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.

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 (5-7pp.); a midterm and a final exam.
Attendance, participation, deadlines. Attendance is required at all lectures. More than three absences will be grounds for failing the course. Arrive to class on time and prepared to listen and to participate by asking questions and offering your thoughts during discussion periods.

You may use a laptop computer to take notes during lecture; other uses will be frowned upon and may lead to embarrassing episodes. Please turn off your cell phone before lecture begins.

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: the course material, the questions it raises, will always give us more than enough to discuss.

Students with disabilities. It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services and making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible (during the second week of the semester) so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at www.wesleyan.edu/deans/disability-students.html.

Honor Code. Please sign the honor code at the top of the first page of all assignments that you submit (‘Pledge, no aid, no violations’). 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, let me know or contact the Writing Workshop: www.wesleyan.edu/writing/workshop/

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at Broad Street Books):

SCHEDULE

I. AMERICA: FANTASY, ENCOUNTER, RUPTURE

Week 1 -- New World Histories 1
WEDNESDAY, 9/9 -- Introduction
    Overview of the scope and limits of the course, pre-history of the materials with which we will deal. 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,

Christopher Columbus, letter to Luis de Santangel on the first voyage (1493) (pp. 32-33)

**FRIDAY, 9/11**
- Bartolomé de las Casas, *The Very Brief Relation of the Devastation of the Indies* (1552) (pp. 36-39)
- Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *The Relation* (1542) (pp. 41-48)
- Thomas Harriot, *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1588) (pp. 49-55)

**Week 2 -- God and Mammon (New England 1)**

**MONDAY, 9/14**
- William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation* (1630-50) (pp. 105-138)
- Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan* (1637) (pp. 139-146)

**WEDNESDAY, 9/16**
- John Winthrop, *A Model of Christian Charity* (1630) (pp. 147-158)
- Winthrop, *Journal* (pp. 158-167)

**FRIDAY, 9/18**
- *The Bay Psalm Book* (1640) (pp. 168-173)
- Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America* (1643) (pp. 174-184)

**Week 3 -- Visible and Invisible New Worlds (New England 2)**

**MONDAY, 9/21**
- Samuel Sewall, “The Selling of Joseph: A Memorial” (1700) (pp. 303-306)
- Sewall, *Diary* (1673-1729) (pp. 289-303)
- Cotton Mather, *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (1692) (pp. 308-313)
- Robert Calef, *More Wonders of the Invisible World* (1700) (pp. 335-342)

**WEDNESDAY, 9/23**
- Anne Bradstreet, “Contemplations,” “The Author to Her Book,” “Before the Birth of One of Her Children,” “To My Dear and Loving Husband,” “Here Follows Some Verses upon the Burning of Our House” (c.1678) (pp. 195-202, 204-206, 212-213)
- Michael Wigglesworth, “The Day of Doom” (1662) (pp. 218-234)
- Edward Taylor, “Meditation 8 (First Series),” “Upon a Wasp Chilled with Cold,” “Huswifery” (pp. 270, 284-286)

**FRIDAY, 9/25**
- *The New England Primer* (1689, 1727) (pp. 353-355)
- Mather, “A Notable Exploit: Dux Faemina Facti” (1702) (pp. 344-346)
- Mary Rowlandson, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* (1682) (pp. 236-267)
II: ENLIGHTENMENT, AWAKENING, NATION-BUILDING

Week 4 -- Looking-Glass 1
MONDAY, 9/28
William Byrd, *The Secret Diary* (1710-12) (pp. 379-384)
Jonathan Edwards, personal narrative (c.1740) (pp. 386-396)
Samson Occom, “A Short Narrative of My Life” (1768) (pp. 441-443)
Phillis Wheatley, letter to Samson Occom (1774) (pp. 763-764)
Wheatley, “On Being Brought from Africa to America” (1773) (pp. 752-753)

WEDNESDAY, 9/30
Edwards, “A Divine and Supernatural Light” (1734) (pp. 404-417), “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” (1741) (pp. 425-436)

FRIDAY, 10/2
John Woolman, *Journal* (1774) (pp. 588-595)
Benjamin Franklin, “The Way to Wealth” (1757) (pp. 451-457)

Week 5 -- Looking-Glass 2
MONDAY, 10/5 --
Franklin, *Autobiography* (1771-1791) (pp. 472-534)

WEDNESDAY, 10/7
Franklin, *Autobiography* (534-587)

FRIDAY, 10/9 -- First take-home essay prompt distributed.
Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative* (1789) (pp. 675-709)

