

**Course Objectives/Course Outline**  
**Spokane Community College**

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**Course Title:** American Literature to 1865  
**Prefix and Course Number:** ENGL 248

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**Course Learning Outcomes:**

**By the end of this course, a student should be able to:**

- Accurately assess the relationship between literary works and the historical contexts in which they were created and read, including the political, social, religious, and artistic milieu in which written and oral narratives were composed on the North American continent from the pre-contact era to the Civil War
- Articulate ways in which Nineteenth Century poets and prose writers developed, and broke away from, traditional genres, themes, forms, and conventions
- Demonstrate an awareness and understanding of the diversity of cultures that formulated and contributed to early American literature
- Articulate ways in which literary writing has reflected, and been reflected by, American cultural and social histories, including early contact between Europeans and American native groups as well as the establishment and development of the United States as a nation
- Articulate original critical positions about pre-1865 American literary works, using textual evidence appropriately as support
- Locate, and demonstrate an understanding of, relevant critical or scholarly findings about works of American literature to 1865, and use these findings to advance insights about primary texts

**Course Outline:**

*(Note: Authors and titles are meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive.)*

I. Overview

- A. Historical Context: When Does "American literature" Begin?
- B. America in the European Imagination

II. Major Periods of American Literature

- A. Early Colonial Period (to 1700)
  - 1. Native American Oral Narrative and Poetry
    - a. "Talk Concerning the First Beginning" (Zuni)
    - b. "Changing Woman and the Hero Twins" (Navajo)
    - c. "The Origin of Stories" (Seneca)
    - d. "Raven and Marriage" (Tlingit)
  - 2. First Encounters
    - a. "Creation of the Whites" (Yuchi)
    - b. Columbus, "Journal of the First and Third Voyages"
    - c. "The Coming of the Spanish and the Pueblo Revolt" (Hopi)
    - d. Handsome Lake, "How America Was Discovered"
  - 3. Writings by English Colonists
    - a. Smith, excerpt from *The Generall Historie of Virginia*
    - b. Revel, "The Poor, Unhappy Transported Felon"
  - 4. The Puritans and Their Peers

- a. Winthrop, "A Medell of Christian Charity"
  - b. Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*
  - c. Morton, *New English Canaan*
  - d. Bradstreet, selected poems
- B. Eighteenth Century
- 1. Revolutionary Impulses
    - a. Paine, *Common Sense*
    - b. Anonymous, "The Lady's Complaint"
    - c. Murray, "On the Equality of the Sexes"
    - d. Wheatley, selected poems
  - 2. Growing Pains of the New Nation
    - a. Tyler, *The Contrast*
    - b. Franklin, *The Autobiography*
    - c. Irving, "Rip Van Winkle"
    - d. Apess, "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man"
- C. Nineteenth Century
- 1. Dark Romanticism
    - a. Brown, "Somnambulism"
    - b. Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher"
    - c. Hawthorne, "The Birth-mark"
    - d. Melville, "Bartleby, the Scrivener"
    - e. Davis, "Life in the Iron-Mills"
  - 2. Literary Responses to Slavery
    - a. Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*
    - b. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*
    - c. Wilson, *Our Nig*
    - d. Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
  - 3. The Transcendentalists
    - a. Emerson, "The American Scholar"
    - b. Thoreau, *Walden*
    - c. Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*
  - 4. Poetic Experimentation
    - a. Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*
    - b. Dickinson, selected poems
- III. Conclusions
- A. "A Backward Glance": Major issues and themes
  - B. The legacy of American literature before the Civil War