**The WAYLAND BAPTIST UNIVERSITY**

**Virtual Campus**

**School of Languages and Literature**

**Wayland Baptist University Mission Statement:** Wayland Baptist University exists to educate students in an academically challenging, learning-focused and distinctively Christian environment for professional success, and service to God and humankind.

**Course Name: ENGL 5310-Early American Literature/Before the West was West**

**Term and Year: Fall 1 2022**

**Full Name of Instructor: Dr. Dorothy Maria O’Connell**

**Office Phone and Email:** [maria.o’connell@wbu.edu](mailto:maria.oconnell@wbu.edu) **806-291-1102 Cell: 806-224-8234 (You can also find me on Facebook, if you would like to message me).**

**Office Hours, Building, and Location: I will be available all day on Tues/Thursday for Blackboard Chat or by email or phone (please make an appointment if you will be calling)**

**Class Meeting Time and Location**: On BlackBoard

**Catalog Description:** A study of prose and poetry of pre-colonial, colonial, and revolutionary America

* Required Textbook and Resources***Before the West was West: Critical Essays on the pre-1800 Literature of the American Frontier.* Ed. by Amy T. Hamilton and Tom J. Hilliard. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2014. Available as ebook**
* Other readings as online resources.

**Optional Materials:** You will need good internet access and the ability to participate in discussion board threads and to turn in written work in a timely manner. You must have software that allows you to save materials as .doc or .docx formats and some form of storage. You will be responsible for making sure that you have saved all works in progress and other materials.

**Course Outcome Competencies**:

This course is structured to examine overlaps between literature and history in the development of the American concepts of nationhood and national identity. It is particularly interested in the colonial and pre-colonial periods of American history. The literary narratives of a country not only reflect its particular time of development, but reveal the concepts that inhabitants carried about themselves and the place where they lived. Those stories and their implications also become part of later narratives (both literary and historical) and form a structure for how residents of a nation, in this case the United States and its surroundings, see themselves and form their identity. Some of the persistent stories/myths about America have to do with frontier West and so, in this class, we will be concerned with ideas of frontier, American identity, spirituality, and conquest beginning with the Vikings’ earliest explorations and continuing through the conquistadores and the pilgrims. At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to identify and critique mythological/literary threads in the various works and connect them to developments in the pre-colonial/colonial Americas and how those threads continue into the concept of “America” today. Students should be able to produce coherent and thoughtful discussion responses and essays developing what they find in the readings and their responses.

**The more the student puts into the course, the higher his or her outcome competencies will be.**

**Attendance Requirements**: The course will take place entirely online. You must have a functional Blackboard account and be able to access the WBU library website, as well as articles and other material provided through proprietary databases available via the WBU library website. You also must have an active WBU email address. Your WBU email address is the usual way that I will contact you. You are strongly encouraged to visit the Blackboard login page and test your browser for Blackboard compatibility, as well as take the Blackboard Tutorial if you are not familiar with how the service works. If you have problems with Blackboard or your WBU email, please use the WBU Support Contacts available on the Blackboard login page

**Disability Statement**: “In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), it is the policy of Wayland Baptist University that no otherwise qualified person with a disability be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational program or activity in the university.  The Coordinator of Counseling Services serves as the coordinator of students with a disability and should be contacted concerning accommodation requests at (806) 291- 3765.  Documentation of a disability must accompany any request for accommodations.”

**Plagiarism and Conduct Statement**

**Writing is a collaborative art. Working out ideas for your paper with an instructor, writing tutor, classmate, family member, or friend is encouraged not only for this class, but also for other classes that involve writing. Discussion and collaborative brainstorming are good. However, passing off another's *writing or ideas* as your own is plagiarism. It is unethical, it constitutes Academic Dishonesty (cheating), and it is sufficient grounds both for failure of a course and suspension from the university.**

**Common examples of plagiarism or academic dishonesty include the following:**

* **Copying any amount of text directly from an internet website, book, or other document without appropriate citation and synthesis into one’s own discussion.**
* **Paraphrasing the ideas presented in any source or oral discussion without *appropriate citation*.**
* **Using the evidence and conclusions of any source as the controlling framework for one’s own paper.**
* **Recycling work from a previous or current course, whether your own work or another student’s work.**
* **Purchasing or otherwise downloading a paper from an internet website.**

**In some writing assignments, you will be expected to incorporate scholarly sources into your document. ALL OF THE FOLLOWING must be met to constitute *appropriate citation* of any source:**

* **Including MLA, Chicago, or APA parenthetical or note-style citation format as required by the instructor.**
* **Placing borrowed text directly from another source within “quotation marks.”**
* **Introducing clearly another author’s voice into the document by means of a signal phrase (an introduction of that author).**
* **Offering, in short, a clear distinction between one’s own voice or ideas and those of any outside authors brought into the discussion.**

**Wayland Baptist University observes a ZERO TOLERANCE policy regarding Academic Dishonesty.**

* **Any suspected instance of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will first be evaluated by the instructor and discussed individually with the student.**
* **If the instructor determines that a student’s actions constitute Academic Dishonesty, the case will be filed with the school dean (as determined by course prefix) and reported to**

