COURSE OVERVIEW
This course introduces American literature and culture through the middle of the nineteenth century. Readings will span the full range of genres as we move from European fantasies and narratives of the conquest of the New World to representations of slavery, industrialization, and U.S. national expansion. We will begin by considering the role of "America" (both the idea and the real continents) in world history; the questions we raise will return often as we look closely at the literature. Whether sermon, imperial report to the metropole, memoir, poem, or novel, the forms of our texts differentiate them as much as their content sometimes unites them, therefore we will examine the consequences, both political and aesthetic, of literary conventions. We will pay special attention to the relationship between texts and images (illustration, painting, iconography).

If we were to diagram our history of “American Literature from the Colonial Period to the Civil War,” it would appear in the shape of a V: the linguistic and geographical expanse of the earliest texts on our syllabus (“the Colonial Period”) gradually narrows to those materials purporting to constitute the national literary tradition of the United States (culminating in “the Civil War”). One objective of the course is to track this narrowing within the literature itself: to identify when and how, through a subtle retrospective substitution, a specifically U.S. literature asserted its claim to the term “American.” Along the way, we will trace the patterns of history in our texts. We will proceed as both close and distant readers, one eye focused on the minute details of our readings and the other trained on the slowly emerging outline of a history of “American Literature.”

REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES
Reading. Read each session’s material carefully before lecture. *Always read the introductory and head notes that precede the texts in your anthology:* these will provide essential information and occasionally they will make claims that we will want to challenge, both in lecture and in essays and exam questions. The reading assignments for this course are never onerous; take the time to absorb the reading, to develop your thoughts about the material. If a text resists your attention, ask yourself why writing that may have excited its original audience feels alien to you: in doing so, you will be fulfilling part of our task in this course, which is to track the relationship between cultural forms and historical change. When some aspect of a text or of the course engages your attention, pursue it: when faced with an abundance and variety of materials, the most important thing is to begin to identify patterns -- and your own interest is an ideal starting place.

Lectures typically will shuttle between the assigned texts and a range of other materials, making connections between our readings and social and cultural history. Sometimes we will engage with only a tiny snippet of the reading during lecture; other lectures will take fuller or even summary
account of the texts. The “coverage” of each lecture has no relationship to your preparation for lecture: always read completely and carefully. Your essays and exams will be based on both the reading assignments and the content of lectures.

**Writing.** Two short take-home essays (5pp.); two short reading exercises (3pp.); a midterm and a final exam.

**Participation.** Arrive to class on time and prepared to listen to lectures with care and to participate by asking questions and offering your thoughts during discussion periods. You may use a laptop computer only to take notes during lecture; any other uses will be frowned upon and may lead to embarrassing episodes—including a general ban on devices. Smart phones are not to be used in lecture under any circumstances. Please turn off your phone before class begins.

**Attendance, deadlines.** Attendance is required at all lectures; more than three absences will be grounds for failing the course. Assignment due dates are provided on the syllabus so that you can plan your work for the semester. All due dates are firm: extensions will be granted only in cases of serious illness or personal crisis. Don’t even ask.

**Office hours.** Although this is a large course, I look forward to getting to know each of you; often I will reserve part of lecture for questions and discussion. I also invite you to visit my office hours. You do not need a specific reason to visit office hours: we will always have more than enough to discuss.

**Special Collections sessions.** In small groups, we will hold one-hour sessions in Special Collections at Olin Library. These seminar-style meetings will give us the chance to look at early editions of books, pamphlets, and other material related to the course, and to have a more intimate discussion than is possible in lectures. We will schedule these sessions during the second week of classes.

**Disabilities resources.** Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860-685-2332 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

**Honor Code.** Please write an abbreviated form of the Honor Code pledge (“No aid, no violation.”) at the top of the first page of all assignments. All work must be done in compliance with the Honor Code, which prohibits the following: the attempt to give or obtain assistance in a formal academic exercise without due acknowledgment; plagiarism; the submission of the same work for academic credit more than once without permission; willful falsification of data, information, or citations in any formal academic exercise; deception concerning adherence to the
conditions set by instructor for the formal academic exercise; failure to take constructive action in
the event of committing or observing a violation or apparent violation; providing false
information and/or deceptive use of documents during an Honor Board hearing. If you need
help with proper citations or you have questions on how to avoid plagiarism, talk with me.

