



## AMERICAN LITERATURE TO 1800

English BC 3179x ♣ Fall 2019  
TuTh 11:40-12:55 ♣ Barnard 409

Professor Lisa Gordis  
Office: Barnard Hall 408D  
lgordis@barnard.edu  
Office phone: 854-2114  
Office hours: generally Tuesdays  
2:30-4 by appointment. Sign up at <http://calendly.com/lgordis>.



<http://blogs.cuit.columbia.edu/lmg21/>  
Mailbox: Barnard Hall 417

Humanities and Global Studies librarian:  
Vani Natarajan  
[vnataraj@barnard.edu](mailto:vnataraj@barnard.edu)

BC 3179x surveys American literature written before 1800. While we will devote some attention to the literary traditions that preceded British colonization, most of our readings will be of texts written in English between 1620 and 1800. These texts--histories, autobiographies, poems, plays, and novels--illuminate the complexity of this period of American culture. They tell stories of pilgrimage, colonization, and genocide; private piety and public life; manuscript and print publication; the growth of national identity (political, cultural, and literary); Puritanism, Quakerism, and Deism; race and gender; slavery and the beginnings of a movement towards its abolition. We will consider, as we read, the ways that these stories overlap and interconnect, and the ways that they shape texts of different periods and genres.

### TEXTS:

The following texts have been ordered at the Columbia University Bookstore:

Author	Title	Notes
William Bradford	<i>Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647</i> (Modern Library College Edition)	We'll be reading this early in the semester.
Nina Baym, ed.	<i>The Norton Anthology of American Literature</i> , 8th edition, Vol. A	The new 9th edition and used copies of older editions will work for most of our readings, but editions earlier than the 7th edition don't include Foster's <i>The Coquette</i> . The novel is available both online at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/2eu97o">http://tinyurl.com/2eu97o</a> and in a paperback edition from Oxford University Press.
Michael McGiffert, ed.	<i>God's Plot: Puritan Spirituality in Thomas Shepard's Cambridge</i> (University of Massachusetts Press)	The assignment in this text is relatively brief. Though the book is excellent, the frugal may want to do this reading on reserve.
John Woolman	<i>The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman</i> (Friends United)	Please read from the assigned edition; available online versions and most other printed texts have been heavily edited.

Charles Brockden Brown	<i>Wieland and Memoirs of Carwin</i> (Penguin)	Available online at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/39cfeh">http://tinyurl.com/39cfeh</a> . Note that the Penguin edition includes both <i>Wieland</i> and <i>Memoirs of Carwin</i> . Only <i>Wieland</i> is assigned for this course.
<b>Recommended text:</b> Olaudah Equiano	<i>The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano</i> (Penguin)	This text supplements the excerpts from Equiano's <i>Narrative</i> printed in the <i>Norton Anthology</i> . Students who choose to write on Equiano may wish to purchase this text or examine it on reserve.

In addition, editions of each text (though not in every case the same editions ordered) will be available on reserve at the Barnard Library. Links to texts available online, as well as links to supplementary material, are available on the course blog. Texts marked with a **W** on the schedule of readings below are available online. Some are password protected. When you click on these links, you will be asked to enter a username and password. Enter the username **gordis** and the password **texts**.

Please inform me **immediately** if you have difficulty obtaining any course texts or logging into the blog, so that I can address the problem.

#### EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS:

Early American texts are surprisingly interesting, but experiencing that interest requires active engagement. You'll need to wrestle with these texts and work to understand both their language and the contexts in which they were written and read.

You are expected to have completed all reading by the date for which it is assigned, and then to **participate in discussion of the reading in class** and via the **course blog**. (Note that some of the assignments are long, and plan ahead.) As we will be working closely with course texts, **please bring assigned readings to class each day**. If you read on reserve or online, take notes detailed enough to allow you to refer to specific passages, and please bring those notes to class. Participating in discussion involves attending class, sharing your ideas, and listening to your classmates' ideas.



Most materials are found on the course blog. **To join the blog, go to <https://edblogs.columbia.edu/engl3179x-001-2019-3> and log in using your uni.** Then click on **your username** in the upper right hand corner of the screen to access your profile. Fill in your first and last name, and then edit the setting "**Display name publicly as**" to show your first and last name. You may also add other information to your profile.

**You must join the blog and edit your profile by September 5.**

**Also, please fill out the student data form at <https://edblogs.columbia.edu/engl3179x-001-2019-3/data-form/>.**



Throughout the semester, we'll write as part of the learning process. Several kinds of writing assignments are required:

**Short papers:** You will write **four two-page papers** over the course of the semester. Each short paper should discuss a particular aspect of the assigned reading. You may do a close reading of a passage, explore a theme or issue in the text, or connect the assigned text with other texts you've studied, either

within or outside of the course. While each paper need not be a fully-developed essay with a fully explicated thesis, it should be an essay rather than a stream-of-consciousness document. Its prose should be paragraphed, polished, and free of errors. Moreover, each essay should reveal that you've put serious thought into the assigned reading, and should be anchored in close work with the language of the text.

