Course Description
What is American literature? How does it provide us unique insights into the history, culture, and political landscape of the United States? Why are specific tensions so central to the formation of the literary canon: liberty versus equality in the American imaginary; the American fixation on race and its significance as a symbol of justice fulfilled or denied; the riddle of class; woman as both icon of domesticity and symbol of moral disorder? How are literary texts influenced by shifting definitions of national identity, including individuality as opposed to collectivism, and the conviction of American exceptionalism in an uncertain world? In “Survey of American Literature,” we will explore works of prose, fiction, poetry, and drama produced by a range of 19th and 20th century American authors. Through close readings, we will develop methods of textual interpretation that incorporate an understanding of the writers, the literary traditions by which they were informed, and the historical contexts in which they lived and created. Central to this will be our ability to view ourselves as active readers, individuals informed by both our own historical and cultural realities. As we do so and become aware of the particular perspective we bring to the text, we will increasingly incorporate the language of literary analysis to our own papers and discussions.

Required Texts (Available at UdeM Bookstore)
Norton Anthology American Literature
The Scarlet Letter (Nathaniel Hawthorne)
The Awkening (Kate Chopin)
The Crucible (Arthur Miller)
The Bell Jar (Sylvia Plath)

Course Objectives
(1) To allow students to understand United States history and culture through its rich and varied literary canon.
(2) To enable students to recognize diverse literary genres and devices, including plot and character development, language, dialogue, and symbolism, and how they affect the text as a work of art.
(3) To help students improve their writing skills through textual analysis. Students will examine, compare and contrast, and critique a variety of writing styles.
(4) To permit course participants to present and examine their ideas in a public forum, thereby exchanging ideas and improving public speaking skills.

Course Mechanics
• Class participation is a must. It improves the quality of discussion (and is graded for both content and frequency).
• All essays must be typed. Each should be double-spaced and have a one-inch margin. Please use a standard font. Remember to title your essays and include page numbers. Staple all pages together.
• Plagiarism, the uncredited use of another’s words, research, and thoughts, is forbidden. It will not be tolerated. Students are advised to familiarize themselves with the policies of the FAS: www.fas.umontreal.ca/plagiat. Please document your sources appropriately.
• You are responsible for any materials or assignments handed out or discussed during an absence.

Course Requirements

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Class Response Papers</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Essay (3-5 pp) <strong>Due: 11/2</strong></td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term Exam (10/19)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam (12/14)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 (9/7)
Introductions

19th Century

WEEK 2 (9/14) **AMERICAN GOTHIC AND THE ROMANCE TRADITION**
*Historical Context: “An American Renaissance?”: 1820-1865 (445-466)*
Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*

WEEK 3 (9/21) **THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE**
Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (938)

WEEK 4 (9/28) **THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE**
Herman Melville, “Benito Cereno” (1128)

WEEK 5 (10/5) **THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE**
Film: Walt Whitman (American Experience)
Walt Whitman (1009-1023)(1024-1067)(1067-1069)
Emily Dickinson (1193-1217)

WEEK 6 (10/12) **THE GILDED AGE AND BEYOND**
*Historical Context: “The Transformation of a Nation”: 1865-1914 (1265-1281)*
Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*

WEEK 7 (10/19) **MID-TERM EXAM**

READING WEEK !!! (10/26)
WEEK 8 (11/2) **MODERNISM** (Poetry Selections)  
**DUE: Essay (3-5pp)**  
*Historical Context: “The Two Wars as Historical Markers”: 1914-1945 (1837-1856)  
Amy Lowell (1893-1898)  
Wallace Stevens (1952-1961)  
William Carlos Williams (1963-1970)  
e.e. cummings (2137-2141)

WEEK 9 (11/9) **THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE/THE NEW NEGRO MOVEMENT**  
WEB DuBois, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” (from *The Souls of Black Folk*) (1717)  
Zora Neale Hurston, “How It Feels to Be Colored Me” (2124)  
Jean Toomer *Cane*, part I (*Studium*)

WEEK 10 (11/16) **THE SOUTHERN RENAISSANCE**  
*Historical Context: “The United States and World Power”: Post-1945 (2255-2271)  
William Faulkner, from *Go Down Moses*: “Pantaloon in Black” and “Go Down, Moses” (*Studium*)  
Flannery O’Connor, “The Lame Shall Enter First” and “Everything that Rises Must Converge” (*Studium*)

WEEK 11 (11/23) **MID-CENTURY AMERICA**  
Arthur Miller, *The Crucible*

WEEK 12 (11/30) **MID-CENTURY AMERICA**  
Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*

WEEK 13 (12/7) **RETHINKING AMERICA**  
Maxine Hong Kingston, “No Name Woman” (2691-2699)  
Richard Rodriguez, “Complexion” and “Mr. Secrets” (*Studium*)  
Louise Erdrich, “Love Medicine” (*Studium*)

(12/14) **FINAL EXAM**