Grading. Your final grade breaks down like this:
- Short reading exercises: 20% (10% each)
- Take-home essays: 30% (15% each)
- Midterm exam: 20%
- Final exam: 30%

REQUIRED TEXTS
The Norton Anthology of American Literature, 8th ed., vols. A and B (at Broad Street
Books)
Additional readings, marked with an asterisk (*), will be posted on the course Moodle
site. Please print these and bring them to lecture.

SCHEDULE
**Note: Read all introductory material and headnotes, in addition to the assigned readings.**

I. AMERICA: FANTASY, ENCOUNTER, RUPTURE
MONDAY, 9/2 -- Introduction
Overview of the scope and limits of the course, pre-history of our materials. In-class
discussion of European colonization of the Americas and of the many problems attending
a survey of “American literature,” with attention to excerpts from, among others, Las
Casas, In Defense of the Indians; More, Utopia; Marx and Engels, Communist Manifesto.

Christopher Columbus, letter to Luis de Santangel on the first voyage (1493) (pp. 35-36)

WEDNESDAY, 9/4 -- New World Histories 1
Bartolomé de las Casas, The Very Brief Relation of the Devastation of the Indies (1552) (pp.
39-42)
Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, The Relation (1542) (pp. 44-51)
Thomas Harriot, A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia (1588)*

FRIDAY, 9/6 -- God and Mammon (New England 1)
William Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation (1630-50) (pp. 122-156)
Thomas Morton, New English Canaan (1637) (pp. 158-165)

MONDAY, 9/9 -- God and Mammon, con.
John Winthrop, A Model of Christian Charity (1630) (pp. 166-177)
Winthrop, Journal (pp. 177-186)
WEDNESDAY, 9/11 -- God and Mammon, con.
  *The Bay Psalm Book* (1640) (pp. 188-192)
  Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America* (1643) (pp. 194-204)

FRIDAY, 9/13 -- Visible and Invisible New Worlds (New England 2)
  Samuel Sewall, “The Selling of Joseph: A Memorial” (1700) (pp. 323-326)
  Sewall, *Diary* (1673-1729) (pp. 309-323)
  Cotton Mather, *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (1692) (pp. 328-333)
  Robert Calef, *More Wonders of the Invisible World* (1700)*

MONDAY, 9/16 -- Visible and Invisible New Worlds, con.
  Michael Wigglesworth, “The Day of Doom” (1662) (pp. 239-255)
  Edward Taylor, “Meditation 8 (First Series)” (p. 270), “Upon a Wasp Chilled with Cold,” “Huswifery” (pp. 304-306)
  **First reading exercise distributed.**

WEDNESDAY, 9/18 -- Visible and Invisible New Worlds, con.
  *The New England Primer* (1689, 1727) (p. 363)
  Mary Rowlandson, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682) (pp. 256-288)

II: ENLIGHTENMENT, AWAKENING, NATION-BUILDING

FRIDAY, 9/20 -- Looking-Glass 1
  William Byrd, *The Secret Diary* (1710-12) (pp. 391-396)
  Jonathan Edwards, personal narrative (c.1740) (pp. 398-409)
  Samson Occom, “A Short Narrative of My Life” (1768) (pp. 446-448)
  Phillis Wheatley, letter to Samson Occom (1774) (p. 774)
  Wheatley, “On Being Brought from Africa to America” (1773) (p. 764)
  **First reading exercise due in class.**

MONDAY, 9/23 -- Looking Glass 1, con.
  Edwards, “A Divine and Supernatural Light” (1734) (pp. 416-429), “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (1741) (pp. 430-441)

WEDNESDAY, 9/25 -- Looking-Glass 1, con.
  John Woolman, *Journal* (1774) (pp. 597-604)
  Benjamin Franklin, “The Way to Wealth” (1757) (pp. 457-463)
FRIDAY, 9/27 -- Looking-Glass 2
Franklin, *Autobiography* (1771-1791) (pp. 481-526)

MONDAY, 9/30 -- Looking-Glass 2, con.
Franklin, *Autobiography* (527-596)

WEDNESDAY, 10/2 -- Looking-Glass 2, con.
Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative* (1789) (pp. 688-706)

FRIDAY, 10/4 -- Looking-Glass 2, con.
Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative* (pp. 706-721)

MONDAY, 10/7 -- *The Literature of Occasions*
Judith Sargent Murray, “On the Equality of the Sexes” (1790) (pp. 739-747)
Wheatley, “To S.M., a Young African Painter, on Seeing His Works” (1773) (pp. 771-772)