You must write **four** short papers over the course of the semester. Each paper is due on the day when we're discussing the material about which you're writing. You may not submit more than one essay in a week without checking with me first. You must hand in your first short paper **no later than October 10**. (In other words, you should spread your papers out over the course of the semester, and may not write four papers the last week of class.) Aside from these constraints, you may choose when to write your essays based on your interests and your schedule. Each paper must be handed in to me on paper, and **must also be posted to the course blog**.

**To post your paper to the blog**, first **compose your post in a word processor and save your file**. Then go to the blog **dashboard** by logging into the blog. You should see a **black bar** at the top of the screen, where you can click on "**New**" and then click on "**Post**." This will take you to an editing screen, and you can copy and paste your text there. (You may include images.) Once you've fiddled with the format, click "**Publish**" at the right side of the screen. You should also assign your post to relevant **categories**, including **paper** and the relevant author(s) and or text(s). When you've posted your paper, please email me so that I can add a link to it in the appropriate reading notes.

**Longer paper:** You will write **one five-to-six-page paper** on a topic of your choosing. I will hand out suggested paper topics, and I encourage you to develop your own topic in consultation with me. I strongly encourage you to consult with me as you write your essay. I'm happy to speak to you about ideas, about tentative outlines, and about working drafts. This paper must be submitted by **December 3**.

**Blog postings:** You'll post many of your writing assignments on the course blog.

- As noted above, you'll **post your short papers** to the blog, so that your insights become part of our class discussions.
- I'll post reading notes for each text or group of texts on the syllabus. Each set of reading notes will include several **provocations**—passages for close examination, themes to consider, topics about which to collect examples from the text. These provocations will help you to work with the text, and will also ground our discussions. **You're required to post comments in response to at least five of the provocations over the course of the semester. To comment**, click on "**Leave a comment**" below the post on which you want to comment. Type your comment in the text-entry box, and click on "**submit**."
  - **If you choose**, you may also post a **provocation**. This is an opportunity to ask a question, suggest an interesting or perplexing passage for our consideration, or explore an issue that interests you. Comments on provocations posted by your classmates count toward your required comments.
- At least **once during the semester**, you're required to post a comment on the **Questions and Reflections** page on the blog. This page offers you an opportunity to take a step back, to think across course texts, to note patterns or issues that recur across the texts, to compare texts, or to consider issues of canon.
- You are encouraged but not required to **reply** to your classmates' papers, comments, and provocations.
- If you choose to make additional contributions to the blog (either posts or comments), such contributions will be noted and will enhance your grade.
- **All blog postings and comments must be posted by December 5.**

**Final examination:** There will be a comprehensive, closed-book **final examination** during the exam period. The university examination schedule currently lists our exam time as **Thursday December 19 from 4 to 7 pm, location TBA**. Please take that date into account when you make travel plans.

If you find yourself unable to complete an assignment by the due date, please speak to me in advance about an extension. Rumors to the contrary notwithstanding, I am generally a reasonable person, and I'm happy to work with you if you find yourself in a challenging situation. Work that is late without an extension will be penalized.

All essays must be typed, double-spaced, on white paper in standard fonts. Please don't use very small or very large fonts to squeeze or stretch out your essay. The page guidelines apply to standard 12-point fonts. Papers should follow MLA guidelines for essays; see *Rules for Writers, A Writer's Reference*, or *The MLA Handbook* for details.

The Barnard English department, like Barnard College as a whole, values intellectual integrity very highly. Plagiarism (using the words or ideas of others without appropriate attribution) is a serious violation, and I report *all* cases of plagiarism to the Dean of Studies *without exception*. If you are at all confused about appropriate acknowledgment of sources, please see me for clarification.

I will calculate your grade based on the following formula:

short papers:	30%
five-to-six-page essay:	30%
final exam:	25%
blog comments:	10%
participation:	5%

### STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

We will read a range of early American texts, including histories, sermons, poetry, autobiographies, drama, and novels. In the process, students will learn about the literature, history, religion, and culture of colonial America and the early Republic. You'll practice thinking critically, reading analytically, and using textual evidence in support of oral and written arguments. I hope that you'll also discover how fascinating early American texts are.

