Course description:
In this course, we will ask the question, “What makes an American writer major?” Artistic achievement? Popularity? Longevity? Influence on other writers? To explore possible answers, we will read famous novels by canonized authors alongside other works written by lesser-known authors, some of whom were widely read and respected in their day. We will examine how Harriet Jacobs’ treatment of societal attitudes toward sexuality in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* compares with Nathaniel Hawthorne’s depiction in *The Scarlet Letter*, how Sarah Orne Jewett’s depiction of the female community in a New England whaling village in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* responds to Herman Melville’s portrayal of a whaling ship in *Moby-Dick*; and how Louisa May Alcott’s portrayal of girlhood in *Little Women* contrasts with Mark Twain’s vision of boyhood in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Required texts:
Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women* (Penguin)
Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Harcourt Brace)
Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (Penguin)
Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Norton)

Course and grading components:
Class participation (5%):
To be a full participant in this class, you must:
1) attend class having completed the readings in advance;
2) participate fully in class discussions;
3) complete all informal in-class and take-home writing assignments
Your participation grade will be based on the above three criteria. Please note that full attendance and completion of writing assignments will earn you a participation grade of C; to achieve a higher grade, you must distinguish yourself in class discussions.

Reading quizzes (10%): You will take 12 reading quizzes designed to indicate whether you are completing the assigned reading. You may drop your two lowest scores.
Discussion board postings (10%): On nine occasions during the semester, you will post a response to the readings on our class discussion board. A handout will follow with more details.

Papers (40%): You will write three papers for this class. The first (2-3 pp.) will require you to perform a close reading of a passage (10%). The second (2 pp.) will require you to visually interpret and verbally analyze a symbol (10%). The third (4-6 pp.) will require you to research the reputation of one of the authors we have read and the reception of his/her writing (20%).

Exams (35%): You will take two exams in this course. The first will be a midterm covering the first three works we have read (15%). The second will cover the last three novels and will contain an additional essay question covering the course as a whole (20%). Both exams will be comprised of identification, short and long essays.

Attendance policy:
You are allowed to have a total of three absences, excused or unexcused, during the semester without affecting your grade. Absences beyond this will result in a lowered grade; more than 6 absences will result in failure of the course. Persistent tardiness will also affect your grade.

Policy on plagiarism: Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of others’ ideas, words, or sentences in your writing. Passing off words, sentences or paragraphs from a book or article as your own, submitting another person’s paper, or using a prepared paper from a website are absolutely unacceptable actions. As a form of cheating, plagiarism is a serious form of academic misconduct and carries heavy consequences. If I discover plagiarism in your writing, I will give you a grade of zero on the assignment and recommend that you be failed from the course. Please consult the student handbook’s policy on academic misconduct (3.4) for further information.

Note: This syllabus is subject to change.

Course calendar:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>T 1/16</th>
<th>R 1/18</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction to course.</td>
<td>The Scarlet Letter, “The Custom House” and chs. I-III</td>
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<th>Week 2</th>
<th>T 1/23</th>
<th>R 1/25</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Chs. IV-XV; reading quiz</td>
<td>Chs. XVI-end</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>T 1/30</th>
<th>R 2/1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, xi-xiv, chs. I-XV; reading quiz</td>
<td>Chs. XV-XXIV</td>
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<th>Week 4</th>
<th>T 2/6</th>
<th>R 2/8</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Chs. XXV-end; reading quiz</td>
<td>Moby-Dick, Chs. 1-9; First paper due.</td>
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Week 5  T 2/13  Chs. 10-31; reading quiz
        R 2/15  No class.  Reading day.

Week 6  T 2/20  Chs. 32-60; reading quiz
        R 2/22  Chs. 61-72

Week 7  T 2/27  Chs. 73-98; Second paper due.
        R 3/1   Chs. 99-110; reading quiz

Week 8  T 3/6   Chs. 111-end
        R 3/8   Exam I

Week 9  T 3/13  The Country of the Pointed Firs,  Chs. I-XI; reading quiz
        R 3/15  Chs. XII-end

Spring Break

Week 10 T 3/27  Huck Finn, Chs. I-XI; reading quiz
        R 3/29  Women’s Symposium; read Chs. XII-XVIII

Week 11 T 4/3   Chs. XIX-XXXI; reading quiz
        R 4/5   Chs. XXXII-end.

Week 12 T 4/10  Little Women,  Chs. 1-9; reading quiz
        R 4/12  Chs. 10-14

Week 13 T 4/17  Chs. 15-23; reading quiz
        R 4/19  Chs. 24-28

Week 14 T 4/24  Chs. 29-38; reading quiz
        R 4/26  Chs. 39-41;  Third paper due.

Week 15 T 5/1   Last day of class;  Ch. 42-end

Final exam:  8-10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, May 8.