WEDNESDAY, 10/9 -- *The Literature of Occasions*, con.
Thomas Paine, *The Crisis*, No. 1 (1776) (pp. 647-653)
Thomas Jefferson, *Autobiography* (1776, 1821) (pp. 661-667)
**First take-home essay prompt distributed.**

FRIDAY, 10/11 -- *The Literature of Occasions*, con.
United States Constitution (1787)*
*The Federalist* Nos. 1 and 10 (1787) (pp. 679-686)

MONDAY, 10/14 -- *Old New World 1*
Royall Tyler, *The Contrast* (1787) (pp. 776-816)
**First take-home essay due in class.**

WEDNESDAY, 10/16 – *Old New World 1*, con.
Paine, *The Age of Reason* (1794) (pp. 653-659)
J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) (pp. 605-625)
Tecumseh, speech to the Osages (pp. 453-455)

FRIDAY, 10/18 -- **In-class midterm exam**

MONDAY, 10/21 – FALL BREAK. NO CLASS.
WEDNESDAY, 10/23 -- **Old New World 2**

FRIDAY, 10/25 -- **Old New World 2, con.**
Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (1836) (pp. 214-243)

III. CAPITAL, SLAVERY, “AMERICAN LITERATURE”
MONDAY, 10/28 -- **Literary Marketplace 1: The Writer as Writer**

WEDNESDAY, 10/30 -- **Literary Marketplace 1: The Writer as Writer, con.**
Poe, “The Raven” (1845) (pp. 637-640), “The Philosophy of Composition” (1846) (pp. 719-727)

FRIDAY, 11/1 -- **Literary Marketplace 1: The Writer as Writer, con.**
Lydia Sigourney, all selections (pp. 108-121)
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, all selections (pp. 598-607)

MONDAY, 11/4 -- **Looking-Glass 3**
Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (1845) (pp. 1174-1239)

WEDNESDAY, 11/6 -- **Looking-Glass 3, con.**
David Walker, *Appeal in Four Articles* (1829) (pp. 792-795)
William Apess, *A Son of the Forest* and “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man” (1833) (pp. 131-159)
Martin R. Delany, “Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent” (1854) (pp. 803-804)

FRIDAY, 11/8 -- **Looking-Glass 3, con.**
Henry David Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government” (1848) (pp. 964-979), “A Plea for Captain John Brown” (1859) (pp. 1166-1170)
Emerson, “John Brown” (1860) (326-328)

MONDAY, 11/11 -- **Old New World 3**
Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) (pp. 450-515)
WEDNESDAY, 11/13 -- Old New World 3, con.
*The Scarlet Letter* (pp. 515-553)
**Second take-home essay prompt distributed.**

FRIDAY, 11/15 -- Old New World 3, con.
*The Scarlet Letter* (pp. 554-594)

MONDAY, 11/18 -- Literary Marketplace 2: The Writer as Worker
Herman Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (1853) (pp. 1483–1509)
**Second take-home essay due in class.**

WEDNESDAY, 11/20 -- Literary Marketplace 2: The Writer as Worker, con.
Melville, “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids” (1855) (pp. 1509–1525)

FRIDAY, 11/22 -- Literary Marketplace 2: The Writer as Worker, con.

MONDAY, 11/25 -- Social Conflict and the Poetic Line 1: Compression
Emily Dickinson, “I never lost as much but twice--,” “Success is counted sweetest,” “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers,” “Title divine, is mine,” “‘Faith’ is a fine invention,” “I’m ‘wife’ -- I’ve finished that--,” “After great pain, a formal feeling comes--,” “He fumbles at your Soul,” “Much Madness is divinest Sense,” “I’ve seen a Dying Eye,” “Pain-- has an Element of Blank--,” “Publication -- is the Auction,” “The Bustle in a House,” “Tell all the truth but tell it slant--,” “The Bible is an antique Volume--,” “A word made Flesh is seldom”

WEDNESDAY, 11/27 and FRIDAY, 11/29 -- THANKSGIVING BREAK. NO CLASS.

MONDAY, 12/2 -- Social Conflict and the Poetic Line 2: Dilation
Walt Whitman, preface to *Leaves of Grass* (1855) (pp. 1314-1329); “Song of Myself” (1855, 1881) (pp. 1330-1374)
**Second reading exercise distributed.**

WEDNESDAY, 12/4 -- Social Conflict and the Poetic Line 3: Form
Herman Melville, *Battle-Pieces* (1866) (pp. 1583-1586)

FRIDAY, 12/6 -- New World Histories 2
Abraham Lincoln, all selections (1858–1865) (pp. 732–740)
**Second reading exercise due in class.**