

**College of San Mateo**  
**Official Course Outline**

**1. COURSE ID:** LIT. 823     **TITLE:** American Literature I

**Units:** 3.0 units   **Hours/Semester:** 48.0-54.0 Lecture hours; and 96.0-108.0 Homework hours

**Method of Grading:** Pass/No Pass Only

**2. COURSE DESIGNATION:**

**Non-Degree Credit**

**Transfer credit:** none

**3. COURSE DESCRIPTIONS:**

**Catalog Description:**

Study of American Literature from the European conquest of the Americas through the 1870s with a focus on the major authors from the 18th and 19th centuries. Lectures, discussions, reading of primary and secondary works, and writing of reader-response journal.

**4. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME(S) (SLO'S):**

Upon successful completion of this course, a student will meet the following outcomes:

1. Demonstrate familiarity with a variety of representative works of American literature from the 1490s through the 1870s, identifying major literary, cultural, and historical themes.
2. Present a critical, independent analysis of themes in one or more works of American literature from the 1490s through the 1870s in the form of a project, presentation, or reading response journal.

**5. SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:**

Upon successful completion of this course, a student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the contexts-historical, intellectual, social, and cultural- of a broad range of American literature from the 1490s through the 1870s.
2. Identify major literary authors and their works in the period.
3. Discuss important literary movements and forms of the period.
4. Analyze literary works from the period, including poetry, essays, sermons, myths, historical documents, and fiction.

**6. COURSE CONTENT:**

**Lecture Content:**

1. The teacher should present students with a wide range of American texts (poetry, essays, sermons, myths, historical documents, and fiction) across the time periods indicated in the course description. While the works of traditionally canonical writers of the period should not be neglected, the instructor should include works by writers of the period from historically underrepresented groups, including women. Course content should include works from each of the below noted periods. (The authors noted represent neither an exhaustive nor required list; rather, they are offered as suggested selected authors.)
  - A. Literature to 1620: Christopher Columbus , Bartolome de las Casas, Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, John Smith, Native American texts
  - B. Early American Literature 1620-1820: William Bradford, John Winthrop, Anne Bradstreet, Michael Wigglesworth, Mary Rowlandson, Cotton Mather, Sarah Kemble Knight, Jonathan Edwards, John Woolman, Benjamin Franklin, J. Hector St. John de Creveceour, Thomas Paine, Handsome Lake, Mercy Otis Warren, Phillis Wheatley, Sarah Wentworth Morton, Olaudah Equiano
  - C. American Literature 1820-1870: Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, Seattle, Frederick Law Olmsted, The Cherokee Memorials, Lydia Maria Child, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Abraham Lincoln, Margaret Fuller, Fanny Fern, Harriet Jacobs, Henry David Thoreau, Frederick Douglass, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson, Rebecca Harding Davis, Angelina Grimke, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Harriet Beecher Stowe
  - D. Universities and colleges across the country present introductory American literature survey courses in either two or three sequenced courses, and the placement of Dickinson, Whitman, and Twain varies. College of San Mateo's American Literature course curriculum follows the more common two-course sequence, covering Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman in LIT 823, and Mark Twain in LIT 824.
2. The teacher should connect the authors and their works to relevant literary movements and historical and

cultural events of the authors' times. The teacher may also present students with background readings, secondary sources, and criticism to provide insight into the period.

3. The teacher should provide students with regular opportunities to discuss the literature based on their own interpretations, on their reading of ancillary texts, and on the instructor's lectures. During class time, the teacher should model close reading and analysis for the students, and encourage the students to anchor their opinions about the works in the texts themselves. Students should have ample opportunity to practice close reading, through informal discussion, quick writes, group work, and so on.
4. The teacher should provide students with an introduction to literary analysis and criticism. Students should gain a firm grasp of basic discipline-specific terms and concepts, including but not limited to figurative language (metaphor, simile, image, symbol), rhyme schemes, patterns of meter, scansion, and literary genres. The teacher should also introduce students to the notion of the critical lens, guiding students in their use of a critical framework for their own reading as well as informing them of the teacher's own critical approach to the presentation of the course as a whole and the works in particular. Students should be made aware of the range of interpretive stances inherent in the discipline, and while the teacher must discourage misreadings of the text, students must also feel free to develop their own interpretations and analytical approaches without fearing that the teacher will succumb to retributive grading to enforce a single, correct reading of the text.
5. Given the immensity of the body of work LIT 823 covers, some teachers may choose to design their syllabus around a theme. Some possible themes include independence, individuality, revolution, social upheaval, the blending of cultures and ideas, encountering the other, shifting attitudes towards nature, changing social and intellectual paradigms, and expanding and shifting definitions of freedom. The selection of a course theme can enhance the students' achievement of SLO 1.