### SCHEDULE OF READINGS: (NA= Norton Anthology eighth edition; W = online)

September 3 Introduction and Origins

September 5 ORIGINS II: Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, chs. 1-15 (Modern College Library Edition pp. 1-182)

**DUE: join blog and edit profile**

September 10 ORIGINS II, continued: Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, chs. 16-36 (Modern College Library Edition pp. 183-385); Morton, *New English Canaan* (excerpts in NA 157-165)

September 12 ORIGINS III: Winthrop, *A Model of Christian Charity* (NA 165-177); "[Winthrop's Speech to the General Court]," from *The Journal of John Winthrop* (NA 184-186)

- September 17 THE PURITAN SERMON: Hooker, *The Soules Preparation* (excerpts on W), Cotton, *Christ the Fountaine of Life*, sermons 1 and 3 (W); Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, chs. 1-6 (W)
- September 19 PRIVATE PIETY: Thomas Shepard, *The Autobiography*, in *God's Plot*, pp. 35-79.
- September 24 PURITAN POETS I: Bradstreet, "The Prologue" (NA 208-09), "In Honor of That High and Mighty Princess Queen Elizabeth of Happy Memory" (NA 209-13); selection from "The Four Monarchies" (read the first twenty lines, and then read "Semiramis," lines 70-279) (W), "Contemplations" (NA 215-22), "The Flesh and the Spirit" (NA 222-24), "The Author to Her Book" (NA 225), "Before the Birth of One of Her Children" (NA 225-26), "To My Dear and Loving Husband" (NA226), "A Letter to Her Husband Absent Upon Public Employment" (NA 226-27), "Another [Letter to Her Husband, Absent upon Public Employment]" (NA 227-28), "Here Follows Some Verses upon the Burning of Our House" (NA 232-33), "As Weary Pilgrim" (NA 233-234), "Meditations Divine and Moral" 38 (W), "A Dialogue between Old England and New" (W), "To My Dear Children" (NA 235-38)
- September 26 PURITAN POETS II: Taylor, "Prologue" (NA 291-92), "Meditation 8 (First Series)" (NA 292-293), "Meditation 16 (First Series)" (NA 293-94), "Meditation 22 (First Series)" (NA 294-295), "Meditation 38 (First Series)" (NA 295-96), "Meditation 26 (Second Series)" (NA 297-98), "The Preface" (NA 298-99), "The Soul's Groan to Christ for Succor" (NA 299-300), "Christ's Reply" (NA 300-3), "The Joy of Church Fellowship Rightly Attended" (W), "Upon Wedlock, and Death of Children" (NA 303-4), "Upon a Wasp Chilled with Cold" (NA 304-5), "The Ebb and Flow" (W), "Upon the Sweeping Flood" (W), "Meditation 3 (First Series)" (W); George Herbert, "Jordan (II)" (W).
- October 1 **NO CLASS**
- October 3 PURITAN POETS III: Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom* (W).
- October 8 CAPTIVITY NARRATIVE: Rowlandson, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (NA 256-88)
- October 10 JONATHAN EDWARDS AS SCHOLAR AND THEOLOGIAN: "A Divine and Supernatural Light" (NA 416-29), "[The Beauty of the World]" (W), excerpts from *Images or Shadows of Divine Things* (W)  
**DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF FIRST SHORT PAPER (HARD COPY TO PROFESSOR GORDIS AND DIGITAL VERSION POSTED TO BLOG)**
- October 15 **NO CLASS**
- October 17 EDWARDS AND THE GREAT AWAKENING: Edwards, "Personal Narrative" (NA398-409), "On Sarah Pierrepont" (NA 409), "A Faithful Narrative" (W), "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (NA430-41); Charles Chauncy, "Enthusiasm Described and Cautioned Against" (excerpt, W)
- October 22 **NO CLASS**