**11 AM: VISIT TO SPECIAL COLLECTIONS IN OLIN LIBRARY**

Week 6 -- The Literature of Occasions
MONDAY, 10/12 -- First take-home essay due in class.
“Women’s Poetry: From Manuscript to Print” (pp. 710-724)
Judith Sargent Murray, “On the Equality of the Sexes” (1790) (pp. 726-733)
Wheatley, “To S.M., a Young African Painter, on Seeing His Works” (1773) (pp. 760-761)

WEDNESDAY, 10/14
John and Abigail Adams, letters (1774-76) (pp. 617-629)
Thomas Paine, *The Crisis*, No. 1 (1776) (pp. 637-643)
Thomas Jefferson, *Autobiography* (1776, 1821) (pp. 651-657)

FRIDAY, 10/16
United States Constitution
*The Federalist* Nos. 1 and 10 (1787) (pp. 666-674)

Week 7 -- Old New World 1
MONDAY, 10/19
Royall Tyler, *The Contrast* (1787) (pp. 765-805)
WEDNESDAY, 10/21
Paine, *The Age of Reason* (1794) (pp. 643-649)
J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) (pp. 596-609)

FRIDAY, 10/23 -- In-class midterm exam

**Week 8 -- Old New World 2**
MONDAY, 10/26 -- FALL BREAK; NO CLASS

WEDNESDAY, 10/28

FRIDAY, 10/30
Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (1836) (pp. 1110-1138)

**IV. MARKET REVOLUTION, SLAVERY, “AMERICAN LITERATURE”**

**Week 9 -- Literary Marketplace 1: The Writer as Writer**
MONDAY, 11/2

WEDNESDAY, 11/4
Lydia Sigourney, all selections (pp. 1028-1044)
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, all selections (pp. 1497-1507)

FRIDAY, 11/6 -- Antebellum Literary Criticism
William Gilmore Simms, “Americanism in Literature” (1845) (pp. 2177-2179)
Emerson, “The Poet” (1844), (pp. 1180-1195)
Margaret Fuller, “The Great Lawsuit” (1843) (pp. 1640-1659)
Herman Melville, “Hawthorne and His Mosses” (1850) (pp. 2308-2320)

**Week 10 -- Looking-Glass 3**
MONDAY, 11/9
Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (1845) (pp. 2064-2129)

WEDNESDAY, 11/11
David Walker, *Appeal in Four Articles* (1829) (pp. 1687-1690)
William Apess, “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man” (1833) (pp. 1053-1058)
Martin R. Delany, “Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent” (1854) (pp. 1696-1698)
FRIDAY, 11/13
Henry David Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government” (1848) (pp. 1857-1872), “A Plea for Captain John Brown” (1859) (pp. 2056-2060)
Emerson, “John Brown” (1860) (1211-1213)

**11AM: VISIT TO SPECIAL COLLECTIONS IN OLIN LIBRARY**

Week 11 – Old New World 3
MONDAY, 11/16
Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) (pp. 1352-1415)

WEDNESDAY, 11/18
*The Scarlet Letter* (pp. 1415-1454)

FRIDAY, 11/20 -- NO CLASS; second take-home essay prompt distributed.

Week 12
MONDAY, 11/23 -- Second take-home essay due in class.
*The Scarlet Letter* (pp.1454 -1493)

WEDNESDAY, 11/25 -- THANKSGIVING BREAK; NO CLASS

FRIDAY, 11/27 -- THANKSGIVING BREAK; NO CLASS

Week 13 -- Literary Marketplace 2: The Writer as Worker
MONDAY, 11/30
Herman Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (1853) (pp. 2363-2389)

WEDNESDAY, 12/2
Melville, “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids” (1855) (pp. 2389-2405)

FRIDAY, 12/4

Week 14 -- Social Conflict and the Poetic Line
MONDAY, 12/7
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–,” “Wild nights -- Wild nights!,” “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,” “A Spider sewed at Night,” “Tell all the truth but tell it slant–,” “The Bible is an antique Volume--,” “A word made Flesh is seldom”
WEDNESDAY, 12/9
Walt Whitman, preface to *Leaves of Grass* (1855) (pp. 2195-2209); “Song of Myself” (1855, 1881) (pp. 2210-2254)

**3PM: VISIT TO SPECIAL COLLECTIONS IN OLIN LIBRARY**

FRIDAY, 12/11
Herman Melville, *Battle-Pieces* (1866) (pp. 2461-2465)

**Week 15 -- New World Histories 2**
MONDAY, 12/14
Abraham Lincoln, all selections (1858-1865) (pp. 1628-1636)