**the university executive vice president/provost, as per university policy. ALL CASES OF**

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY WILL RE REPORTED.**

* **Per university policy as described in the Wayland Academic Catalog, second offenses**

**WILL RESULT IN SUSPENSION FROM THE UNIVERSITY.**

* **In this course, the first instance of Academic Dishonesty may also result in a zero on the assignment.**

**Grade Appeals**

**Students shall have protection through orderly procedures against prejudices or capricious academic evaluation. A student who believes that he or she has not been held to realistic academic standards, just evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course by using the student grade appeal process described in the Academic Catalog. Appeals may not be made for advanced placement examinations or course bypass examinations. Appeals are limited to the final course grade, which may be upheld, raised, or lowered at any stage of the appeal process. Any recommendation to lower a course grade must be submitted through the Executive Vice President/Provost to the Faculty Assembly Grade Appeals Committee for review and approval. The Faculty Assembly**

**Course Requirements and Grading Criteria:** Students will provide evidence of successful completion of the course outcome competencies by:

**Semiweekly Responses to Study Prompts1: 30%**

1 Regarding “Responses to Study Prompts”: these are decidedly not “essays,” merely a page or two of organized thought per prompt. Select one of the possible prompts for each date and submit your considered response by Tuesday and Friday midnight of each course week. There is no order in which to answer the prompts and you might cite freely but meaningfully—by extending or challenging ideas—from your colleagues. Borrowings, of course, require in-text acknowledgments, whether of word or idea.

**Threaded Peer Reviews of Responses: 20%**

2 Respond to any of the posted responses from your colleagues—one from the Tuesday submissions or one from the Friday submissions. Each review should consist of a single, well-developed paragraph (you will touch on your peer’s argument, question, and critique). This must go beyond, “I agree” or “good job” to really engage your peers. Ask questions, bring up ideas, or explain WHY you agree/disagree. Submit your considered reviews by Saturday midnight of each course week.

**Paper proposal: 20%**

3.) Midterm detailed proposal for final paper: **5-8 pp** with a detailed plan for how you wish to approach a piece of early American literature and the way it contributes to/portrays the ideas of a frontier West. You may use later 19th and 20th-century American texts, films, etc. to further illustrate your thinking. This proposal should include your basic sources and the methodology you will use to approach the various topics. This is a rumination; a chance to brainstorm arguments and show understanding. I will expect it to be in MLA format and fairly formal, but it can be fragmentary to some extent. I need to be able to evaluate your argument and themes and give you feedback on how to finalize your essay.

**Final paper 30%:**

4). Final paper: **10-15 pp** should be an extended argument about concepts of frontier, exploration, conquest, and conversion (or variations of these) and how they can be identified in various works of early American literature. You are also welcome to make connections to current literature, film, or historical events and how they continue or trouble those literary/mythological/historical concepts.

.

**Tentative Schedule**: **Subject to (slight) revision as necessary! This is basic overview and will evolve with time and discussion.**

**Explorations and Adventures**

**Week 1**. (August 20-25) **Read Chapter 2 of *Before the West was West:* “When the East was West” by Annette Kolodny and “The Saga of the Greenlanders**

**Discussion prompt 1 (due Tuesday): Introduce yourself and tell us what interested you about the course?**

**Discussion prompt 2 (due Friday): Choose one of these:**

1. **What does Kolodny mean by “when the East was West” and how does it change your ideas about how long Europeans knew about the Americas?**
2. **Is there a connection identified between spirituality and exploration? Why is the prayer at the beginning of “The Saga of the Greenlanders” significant?**
3. **What does Sigurdsson (editor of The Vinland Sagas) mean when he says that they “prefigure[e] the European novel” (xiii)? Is their extraordinary literary value significant for the American conception of the frontier? Why or why not?**
4. **What is th e connection between ‘Krossanes’ (11) and later history of American exploration? How does this story connect with the story of Freydis (17-21)?**

**Peer responses (due Saturday)**

**Week 2. (August 27-Sept 1) Read excerpts by Annette Kolodny.**

**Discussion Prompt 1 (due Tuesday): Choose one of these**

**Discussion Prompt 2 (Due Friday): Choose one of these to answer**

**Peer Responses (due Saturday)**

**Week 3: Read Chapter 1 “From Huhahpu to Hiawatha”**

**Discussion Prompt 1 (Due Tuesday) Choose ONE of these**

1. **How does the examination of the corn myths realign some of the misconceptions about native society before the time of the Europeans? How were the natives who practiced agriculture similar to the Vikings and those who followed them?**
2. **How does this myth and the development of agricultural societies in the New World trouble or undermine the myth of greater technology and organization defeating the Aztecs and Maya when the Spanish came?**
3. **How might the current interpretations of these myths and their violence be influenced by an already Christian world view? Norse myths also have a resurrection cycle, as do the Greeks. Is it possible that this is a universal explanation for the return of goodness to the earth, after a time of great evil?**

