including but not limited to; a verbal warning, temporary seizure of said device by a school official, an unexcused absence for the class in question, written communication to parent/guardian, among other elevated consequences for repeated improper use.

**For this course, specifically, all electronic devices are prohibited. You will take your notes with pen and paper – not electronic pad and stylus. Usage of laptops, phones, earbuds, or any sort of so-called “smart” device is not permitted** unless you have academic learning accommodations or unless I have explicitly given you permission to use such devices (for example, if we are having an in-class writing workshop). **Non-permitted use of these devices will lower your monthly participation grade, as discussed in the participation policy.**

E-MAIL POLICY

--- I check my e-mail regularly and often and so should you.

--- My response may not be instantaneous since, like you, I have a life outside of this classroom. I will always reply as soon as possible, so please be patient.

--- Please feel free to e-mail me anytime, but if you e-mail me after 6 p.m. you might not get a response until the next morning.

--- **Considering all of the above, you will ALWAYS get a response within 24 hours. If a full 24 hours go by, and you do not receive an emailed reply from me, then you should resend your e-mail because I did not receive it. THUS, please be aware that email mishaps are not acceptable excuses for missed work.**

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

You are responsible for the integrity of your work, and you must produce work that is

academically honest. This means that all your coursework must be your own and must be created specifically for this course. Failing to maintain the integrity of your work can have serious consequences. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, the following: submitting someone else’s paper, including papers you obtain online, as your own writing; and, attempting to take credit for someone else’s (or an AI’s) words or ideas without properly citing them. **If you are even remotely uncertain about whether or not any part of your work is academically honest, please contact me for assistance before you submit your work for grading.** Also, please refer to the student handbook for additional information, especially the quoted portions below:

* *Plagiarism: representing as one’s own work any material obtained on the Internet (such as term papers, articles, etc.). When Internet sources are used in student work, the author, publisher and website must be identified. (See policy on Academic Dishonesty in the student handbook.)*
* *Students are prohibited from using any electronic device to capture, record, and/or transmit test, quiz, exam, or other class information or any other information in a manner constituting fraud, theft, cheating, or academic dishonesty and students are prohibited from using electronic devices to receive such information.*
* *Plagiarism or violations of procedures prescribed to protect the integrity of an assignment, such as: a. Submitting an assignment purporting to be one’s original work, which has been wholly or partially created by another person; b. Presenting as one’s own work ideas, representations, or words of another person without customary and proper acknowledgment of sources; c. Submitting as new work, without the faculty member’s prior consent or knowledge, one’s own work which has been previously presented for another class elsewhere; d. Knowingly permitting one’s work to be submitted by another person as if it were the submitter’s original work; e. Cooperation with another person in academic dishonesty, either directly or indirectly, as an intermediary agent or broker; f. Knowingly destroying or altering another’s work, whether in written or digital form, computer files, artwork, or other format; g. Aiding, abetting, or attempting to commit an act or action that constitutes academic dishonesty.*

AI POLICY:  
 From the Humanities Division of the Academy (History, Languages, English):

* *“The Humanities Division recognizes that artificial intelligence (AI) provides some exciting new tools for academic work. However, AI also poses significant dangers for academic integrity. Passing off as your own any research, words, or ideas which you did not create is plagiarism. That is always the case whether the source is print, internet content, or generated by AI. It is vital to read the policies your individual humanities instructors have regarding AI, and ask them any questions you may have about the use of AI in their course.”*
* **On that note, here is my AI policy specifically for this course:**

**I consider any and all usage of AI a violation of academic integrity. As a professor, scholar, and devotee of the Arts & Humanities, I find AI to be antithetical to the passion of the human spirit, a threat to the nature of individuality, and a mockery of artistic creation.**

* + - **If I discover you have used any type of AI for any work you do for this class, you will receive a 0 on the assignment and I will report you to the administration for violating academic integrity.** 
      * **This includes, *but is not limited to*, AI generation of ideas/brainstorming, AI generated writing, AI organizing or attribution of sources, and using AI to revise and edit your writings.**

**To limit your temptation to use AI, and to assess your learning, the following steps will be taken regarding assignments:**

* As much work as possible will be handwritten and completed in class.
* Longer writings will be composed gradually and reviewed in meetings, etc.
* Assignments of significant writing length that need completed outside of class will be typed on a Google Doc created by Dr. Myers and shared with the student, so that Dr. Myers can monitor students’ writing processes.

READING CONTENT / SUBJECT MATTER POLICY:

From the Humanities Division of the Academy (History, Languages, English):

* “As with many classes, the lectures, readings, and discussions will include a range of topics that may be triggering, emotionally distressing, and difficult for some students … Literary studies seek to understand how writing communicates and expresses the experiences, thought processes, and cultures of former generations, whether for good or ill. Sometimes the language and word choices used by people in the past may be insensitive or politically incorrect today. The meaning of words and phrases changes over time and all language should be considered within its circumstances. We must take this into account, since the goal of the humanities is to understand people and the past within their own context and time.
* If a reading, image, or discussion is *truly* troubling to anyone, please do not hesitate to talk to your instructor. In most circumstances, an alternative reading or assignment can be arranged.

RESPECTFUL EXPRESSION POLICY

* Opinions, discussions, and different interpretations are the bedrock of academic study and democracy; however, **please participate in a manner that respects the viewpoints of everyone in the class.** i.e., no dismissiveness, name-calling, bullying, or general meanness.
* **Please exercise discretion in what you share in this class**, both in class discussions and in your writing. Stories need to have conflict, but language, by its very nature, can be misunderstood. **Instructors are responsible for reporting any evidence of abuse, neglect, or a student’s possible intent to harm themselves or to harm others**. In writing, especially, certain topics can sometimes be tricky to navigate, so **please reach out to me if you ever have any doubts, concerns, or questions about what you want to express.**
* **Please recognize that all feedback you receive from me in this class, including graded comments, is constructive**.
  + I genuinely want to assist your academic progress and professional growth by helping you become better writers and stronger critical thinkers!
  + However, this means that I must hold you accountable to both course requirements and the standards of higher education. Just like learning an instrument, playing a sport, or any other life achievement, you cannot improve unless you confront your mistakes and learn how to fix them.

**Behavioral Norms:** Alongside steady attendance, students are expected to maintain consistent healthy habits of decorum, respect, and kindness towards their classmates, instructors, and teaching assistants. When students fail to meet these classroom behavioral standards and academic habits, faculty will engage appropriately to bring quick and immediate resolution. When students consistently fail to meet these behavioral standards and academic habits in the classroom, an administrative consequence ladder will be adopted, and recorded, in an attempt to administratively address, engage, and rectify ongoing challenges.

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY BENIFICENCE PLEDGE

Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains outstanding faculty, staff, and students. Ball State is committed to ensuring that all members of the campus community are welcome through our practice of valuing the varied experiences and worldviews of the people whom we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse as evident in our Beneficence Pledge. As a reflection of Ball State’s commitment to respect, civil discourse, and the Beneficence Pledge, inclusiveness at the Indiana Academy emerges as one of the priorities of our living and learning community. We strive to exist together respectfully and compassionately, creating an environment where every member can thrive.

DISABILITY SERVICES

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. The Office of Disability Services coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at **765-285-5293** or [**dsd@bsu.edu**](mailto:dsd@bsu.edu)

If you ever have any questions or concerns about the course policies outlined on this syllabus, please reach out to your instructor: Dr. Joshua Myers [jmyers3@bsu.edu](mailto:jmyers3@bsu.edu)

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