

Building F, KERÉNYI Room

Mon 8.30-10.00

Office hrs: Wed 14:00-15:30**Office:** 447**Email:** benczik.vera@btk.elte.hu

This is a lecture course surveying American literature from the colonial times to the end of the 20th century. The readings are arranged chronologically, beginning with Puritan texts and ending with 20th century women's writing. Our main concern throughout the course will be to explore diversity and multiplicity in American literature; so, in addition to canonical texts, we will discuss authors formerly marginalized for reasons related to gender, race, or class.

This is a rather difficult course, as much about the literary texts as about their historical context, and the critical approaches. Not only will you have to read a lot of text pages but you will have to learn the more complex ways to unpack those texts. So this is really a course in critical interpretation too, for which it is essential that you learn to follow the lectures. This will not always be easy, since our approach to literature will go beyond the simple plot outline or character presentation.

If you have any problems in connection with the above, come and see me during my office hours, or contact me via email.

PLEASE NOTE THAT NO "EXAM COURSE" (VIZSGAKURZUS) IS OFFERED IN THE FALL SEMESTER. The next time you can take the course is in the spring of 2017.

REQUIRED READINGS:

1. PRIMARY TEXTS: Except for the few longer novels, which can be checked out in separate volumes from the SEAS and other libraries in the city, the assigned texts can be found in the following anthologies (as well as on the internet):

The Norton Anthology of American Literature, vols. I-II

The Heath Anthology of American Literature, vols. I-II

The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women

2. SECONDARY TEXT:

Compulsory reading: relevant chapters from

Bollobás Enikő, *Az amerikai irodalom rövid története* (Budapest: Osiris, 2015). (For the page numbers of relevant chapters, see below.)

Recommended reading: **Gray, Richard**. *A Brief History of American Literature*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

REQUIREMENTS:

- (i) attendance**
- (ii) final exam**

(i) Attendance

It is strongly advised that you attend the lectures; in fact, it is strongly advised that you too come prepared for each class. Indeed, the best way to ensure that you follow the lectures is to read the texts for each week. Remember, the more you read during the semester, the more useful you will find the lectures; the more you understand the lectures, the better prepared you will be for the exams.

(ii) FINAL EXAM This will cover the lectures and the required primary and secondary readings. The exam will consist of two parts:

- 1) The **FIRST PART** is a short test in which students are asked to identify basic terms / dates / names, either defining them or pairing them to authors / works. A list of these will be made available online. This part functions as a filter to the second part of the exam, and students will have to achieve at least 60% in order to pass the exam. Students who achieve less than 60% in this part fail the whole exam.
- 2) The **SECOND PART** is a series of excerpts from the compulsory readings followed by questions related to the text, and its cultural and literary context.

GRADES: you must achieve 50% or higher on the exam in order to pass the course.

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SCHEDULE OF LECTURES

February 8	Introduction and orientation
February 15	Colonial & 18 th century America
February 22	19 th century American literature I: Transcendentalism, early prose
February 29	19 th century American literature II: poetry, slave narratives
March 7	19 th century American literature III: post-bellum realism, women writers
March 14	<i>no class</i> (national holiday)
March 21	Modernism I: background, poetry 1.
March 28	<i>no class</i> (spring break)
April 4	Modernism II: poetry 2., prose 1.
April 11	Modernism III: prose 2.
April 18	Modernism IV: Harlem Renaissance
April 25	Postwar literature: postmodernism, prose
May 2	Postwar literature: drama & poetry
May 9	Women writers, ethnic identities

**Relevant chapters from *Az amerikai irodalom rövid története*
and Required Primary Readings**

1. Puritanism & 18th century America

Bollobás 19-48

Readings:

from *The Journal of John Winthrop* (Norton I, 181-188)

Anne Bradstreet, "To My Dear and Loving Husband," "Here Follow Some Verses Upon the Burning of Our House" (Norton I, 209-214, 219-220)

2. 19th century American literature

Bollobás 67-74, 78-87, 95-103, 107-120, 120-139, 140-143, 149-156, 165-167, 169-174, 194-196, 200-202.

READINGS:

Transcendentalism:

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*

Prose:

Washington Irving, "Rip Van Winkle"

Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher"

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*

Herman Melville, "Bartleby, the Scrivener"

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Norton I, 1626-1645) **EXCERPTS!**

Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*

Sarah Orne Jewett, "A White Heron"

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"

Poetry:

Edgar Allan Poe, "The Raven"

Walt Whitman, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd"

Emily Dickinson, poems #280, 303, 341, 465, 754, 1129, 1418, 1719

3. 20th century American literature

Bollobás 211-218, 222-232, 232-248, 254-262, 275-279, 285-297, 301-303, 310-314, 322-324, 326-329, 335-337, 348-357, 359-363, 368-372, 374-385, 391-394, 466-473, 491-492, 498-501, 510-515, 517-522, 548-560.

READINGS:

Prose

Ernest Hemingway, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro"

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

William Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily"

Nella Larsen, *Passing*

Flannery O'Connor, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"

J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*

Paul Auster, *City of Glass* (from the *New York Trilogy*)

Alice Walker, *Color Purple*

Leslie Marmon Silko "Lullaby"

Poetry

Ezra Pound, "In a Station of the Metro," "The Jewel Stairs' Grievance," "Pagani's, November 8"
William Carlos Williams, "The Red Wheelbarrow," "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus"
Amy Lowell, "A Decade"
H. D., "Oread"
Robert Frost, "Mending Wall," "The Road Not Taken"
T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"
Langston Hughes "I, too" and "The Negro Speaks of Rivers"
Denise Levertov, "Woman Alone"
Sylvia Plath "Lady Lazarus," "Daddy"
Charles Olson, "Variations Done for Gerald Van De Wiele"

Drama

Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*
Arthur Miller, *The Death of a Salesman*