## 7. REPRESENTATIVE METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

Typical methods of instruction may include:

- A. Lecture
- B. Discussion
- C. Other (Specify): 1. Lectures: Instructor gives an oral presentation (which may or may not be accompanied by a visual presentation, either through handouts, board work, or multimedia presentation tools) to introduce students to new works, concepts, and authors. 2. Inductive presentations: Instructor provides students with an array of data from which they draw general conclusions about a work, author, time period, skill set, or other course material. 3. Guided readings: Students read and interpret specific works with instructor guidance (questions). 4. Journal work: Students write journal entries in response to specific questions. 5. Student discussions: Student-led or teacher-led oral discussions based on readings and class activities; structured small- and large-group interaction. 6. Dramatic presentations: Recorded readings/dramatizations of appropriate material (e.g. plays, poetry readings, film adaptations) 7. Collaborative/Individual projects: Student-initiated projects into coursework or course-related material (research, drama, presentations, etc.)

## 8. REPRESENTATIVE ASSIGNMENTS

Representative assignments in this course may include, but are not limited to the following:

### **Writing Assignments:**

Journal work: Students write journal entries in response to specific questions.

### **Reading Assignments:**

Guided readings: Students read and interpret specific works with instructor guidance (questions).

### **Other Outside Assignments:**

Collaborative/Individual projects: Student-initiated projects into coursework or course-related material (research, drama, presentations, etc.)

## 9. REPRESENTATIVE METHODS OF EVALUATION

Representative methods of evaluation may include:

- A. Exams/Tests
- B. Oral Presentation
- C. Quizzes
- D. Informal and low-stakes writing assignments: Reader-response journals, critical reflections, limited explications, and other exploratory writing based on assigned readings to demonstrate students' understanding of engagement with the course material and to aid students in synthesizing and analyzing works and themes.

## 10. REPRESENTATIVE TEXT(S):

Possible textbooks include:

- A. Lauter, Paul. *The Heath Anthology of American Literature. Volume A & B*, 6th ed. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007
- B. Baym, Nina. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature. Volume A & B*, 7th ed. New York: Norton, 2007

Other:

- A. Students must read at least one full-length work from the period covered by the course. Many publishers offer the below listed and other appropriate works at a wide range of prices, from the Dover Thrift editions, which usually are priced at under \$5.00, to the Norton Critical editions, which are usually priced around \$15.00 and include a useful collection of contemporary and recent literary reviews and criticism along with background materials and biographical information about the author and work.
- B. Franklin, Benjamin. *The Autobiography*.
- C. St. John de Creveceour, J. Hector. *Letters from an American Farmer*.
- D. Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Selected Essays*.
- E. Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or Life among the Lowly*.
- F. Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.
- G. Douglass, Frederick. *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*.
- H. Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden, or Life in the Woods*.
- I. Thoreau, Henry David. *Civil Disobedience*.
- J. Whitman, Walt. *Leaves of Grass*.
- K. Melville, Herman. *Moby Dick*.
- L. Melville, Herman. *Benito Cereno*.
- M. Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter*.
- N. Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The House of the Seven Gables*.
- O. Poe, Edgar Allan. *Collected Stories*.
- P. Dickinson, Emily. *Collected Poems*.

**Origination Date:** January 2018

**Curriculum Committee Approval Date:** February 2018

**Effective Term:** Fall 2018

**Course Originator:** Daniel Keller