

ECONOMICS AND EMPIRE IN EARLY AMERICAN LITERATURE

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odd days 11:00—11:30 a.m.; even days 1:00—2:00 p.m;
and also by appointment

English 346, fall 2009

time: odd days 2:40—3:50 p.m.

place: SJU Quad 339

THE IDEA OF THIS CLASS

America was originally a business venture that produced much wealth for an emergent bourgeois class in the colonies and in Europe but was also accompanied by much violence, slavery, and disease. The discovery of America has been both celebrated and condemned as the beginning of modern capitalism. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, writers in the American colonies such as Cotton Mather and Benjamin Franklin expressed their views on a changing economy and attempted to affect policy. Later, early nineteenth-century writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, and Ralph Waldo Emerson reflected on the previous century whose changes they had inherited. The goal of this class is to investigate how literature of both the “enlightenment” era and the post-enlightenment “romantic” era represented, participated in, and/or contested the economics of eighteenth-century imperialism. We will be reading many of the classics of American literature – as well as classics from the other side of the Atlantic such as *Gulliver’s Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe* – in the context of the economic questions that so dominated the imaginations of people during that time. The class is designed to appeal to English majors interested in either early American literary history or post-colonial theory as well as to students majoring in business, history, political science, or economics who might want to take a literature class that relates to their fields.

TEXTS TO BUY

Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford U. Press, 2008)

Thomas Krise, ed., *Caribbeana: an Anthology of English Literature of the West Indies, 1657-1777* (Chicago U. Press, 1999)

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*, ed. Vincent Carretta (Penguin, 2003)

Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard Labaree et al. (Oxford U. Press, 2009)

Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels and Other Writings*, ed. Clement Hawes (Wadsworth, 2003)

Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship* (Penguin Books, 2007)

Alexander Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America*, trans. Alexis Brown (Dover Pub., 2000)

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (W. W. Norton, 1993)

Other Reading Assignments Available on Moodle.

EVALUATION

Six Short Essays... 10% each

Final Paper... 20%

Attendance and Class Participation... 20%

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE CLASS

This class is divided up into units, each of which focuses on a specific theme and poses several questions about that theme. We will read a variety of texts including not only early British-American literature and early economic literature but also some recent scholarly study on that literature and history. The reasons for reading such a variety are (1) so that you will gain some historical and critical perspective, and (2) that you acquire a sense of the diversity of literature and of perspective during the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. At the end of each unit, you will bring a one-page, single-spaced essay. At the end of the semester, you will write a larger final paper which expands upon the work you have already done in your short essays.

SHORT ESSAYS

Your essays will address the theme of each unit on the syllabus by engaging with at least four of the texts assigned for that unit of the course. I will grade you on (1) how well you formulate and answer a question, (2) how well you support your claims with evidence from the texts, and (3) your reasoning and organization.

Your essays should be *exactly* one page, single spaced, using 11 point Times New Roman font, with one inch margins, no more, no less. As for the header, at the top left, put your name and date, and at the top right, put the name of this class – English 346 -- and the number of the unit (e.g., Essay, unit #?). There should be one line of space between the header and the essay, and no title.

On the back of your essay, after 40-45 minutes of group discussion on the day that it is due, you will re-think what you wrote based on the conversation you had with your group. Your in-class essay will be graded on (1) how honestly you reconsider the texts, (2) how well you draw upon the conversation with your group, and (3) how well you support your new ideas with evidence from the texts.

FINAL PAPER

Your final paper will reconsider the big picture—the theme for the entire course. You must engage with at least three of the texts assigned in the “final unit” and also at least three texts from previous units. Here you can use and reconsider things you wrote before.

As with the other essays, I will grade you on (1) how well you formulate and answer a question, (2) how well you support your claims with evidence from the texts, and (3) your reasoning and organization.

