

ENG 240-02: Topics in American Literature
—The Frontier in American Literature—

Spring Semester, 2007

Meetings: Tue & Thu 12:00 – 1:40 pm

Office: Parker 4

Office Hours: Tue & Thu 2:00 – 3:00 pm

Instructor: Dr. Lorianne DiSabato

Voicemail: (35)8-8888 box 4167#

Email: ldisabato1@keene.edu

<http://www.pedestrianthoughts.com>

Welcome are all earth's lands, each for its kind;
Welcome are lands of pine and oak;
Welcome are lands of the lemon and fig;
Welcome are lands of gold;
Welcome are lands of wheat and maize—welcome those of the grape;
Welcome are lands of sugar and rice;
Welcome the cotton-lands—welcome those of the white potato and sweet potato;
Welcome are mountains, flats, sands, forests, prairies;
Welcome the rich borders of rivers, table-lands, openings;
Welcome the measureless grazing-lands—welcome the teeming soil of orchards, flax, honey,
hemp;
Welcome just as much the other more hard-faced lands;
Lands rich as lands of gold, or wheat and fruit lands;
Lands of mines, lands of the manly and rugged ores;
Lands of coal, copper, lead, tin, zinc;
LANDS OF IRON! lands of the make of the axe!

—Walt Whitman,
Section 2 of *Song of the Broad-Axe*

Description:

At the end of the 19th century, historian Frederick Jackson Turner argued that the frontier—the ragged edge between civilization and wilderness—was the reason for Americans' fascination with exploration and innovation. Although Turner observed that America's geographical frontier had closed, American writers before and since have used the image of living on the edge as a metaphor for self-reliance and philosophical searching. In this class, we will trace the image of the frontier in American literature, reading texts by authors such as Whitman, Cooper, Cather, and Dillard.

Required Texts:

James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pioneers*

Mark Twain, *Roughing It*

Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!*

Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*

Annie Dillard, *The Living*

Elizabeth Gilbert, *The Last American Man*

Short text reading available online at <http://www.pedestrianthoughts.com>

Be forewarned: this class requires a great deal of reading. If you're looking for an "easy elective," you're probably in the wrong class!

Requirements:

Attendance and active participation in class sessions

- You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss assigned readings.
- You are permitted two absences; after two absences, your semester grade will be lowered **5 points** for each additional absence. I do NOT differentiate between excused and unexcused absences: if you are not in class, you are “absent.”
- Absences do not excuse you from due dates; you are responsible for keeping up with readings and assignments.
- Come to class on time! I will count three late arrivals as one absence.
- Perpetually unprepared students may be counted absent.
- I expect you to show respect for others’ opinions. Inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated; you will be asked to leave and marked absent.

Timely completion of assignments

- Due dates are listed on the syllabus, so plan accordingly. POPs and other assignments are due at the BEGINNING of class. **I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE ASSIGNMENTS.**
- If you are going to miss a class, arrange to have your work delivered to me or turn it in early.

Paper Format:

- All assignments must be word-processed (or typed). Print hard copies of all work you word-process, and be sure to backup your work. **Computer mishap is not an acceptable excuse for late or “disappeared” papers.**
- Papers must be double spaced, in standard (10 or 12 point) font size, and with one-inch margins.
- When appropriate, essays must follow MLA documentation guidelines.

Point Values:

Fourteen 1-2 page POPs, 5 points each.....	70 pts
Take-home midterm essay exam	15 pts
Take-home final essay exam.....	15 pts

Grading:

Out of a total 100 points, your semester grade will be calculated according to the following scale:

90 – 100 points	A
85 – 89 points	AB
80 – 85 points	B
75 – 79 points	BC
70 – 74 points	C
65 – 69 points	CD
60 – 64 points	D
59 or fewer points	F

POPs:

“POP” stands for “page on a page.” A POP is a 1-2 page (typed, double-spaced) paper that discusses a single page from an assigned reading. Instead of making global generalizations about what a particular essay is about, your POPs will point to what you think is interesting or intriguing about a *specific passage* (i.e. a single page) in that reading. Since we will use POPs to generate

class discussion, you should focus on whatever passage you think is the most interesting, intriguing, or problematic. If you are particularly confused by one page of a given reading, for instance, you might write a POP which points out why this passage is confusing or contradictory.

