

HL2027 / Early American Literature  
Tuesdays, 14:30-17:20 / SHHK Seminar Room 9  
Asst. Prof Christopher Trigg  
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### Description

The European settlement and colonization of the Americas created the global world of the modern era. In Peru, Mexico, Haiti Barbados, Virginia, New England, and New York, new forms of political, religious, commercial, and cultural life emerged. The modern concept of racial difference also first developed in the Americas, through contact with indigenous peoples and the importation of slaves from Africa.

This class introduces you to the literature produced in and about England's North American Colonies (including Virginia, Massachusetts Bay, and Maryland). Our readings explore the challenges posed by living, working, and thinking in colonial and revolutionary America.

With adventurer playwright Aphra Behn, students will reflect on the transformative promise of the New World. How did Virginia offer ordinary men and women the chance to live like royalty? In the life of John Marrant, we'll see how conversion to Christianity led a young African-American man to become the confidant of a Cherokee king. Mary Rowlandson's account of her captivity amongst the Wampanoag finds proof of God's supervising plan in the midst of bitter hardship. Reading Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, students will consider how a man from the same New-England Puritan culture could come to consider himself the master of his own destiny.

Covering a wide variety of literary forms and genres, this course serves as a solid foundation for further study of American literature, as well as seventeenth- and eighteenth- century British & Irish literature. You will also develop important skills in textual editing and the use of online archives.

### Required Texts

Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette* (Dover - [0486796191](#))

All other texts posted online

### Assessment

Participation and Preparation 10%

Bibliographic Exercise 15%

Term Paper 25%

Final Exam (online) 50%

### Participation and Preparation

Each week, two discussion questions will be posted via LAMs. Students must write brief answers to both of these questions, and post them online by 5pm on Monday, the day before class. Answering these questions is compulsory.

### **Bibliographic Exercise**

Working in small groups, students will identify an interesting (and brief) early American text from an online database. They will then produce an edition of the text, including a short introduction, a bibliographic record, and any footnotes necessary for the comprehension of a general reader. Students will be able to conduct most of the work for this exercise during class on 19<sup>th</sup> September.

### **Late Penalties**

Late work submitted without an approved extension will be penalized one half letter grade per day late – an A paper submitted one day late would drop to an A-, etc.

### **Academic Integrity**

Please be advised that the use of AI tools is prohibited in this course. This includes (but is not limited to) Chat GPT, Google Bard, and editing software such as Grammarly and Quillbot. The use of any AI tools will result in a significant grade deduction (including a potential fail grade or zero for the assignment).

### **Seminar Schedule**

1. 15<sup>th</sup> August

The Idea of America

(no reading)

2. 22<sup>nd</sup> August

Colonial Virginia: Planters, Rebels, & Indians

Aphra Behn, [\*The Widow Ranter\*](#) (1689).

3. 29<sup>th</sup> August

Colonial Massachusetts: Puritan Ideology, Puritan Faith

John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity” (1630).

Anne Bradstreet, Selected Poems.

4. 5<sup>th</sup> September

The Captivity Narrative

Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (1682).

5. 12<sup>th</sup> September

The Salem Witch Trials

Deodat Lawson, *A Brief and True Narrative* (1692).

\*Cotton Mather, [\*Wonders of the Invisible World\*](#) (1692).

6. 19<sup>th</sup> September

The Book in the Atlantic World

**Bibliographic exercise**

7. 26<sup>th</sup> September

Slaves and Slave Holders

Samuel Sewall, [\*The Selling of Joseph\*](#) (1700).

John Saffin, *A Brief and Candid Answer* (1701).

Cotton Mather, [\*The Negro Christianized\*](#) (1706).

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8. 10<sup>th</sup> October

The Black Atlantic

John Marrant, *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant* (1785)

Phillis Wheatley, "To the University of Cambridge, in New-England" (1773); "On Being Brought from Africa to America" (1773); "On Virtue" (1773).

9. 17<sup>th</sup> October

Commercial Culture

Ebenezer Cooke, *The Sot-Weed Factor* (1708).

**In-Class Essay Workshop**

10. 24<sup>th</sup> October

Writing the Revolution: Jefferson and Freneau

Thomas Jefferson, *Draft of the Declaration of Independence* (1776).

Philip Freneau, "On the Emigration to America and Peopling the Western Country" (1784); "The Indian Burying Ground" (1788); "To the Americans of the United States" (1797).

11. 31<sup>st</sup> October

Defining National Culture

Royall Tyler, *The Contrast* (1787).

12. 7<sup>th</sup> November

Early American Novels: *The Coquette* ——— **term paper due.**

Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette* (1797).

13. 14<sup>th</sup> November

Revision