Your final essay should be twice as long as the other essays you have written for the class—exactly **two pages**, single spaced, using 11 point Times New Roman font.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Half of your attendance and participation grade is your attendance. You are allowed three absences. Unless you have a documented excuse, I will reduce your attendance grade by 20% for each absence in excess of those three.

The other half of this grade is your participation. I expect you to be prepared to discuss the reading every day and to listen respectfully to your classmates.

CALENDAR

UNIT ONE – INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE AND ECONOMICS

Questions: *What was the project of America? How did literature reflect that project, and/or how did the project reflect the aspirations in the literature? How do we begin to think about the relationship between economics and literature?*

Aug. 26 (Wed)	Introductions
Aug. 28 (Fri)	Benjamin Franklin, “The Way to Wealth” Handsome Lake, “How America Was Discovered” Jennifer Baker and Eric Wertheimer, “Economics and Early American Literature,” <i>Early American Literature</i> 41:3 (2006)
Sept. 1 (Tue)	John Oldmixon, from <i>The British Empire in America</i> Adam Smith, book one—chapter 7-8 of <i>The Wealth of Nations</i> and Kathryn Sutherland’s Introduction Marcus Rediker, introduction to <i>The Slave Ship</i>
Sept. 3 (Thu)	John Locke, “Property” from <i>Two Treatises of Government</i> Barbara Arneil, introduction to <i>John Locke and America</i> Rediker, <i>The Slave Ship</i> , ch. 1
Sept. 7 (Mon)	Labor Day
Sept. 8 (Tue)	George Berkeley, “Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America” Henry David Thoreau, “Walking”
Sept. 10 (Thu)	Unit One Essay Due

UNIT TWO – THE QUESTION OF VALUE AND THE LANGUAGE OF MONEY

Questions: *How do things have value? How do we communicate (or translate) the value of things? How do we guarantee or insure that a token of value (such as paper money) will be worth what it claims to be worth?*

Sept. 14 (Mon)	Anne Bradstreet, “To Her Father...”; “Upon the Burning...” Edward Taylor, “Another Meditation at the same time” Benjamin Franklin, “A Modest Enquiry into... Paper Currency”
Sept. 16 (Wed)	Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Language” from <i>Nature</i> Adam Smith, <i>The Wealth of Nations</i> , book one—ch. 1-4 (especially 4) Jennifer Baker, intro and ch. 1 of <i>Securing the Commonwealth</i>
Sept. 18 (Fri)	Cotton Mather, “The Life of Phips” Nathaniel Hawthorne, “Sir William Phips” “The Gray Champion” “The May-Pole of Merry Mount”

- Sept. 22 (Tue) Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, begin
Jonathan Swift, “The Bubble” p.332-39
Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship* ch. 2
- Sept. 24 (Thu) Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, finish
Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, book one—ch. 5-7
Karl Marx on *Robinson Crusoe* (from “Commodity Fetish” in *Capital*)
- Sept. 28 (Mon) **Unit Two Essay Due**

UNIT THREE – THE CULTURE OF COMMODITIES AND THE MEANING OF CASH

Questions: What is a “cash crop”? How does the meaning of a commodity change over time? How did literature attempt to understand the workings of a single-crop economy? How does literature attempt to mediate the vicissitudes and politics of value?

- Sept. 30 (Wed) Ebenezer Cooke, *Sotweed Redivivus*
T. H. Breen, introduction to *Tobacco Culture*
Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, book one—ch. 8-10
- Oct. 2 (Fri) selections from William Byrd II, *History of the Dividing Line*
Steven W. Thomas, “Taxing Tobacco and the Metonymies of Virtue”
- Oct. 6 (Tue) James Grainger, *The Sugar Cane*, book one and two
Sydney Mintz, introduction to *Sweetness and Power*
- Oct. 8-11 Fall Break
- Oct. 12 (Mon) James Grainger, *The Sugar Cane*, book three and four
selected pages from Richard Sheridan, *Doctors and Slaves*
Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, ch. 7-8
Steven W. Thomas, “Doctoring Ideology”
- Oct. 14 Wed) **Unit Three Essay Due**

UNIT FOUR – THE SLAVE TRADE

Questions: What was the nature of the slave trade? What were the many different points of view on the slave trade? With what principles did Europeans and European-Americans justify and/or criticize the slave trade? Was there any discernible change in attitudes or principles from the late seventeenth century to the late eighteenth?