Extra Help:

If you need assistance or accommodation with any aspect of the class, please see me immediately so we can work together to address your situation.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to make an appointment with Jane Warner or Jessica Bigaj in the Office of Disability Services (x2353). Please contact me in person or via phone or email so that we can collaborate with the Office of Disability Services to provide the appropriate accommodations and support to assist you in meeting the goals of this course.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the act of claiming someone else's words and ideas as your own. Penalties for plagiarism range from a failing grade on the paper to possible expulsion from the course and/or college.

Please note that "intentional" and "unintentional" plagiarism carry the same penalty. In ALL assignments, you must properly cite and document ANY material that is not your own original idea, including information from books, articles, websites, etc. Any phrase, sentence, or passage copied verbatim from a published source must be enclosed in quotation marks and followed by an identifying parenthetical citation. Likewise, if you paraphrase an idea from a published source, you must cite that source parenthetically. **If you have questions about how or whether to cite specific material, PLEASE ASK ME in person or via email.**

Inclement Weather:

To find out whether class has been cancelled, check my voicemail message. Dial 8888 (from campus) or (603) 358-8888 (from off-campus), then dial my voice-mailbox number (4167) and the # key. A voicemail message will announce if class has been cancelled; if there is no such message, we will have class.

Course Calendar:

Wk 1: January 16, 17

Course intro, Whitman's "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" (handout)
Whitman, "Song of the Broad-Axe" (online)
POP 1 on Whitman due Thu, Jan 17

Wk 2: January 23, 25

Bryant, "The Prairies" (online)
POP 2 on Thoreau due Tue, Jan 23
Austin, "The Land of Little Rain" (online)
POP 3 on Austin due Thu, Jan 25

Wk 3: January 30, February 1

Cooper, *The Pioneers*, Chapters I through XX (pp. 13 – 220)
POP 4 on Cooper due Tue, Jan 30

Wk 4: February 6, 8

Cooper, *The Pioneers*, Chapters XXI through XLI (pp. 220 - 436)
POP 5 on Cooper due Tue, Feb 6

Wk 5: February 13, 15

Twain, *Roughing It*, Chapters I through XXXIX (pp. 1 – 207)
POP 6 on Twain due Tue, Feb 13

Wk 6: February 20, 22

Twain, *Roughing It*, Chapters XL through LXXIX (pp. 208 – 458)
POP 7 on Twain due Tue, Feb 20

Wk 7: February 27, March 1

Cather, *O Pioneers!*, Parts I – II (pp. 1 – 106)
POP 8 on Cather due Tue, Feb 27

Wk 8: March 6, 8

Cather, *O Pioneers!*, Parts III – V (pp. 107 – 180)
POP 9 on Cather due Tue, Mar 6
MID-TERM EXAM due Thu, Mar 8

Wk 9: March 20, 22

Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, Chapters 1 – 9 (pp. 1 – 217)
POP 10 on Brown due Tue, Mar 20

Wk 10: March 27, 29

Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, Chapters 10 – 19 (pp. 219 – 445)
POP 11 on Brown due Tue, Mar 27

Wk 11: April 3, 5

Dillard, *The Living*, Books I through III (pp. 1 – 167)
POP 12 on Dillard due Tue, Apr 3

Wk 12: April 10, 12

Dillard, *The Living*, Books IV through VII (pp. 169 – 445)
POP 13 on Dillard due Tue, Apr 10

Wk 13: April 17, 19

Gilbert, *The Last American Man*, Chapters 1 through 5 (pp. 1 – 114)
POP 14 on Gilbert due Tue, Apr 17

Wk 14: April 24, 26

Gilbert, *The Last American Man*, Chapters 6 – Epilogue (pp. 115 - 268)
Extra Credit POP 15 on Gilbert due Tue, Apr 26
Semester review

Finals' Week Schedule:

Reading Day: Monday, April 30 (office hours to be announced)
Final exam due: Thursday, May 3 between 10:30 am and 12:30 pm

—SYLLABUS SUBJECT TO CHANGE BY THE INSTRUCTOR—