

# *A Survey of American Literature*

Instructor: Christie Geis

405-921-7511

This course is organized as a survey of American literature. It is a complete year of general study in English. This course expands upon and deepens understanding of skills including reading, writing, language, and, research. Students examine the belief systems, events, and literature that have shaped the United States from colonial to modern eras. Reading selections cover a variety of genres and voices in literature including novels, short stories, dramas, letters, speeches, essays, poetry, prose, and multiple non-fictional sources. Students are encouraged to respond critically and personally to these works and to use them as a context for thinking about the unique and universal aspects of culture and faith. Within topic areas, special emphasis is placed on honing critical and analytic skills through close readings of literary, historical, expository, and functional documents; building vocabulary; and practicing productive communication skills in class discussions. Finally, students practice gathering, evaluating, synthesizing, presenting, and documenting information in a unit dedicated to writing research reports.

In the Colonial Period, students explore how American literature tells the stories of individuals who have struggled for independence and freedom: freedom of self, freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of home and country. Reading the words of Frederick Douglass and those of the Civil Rights Act, students look carefully at the experience of African Americans and their struggle to achieve equal rights. Students reflect on the role of the individual in literature that considers the relationship between citizens and government, and explores whether the American Dream is still achievable while examining Modernist disillusionment with American idealism. Students will reflect on how individuals cope with the influence of war, cultural tensions, and technology in the midst of trying to build and secure their own personal identity. Students build their writing and speaking skills in journal responses, discussions, frequent free response exercises, and essays or presentations. Students will do a research project focusing on literary topic.

Assignments will include internet and computer based assignments.

Length: Two semesters

---

## *Curriculums available to use:*

### **MAIN RESOURCE**

The textbook you need to purchase for this course:

**Elements of Literature – Fifth Course – American Literature published by Holt, Rinehart, and Winton:**

**ISBN: 0-15-717540-5**

I do have several textbooks available to rent out for the year if you would like to utilize this option.

**COST: \$25 a month**

## Works Being Covered

---

### 1600-1750 Colonial

John Winthrop – A Model of Christian Charity

Anne Bradstreet – To My Dear and Loving Husband, Upon the Burning of Our House (poetry)

Jonathan Edwards – Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God (July 8, 1741 - sermon)

### 1750-1800 Revolutionary – Enlightenment, Age of Reason, Rationalism

Phillis Wheatley – To His Excellency General Washington (1773 - poetry)

Olaudah Equiano – (1789 – narrative autobiography)

Benjamin Franklin – Poor Richard's Almanac (1758) Autobiography(1791)

Abigail Adams: Witness to Revolution - Letters to John Adams and daughter. (letters)

Patrick Henry - Speech to Virginia Convention (1775 – speech)

Thomas Paine – Common Sense (1776 – pamphlet)

### 1800-1860 Romanticism - Transcendentalism

Washington Irving – The Devil and Tom Walker and Rip Van Winkle (1820 - folk-tale)

Edgar Allen Poe – The Tell-Tale Heart (horror short story)

The Poetry of Edgar Allen Poe William Cullins Bryant, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Longfellow, Emily Dickinson, and Walt Whitman.

Nathaniel Hawthorne – The Scarlet Letter -1850 - (read excerpt) and short stories

Henry David Thoreau – Walden (1854 autobiography), Civil Disobedience (1849 - essay)

Ralph Waldo Emerson – Nature (essay), Self-Reliance, and The American Scholar (speech)

Herman Melville – Moby Dick - 1851 ( read excerpt), Billy Bud (1888 - read novella)

### 1850-1900 Realism

Harriet Beecher Stowe - Uncle Tom's Cabin

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot; Go Down Moses (1860's - folk-songs)

Frederick Douglass – The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas (1855-autobiography)

Abraham Lincoln – The Gettysburg Address (1863), and a poem

Mark Twain – The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, (1883 - Read Novel)

Edwin Arlington Robinson – Miniver Cheevy (1910), Richard Cory (1897 – poetry)

Ambrose Bierce - An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge – (short story)

### 1900-1950 Naturalism, Modernism, The Jazz Age, Disillusionment

Willa Cather – My Antonia -1918 - (read excerpt)

Lorraine Hansberry - A Raisin in the Sun (1959 play)

John Steinbeck - The Pearl (Read – Novel)

F. Scott Fitzgerald - The Great Gatsby (read excerpt)

Ernest Hemmingway – The Old Man and the Sea (1952 – read novel)

Robert Frost – Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening, The Road Not Taken (poetry)

James Thurber – The Secret life of Walter Mitty (1939 – short story)

### 1950-Present Contemporary, Post Modernism

Tennessee Williams – Glass Menagerie or (1944), Summer and Smoke

Harper Lee - To Kill a Mockingbird (read excerpt)

Martin Luther King Jr. - I Have a Dream (Speech)