- Oct. 16 (Fri) Samuel Sewall, “The Selling of Joseph”
John Saffin, “Brief... Answer to the Selling...” and “Negroes Character”
Cotton Mather, “The Negro Christianized”
Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, ch. 3

- Oct. 20 (Tue) Thomas Jefferson, “Laws,” from *Notes on the State of Virginia*
Phyllis Wheatley, “To Maecenas” and “On being brought from Africa”
Benjamin Franklin, “Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim on the Slave Trade”
David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*, ch. 1
- Oct. 22 (Thu) Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, ch. 4
Olaudah Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, ch. 1 – ???
Harriet Beecher Stowe, “The Freeman’s Dream: a Parable”
- Oct. 26 (Mon) **Unit Four Essay Due**

UNIT FIVE – DISCIPLINING THE ATLANTIC WORLD

Questions: *Was there such a thing as an “Atlantic” culture? How does this relate to “national” cultures? How did literature explore cultural identities and the problems of administrative politics in the “Atlantic World”?*

- Oct. 28 (Wed) Alexander O. Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America*, intro and part one
Armitage and Braddick, ed., *The British Atlantic World*, pgs. xiv – 27
David Hancock, introduction to *Citizens of the World*
- Oct. 30 (Fri) Exquemelin, *Buccaneers of America*, parts two and three
Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, ch. 5
- Nov. 3 (Tue) Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, introduction and parts one and two
Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, ch. 6
- Nov. 5 (Thu) Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, part two and three
- Nov. 9 (Mon) Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, part four
Rediker and Linebaugh, selected passages from *Many-Headed Hydra*
Clement Hawes introduction and essay on Swift (recommended only)
- Nov. 11 (Wed) **Unit Five Essay Due**

UNIT SIX – ECONOMIC MAN

Questions: *What are the socio-economic circumstances in which a person becomes his or herself? In what ways is the notion of the “self-made man” true and/or not true? How does literature illuminate the paradoxes of those circumstances or attempt to change them?*

- Nov. 13 (Fri) Olaudah Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, ch. ??? – ???
Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, ch. 9
- Nov. 17 (Tue) Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, finish
selections from Harriet Ann Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

- Nov. 19 (Thu) Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*, part one
Phyllis Wheatley, “To the University of Cambridge”
Annis Boudinot Stockton, “To Palemon No. 2”
Carla Mulford, “Literary and Social Context of Palemon and *Æmilia*”
- Nov. 23 (Mon) Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*, finish
- Nov. 25—Nov. 29 Thanksgiving
- Nov. 30 (Mon) Herman Melville, “Paradise of the Bachelors / Tartarus of the Maids”
Mark Twain, “Good Little Boy” and “Bad Little Boy”
- Dec. 2 (Wed) **Unit Six Essay Due**

FINAL UNIT – MERCANTILISM REVISITED

Questions: *How might we evaluate Adam Smith’s critique of the “mercantile system”? What is the relationship between capitalism and slavery? Considering that the economic and political thought of the eighteenth century is the foundation for our society today, has anything changed?*

- Dec. 4 (Fri) Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, book four—ch. 1-3 and ch. 7-9
Steven W. Thomas, “Mercantilism”
begin in-class movie: *The Corporation*
- Dec. 8 (Tue) Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, ch. 10 and Epilogue
selected passages from Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*
continue in-class movie: *The Corporation*
- Dec. 10 (Thu) finish in-class movie: *The Corporation*
- Dec. 16 (Wed) **Final Essay Due**