- October 24 THE AWAKENING II: Samson Occom, *A Short Narrative of My Life* (NA 445-6 and W), John Marrant, *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, a Black* (W)
- October 29 QUAKER CONVERSION AND PIETY: Elizabeth Ashbridge, *Some Account of the Fore Part of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge* (W)
- October 31 QUAKER PIETY AND ABOLITION: Woolman, *The Journal of John Woolman* (23-192, 297-8)
- November 5 **ELECTION DAY ACADEMIC HOLIDAY—NO CLASS**
- November 7 DECLARING INDEPENDENCE I: Franklin, *The Autobiography* (NA 481-596), Paine, *The Age of Reason* (excerpt in NA 653-59)
- November 12 DECLARING INDEPENDENCE II: Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (excerpts in NA 687-721)
- November 14 DECLARING INDEPENDENCE III: Paine, *Common Sense* (excerpts in NA 639-47); Jefferson, *The Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson* (excerpts in NA 659-67); Adams and Adams, *The Letters of John and Abigail Adams* (excerpts in NA 625-39 and W), Murray, "On the Equality of the Sexes" (NA 737-47)
- November 19 AMERICAN NEOCLASSICISM AND PUBLIC POLEMICAL VERSE: Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America" (NA 764), "To the Right Honorable William, Earl of Dartmouth, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for North America, &c." (NA 765-66), "To the University of Cambridge, in New England" (NA 766), "On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield, 1770" (NA 767-68), "Thoughts on the Works of Providence" (NA 768-71), "To His Excellency General Washington" (NA 772-73), selected letters (NA 773-75 and W); Freneau, "On the Emigration to America and Peopling the Western Country" (W), "The Wild Honey Suckle" (NA 757-58), "The Indian Burying Ground" (NA 758-59), "To Sir Toby" (NA 759-60), "On Mr. Paine's Rights of Man" (NA 760-1), "On the Religion of Nature" (NA 762), "Literary Importation" (W)
- November 21 AMERICAN AND ENGLISH CULTURE: Barlow, *The Hasty Pudding* (W); Tyler, *The Contrast* (NA 775-816)
- November 26 THE NOVEL IN THE EARLY REPUBLIC I: Foster, *The Coquette* (NA 817-916)
- November 28 **THANKSGIVING BREAK—NO CLASS**
- December 3 THE NOVEL IN THE EARLY REPUBLIC II: Brown, *Wieland* (1-278); Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (excerpt from Letter III in NA 604-14).  
(Note: *Memoirs of Carwin*, printed with *Wieland* in the Penguin edition, is not assigned.)  
**\* DUE: FIVE-TO-SIX-PAGE PAPER**

December 5 THE NOVEL IN THE EARLY REPUBLIC II: Brown, *Wieland*, continued, and CONCLUSION

\* **DUE: FINAL SHORT PAPERS**

\* **DEADLINE FOR COMPLETION OF ALL BLOG POSTINGS AND COMMENTS**

December 10 **OPTIONAL REVIEW SESSION** in TBA

**FINAL EXAMINATION** scheduled by registrar, currently projected for **Thursday December 19 from 4 to 7 pm, location TBA.**

**Assignment checklist:**

**4 short papers (1-2 pages): (paper and blog)**

- Short essay 1 (due on or before 10/10)
- Short essay 2
- Short essay 3
- Short essay 4

**5 responses to provocations: (blog)**

- Response 1
- Response 2
- Response 3
- Response 4
- Response 5

**1 comment on the "Questions and Reflections" page (blog)**

**1 longer paper (5-6 pages): (paper)**

**1 final examination**

## ***Of Plymouth Plantation***

And first of the occasion and inducements thereunto; the which, that I may truly unfold, I must begin at the very root and rise of the same. The which I shall endeavour to manifest in a plain stile, with singular regard unto the simple truth in all things, at least as near as my slender judgment can attain the same.

### **Chapter 1**

It is well known unto the godly and judicious, how ever since the first breaking out of the light of the gospel in our honourable nation of England, (which was the first of nations whom the Lord adorned therewith after the gross darkness of popery which had covered and overspread the Christian world,) what wars & oppositions ever since, Satan hath raised, maintained, and continued against the Saints, from time to time, in one sort or other. Sometimes by bloody death and cruel torments; other whiles imprisonments, banishments and other hard usages; as being loath his kingdom should go down, the truth prevail, and the churches of God revert to their ancient purity, and recover their primitive order, liberty, & beauty.

But when he could not prevail by these means against the main truths of the gospel, but that they began to take rooting in many places, being watered with the blood of the martyrs and blessed from Heaven with a gracious increase; he then began to take him to his ancient strategems, used of old against the first Christians. That when by the bloody and barbarous persecutions of the heathen emperors he could not stop and subvert the course of the gospel, but that it speedily overspread, with a wonderful celerity, the then best known parts of the world; he then began to sow errors, heresies and wonderful dissensions amongst the professors<sup>1</sup> themselves, working upon their pride and ambition, with other corrupt passions incident to all mortal men, yea to the saints themselves in some measure, by which woeful effects followed. As not only bitter contentions and heartburnings, schisms, with other horrible confusions; but Satan took occasion and advantage thereby to foist in a number of vile ceremonies, with many unprofitable canons and decrees, which have since been as snares to many poor and peaceable souls even to this day.

So as in the ancient times, the persecutions by the heathen and their emperors was not greater than of the Christians one against other:—the Arians and other their complies against the orthodox and true Christians. As witnesseth Socrates in his second book. (1-2)

Bradford, William. *Of Plymouth Plantation 1620-1647*. Intro. Francis Murphy. Ed. Samuel Eliot Morison. New York: Random House, 1981.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Professor*, as used by Bradford and by Puritans generally, had no educational connotation; it merely meant one who affirmed belief in Christianity.