**Discussion Prompt 2 (Due Friday)**

1. **Why might lessening violence be important to an agricultural society? How does the structure and organization of an agricultural group push against the myths about Native Americans that the European conquerors told?**
2. **Why might violence be represented as a sexual tension and how does that relate to the growing of corn? How does agriculture change the relations between men and women?**
3. **How does the mythmaking preserved in the traces of the “Passion of the Corn” relate to the way that the colonial peoples see the world? How is the New World, at least for the people who make first contact, different from the settled Europe that they have left? How might violence become incorporated into their myths as well?**

**Peer Responses due Saturday**

**Week 4. Read Chapter 6 “Frontier Commonwealths” *Before the West was West***

**Discussion Prompt 1 Choose one of these**

**Discussion Prompt 2 (due Friday )Choose one of these**

**Peer responses (due Saturday).**

**Wanderers, Cartographers, and Settlers**

**Week 5: Read Chapter 9 of *Before the West was West* “Contrast and Contradiction” Read Letters 1-6 of Crevecoeur**

**Discussion prompt 1: (Due Tuesday) Choose one of these**

1. **In “Contrast and Contradiction” Penry discusses the “seemingly ‘boundless’ scope” of the North American continent for de Crevecoeur. His push into the frontier eventually goes as far as the Mississippi. How does his description of the country as it existed in early America partake of the frontier mentality that will be so identified with America and Americans? How does it differ?**
2. **How does de Crevecoeur embody American frontier masculinity when “during the spring and summer 1767, he encountered ‘the great wilderness’ [joining] a surveying and exploring party that went over the Appalachians and down the Ohio River to St. Louis, up the Mississippi to the** Great **Lakes at the present-day site of Chicago” (Kindle)? What does it represent when he marries and stops traveling?**
3. **How is Crevecoeur’s writing “characteristic of our finest fiction: idyll or melodrama as modes, the borderland as the locale where actual and imaginary worlds can mingle, alienation and disorder as themes, and, at the end,…persistence of those polarities discovered in American experience” (Kindle)? Can you give concrete examples of these themes? Do you see those themes in more modern Westerns and how?**
4. **How, in Letter II, does de C connect fatherhood and farming? How does that touch on property rights and American government?**

**Discussion Response 2 (Friday): This is a bit of a free-for all. I would love to see your ideas for your papers and to see you discuss and help each other. I will jump in as I can. I’m very excited to see what everyone is thinking about.**

**Saturday peer response**

**Week 6 Paper Proposal of 3-4pages. See the requirements on the syllabus. We will not have a discussion board, but I will be available by email for feedback on your papers. The paper will be due on Saturday (**

**Week 7 (Oct 8-13): Read Chapter 10 of *Before the West was West* “The Business of Heaven and Earth” Read Letters 7-12 of de Crevecoeur**

**Discussion prompt 1: Due Tuesday**

1. **In “The Business of Heaven and Earth,” Brooks maintains that “some of the journal’s most enlightening moments occur as the expedition struggles to reconcile its Christian, imperial, and human endeavors and expectations with its immediate environment and actual circumstances” (Kindle).In the case of early American explorers that reconciliation took place with descriptive naming. Can you see some of the same struggle in Crevecoeur and how does he reconcile his struggles?**
2. **Studying the Dominguez-Escalante journal can certainly involve ecocritical study and examination of how the landscape has been viewed and theologized. Can you identify some areas in the Letters where landscape is theologized? Is there any other way that landscape is evaluated and is there a certain type of landscape that is considered more morally ‘good’?**
3. **De Crevecoeur often uses the metaphor of bees to compare different types of labor and of people. What is the value of bees and how are the men of Nantucket (Letter VII) like bees? How are the itinerant Quakers and other emigrants from Nantucket comparable to the missionaries of New Spain?**

**Discussion Response 2: Due Friday**

1. **What do you think is the purpose of the letter on the snake and the hummingbird? Why do you think he treats of snakes with such compassion? Does he offer any traits of the hummingbird that surprise you?**
2. **Who is the enemy in Letter XII? Why do you think the threats that faced Crevecoeur were so devastating to him? Why does he seem to feel so betrayed by a war that is ostensibly about independence? How might this nuance the usual American history approach to the Revolution?**
3. **Who is the “innocent class”? Why do you think others might not see the de Crevecoeur family or others like them as innocent? Who are those like him, who are ‘pismires destroyed by the plough’?**

**Peer Responses: due Saturday**

**Week 8 (Oct 29-Nov 3) Final wrap-up. Available by email or chat to conference about the final paper. (Final due week 8 5-8 pg.)**

**Discussion Prompt: Answer BOTH of these. This is the only prompt this week.**

1. **What concepts do you take away from this class? Be as specific and clear as possible.**
2. **How does reading the ideas of the West and of the frontier through early-American literature change or add to your understanding of American identity, especially as expressed through literature, film, and media?**