

# Syllabus

## Course Description / Overview

The theme for this class is "American Revolution." We will read authors who record, on the one hand, the failures of the American revolution, with its dream of democracy and freedom for all, and on the other hand the potential for narrative to reenact that revolution successfully. In different ways, these authors overturn traditional or unethical authority through their literary innovations. Although certain classic American historical, political, and cultural issues will be at the center of our study—democracy, slavery, gender equity, social reform—we will concern ourselves primarily with literary strategies, with language and its uses. Essays will pursue close readings of the texts and develop students' abilities to think creatively and critically about fictional works.

This is a HASS-CI course. Like other communications-intensive courses in the humanities, arts, and social sciences, it asks students to produce 20 pages of polished writing in 3 assignments, one of which is a required revision, with a second revision optional. It also offers substantial opportunities for oral expression, through in-class reports, student-led discussion, and class participation. The class has a low enrollment that ensures maximum attention to student writing and oral expression. In cases where the enrollment rises above 18 students, a writing tutor will be available for consultation on drafts and revisions.

**Uses of Multimedia** This course has been planned in conjunction with the [MetaMedia Project at MIT](#) to develop uses of electronic media in the humanities classroom. We will be exploring online texts, visual arts, film, and music in relation to the texts studied in class and will work with a database of materials that will support research, writing, and in-class presentations. No technical experience is necessary.

## Required Texts

William Blake. *America: A Prophecy*.  
Herman Melville. *Moby-Dick*.  
Nathaniel Hawthorne. *The Blithedale Romance*.  
Harriet Beecher Stowe. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.  
William Wells Brown. *Clotel*.  
Sarah Orne Jewett. *Country of the Pointed Firs*.  
William Faulkner. *Absalom, Absalom*.  
Toni Morrison. *Beloved*.

## Schedule of Reading and Writing

WEEK #	TOPICS	READINGS	IMPORTANT DATES
1	Introduction		
2	Two Views of American	William Blake,	

	Revolution: Blake and Washington	<i>America: A Prophecy</i>  George Washington, "The Farewell Address" (handout)	
	Melville, "Etymology," "Extracts,"	Ch 1-23	
3	Melville	Ch 24-50	
	Melville	Ch 51-79	
4	Melville	Ch 80-108	
5	Melville	Ch 109-Epilogue	
		Hawthorne, "Rapaccini's Daughter" (handout)	ESSAY 1 (5 pages)
6	Hawthorne	"Preface"-Ch 14	
	Hawthorne	Ch 15-29	
7	Stowe	Ch. 1-11	REVISION (Required)
8	Stowe	Ch. 12-20	
	Stowe	Ch. 21-34	
9	Stowe	Ch. 35-45	
10	William Wells Brown	Ch 1-29	
			ESSAY 2 (5 pages)
11	Sarah Orne Jewett	Ch 1-18	
12	Jewett	Ch 19-24	REVISION (Optional)
	Faulkner	Ch. 1-4	
13	Faulkner	Ch. 5-7	
	Faulkner	Ch. 8-9	
14	Morrison	pp. 3-165	
	Morrison	169-235	
			Conference Day
15	Morrison	239-275	
	Conclusion		ESSAY (10 pages)

## Course Expectations

### 1. Attendance and Participation (30%)

This is a discussion course where your attendance and participation in class are vital to your success and that of the group.

a. *Attendance* (10%) You are expected to attend every class. Do not sign up for this course if you have a conflict with another class, recitation, sports commitment, or job. If you must miss class, please notify me of the fact by e-mail or in person by the time of the class. **Any absence deducts a percentage point from your final grade: two latenesses count as one absence. Repeated absences will lead to a formal warning and can affect your grade and status in the class.**

b. *Class Participation* (10%) This class is designed to challenge oral communication as well as writing skills. Be prepared to contribute to class discussion, not only by speaking but also by listening and responding to others. Submitting weekly email comments or contributions to the class forum is expected of all students and is helpful to class discussion.

c. *In-Class Report* (10%) Each student will prepare and deliver an in-class report on one day's reading. This report should include research, drawing on materials from print and online sources (1-3 of each) and presenting a bibliography in MLA Citation Form (see [Citation Index](#)). It should also raise questions and offer ideas for class discussion. You will submit an outline/handout, bibliography, and any supporting materials and will be graded on your content and also on your delivery and ability to generate class discussion.

## 2. Written Work (70%)

a. *Essays* (15%, 15%, 25%) **Essays are due at the beginning of class on the day assigned.** You must hand in something, even if you do not consider it your very best, in order to receive credit for the assignment. **Late essays (with an extension from me) will receive credit, as long as they come in by the following class. After that they will drop a full grade for each day late.**

b. *Revision* (15%) Students must revise the first of the two shorter papers (the second revision is optional). The required revision is a separate assignment from the essays and gets its own grade. The grade for the optional revision will be averaged with the original essay grade.

c. *Format Essays* must be typed or word-processed, double-spaced, and adequately margined, should include a title, and need to observe the conventions of grammar and spelling.

d. *Conference Day* Each student will meet with the instructor at least once during the term (one conference will be scheduled before the final essay, in week #14) to discuss essays and writing. Other conferences are strongly encouraged, especially with the first essay and revision; I am available to discuss writing throughout the term, and you may also consult the Writing Center.

## **Statement on Plagiarism**

Plagiarism attacks freedom and integrity of thought and violates the trust of the academic community. Especially in a class that will depend to some extent on online research, you must know what constitutes plagiarism and avoid it. The Literature Department has formulated this statement and policy for all plagiarism cases:

Plagiarism-use of another's intellectual work without acknowledgement- is a serious offense. It is the policy of the Literature Faculty that students who plagiarize will receive an F in the subject, and that the instructor will forward the case to the Committee on Discipline. Full acknowledgement for all information obtained from sources outside the classroom must be clearly stated in all written work submitted. All ideas, arguments, and direct phrasings taken from someone else's work must be identified and properly footnoted. Quotations from other sources must be clearly marked as distinct from the student's own work.

MIT's academic honesty policy can be found at the following link:

<http://web.mit.edu/policies/10.0.html>