**English 553, Early American Literature**

Professor Bross  
HEAV 325B  
Office Hours: M, F 10:30-11:30; W 2:30-3:30  
Office: Heavilon 325B  
Telephone: 494-3745  
Email: kbross@purdue.edu

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**Texts:**  
The reading list comprises a fairly expensive collection of books, I know. The starred titles are required in the specific edition (usually, no other is available; let me know if you have a reason to substitute a different edition). The Bradstreet and Wheatley texts would be good ones for your bookshelf, but since we’ll be reading only a selection of their works, I am happy for you to make copies of the assigned texts if you prefer. *Early Native Literacies* will be distributed later in the semester (see note 1 of the schedule).

**Thomas Harriot, A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia** (Dover)  
**Roger Williams, A Key into the Language of America** (Applewood Books)  
**Mary Rowlandson, Sovereignty and Goodness of God** (Bedford)  
**Sarah Kemble Knight, Journal of Madame Knight** (Applewood Books)  
**Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography** (Bedford)  
**Olaudah Equiano, Narrative** (Bedford)  
Phillis Wheatley, *Complete Writings* (Penguin)  
**Jeffrey Richards, Early American Drama**  
**Hannah Foster, The Coquette** (Oxford)  
**Susanna Rowson, Reuben and Rachel** (on-line, but see note 2 of the schedule)

**Course Packet (at Copymat—designated as “CP” on the schedule)**

**Assignments**  
Bibliographic essay (20%)  
Due no later than September 29 (but I will accept it earlier). Using one of our texts (or sets of texts) assigned during weeks 3-10, construct a bibliographic essay in which you survey the criticism associated with that text. I imagine the length somewhere in the 5-8 page range, depending on what you uncover. You’ll want to consider an angle to the essay—it’s not just a listing of secondary sources but an argument or analysis of them. You might look at the history of criticism if a text has been studied for some time or discuss the intersection of the particular studies and a larger literary history or theoretical school. You might choose a specific approach to a well-known text or author (gender or class, for instance), or you might comment about a related grouping of studies. There are other possible approaches. I don’t expect the essay to be comprehensive, but it should hit important studies and provide the new reader with a good sense of the state of criticism about your text.
In-class presentation (10%)
On the day we are due to discuss the text or texts that you dealt with in your bibliographic essay, you will lead the class through a discussion of some particular aspect of or approach to the primary reading. You might choose to look at a particular passage that has sparked critical interest, present your analysis of the secondary scholarship, contextualize or historicize the text, or lead us through a discussion of questions you have generated based on your own reading and research.

You will also choose a secondary source or several sources to assign the class—these must be to me at least ten days in advance (more time is better) so that we can distribute them.

Final project (60%)
Choose one of the following options. Proposals are due by email on Friday, October 29 (by noon) and should include a one-page abstract that details in miniature your approach and analysis including a projected thesis. I’ll provide an example of the proposal genre closer to the due date. Final drafts are due Friday, December 3 in my mailbox by noon. If you anticipate needing more time to complete your paper, see me as soon as possible.

• Option 1: Edit a text or a set of texts from early American literature. You may choose either a text that hasn’t received any (or much) critical attention (on-line databases and microfilm collections will be good sources) or you may bring together a set of texts anthology-style (such as a selection of Wheatley poems). Your edition should provide bibliographic details for the author, critical footnotes, and a scholarly essay introducing it that explains the importance of the text, your editorial practice, the need for (and projected use of) a new edition, your reading of the text or the place of the author in early American literature, your principles of selection (in the case of a group of texts), etc.

• Option 2: A long conference paper (12-15 pages) on a topic of your choosing.

Mock conference paper (10%)
Excerpt your project for a 15-minute conference presentation (6-7 pages) to be delivered during the last class period.
Schedule

- **Note 1:** *Early Native Literacies* is a work in progress, a collection of primary texts and critical essays that I am co-editing. We will have the opportunity to read a first draft of the collection and discuss it sometime during the semester. As soon as I receive the majority of the chapters from the contributors, we will break into the schedule and discuss these works.

- **Note 2:** *Reuben and Rachel* is an interesting, sprawling novel tracing five generations of New World women and their families. Unfortunately, it is not widely known, and there is no readily accessible edition available. I would like us to look at this novel, but we will have to use an on-line version, which may be difficult for some of us. During the first two weeks of class, let’s discuss whether we should tackle this book. If the logistics seem too challenging, I will substitute a collection of Pequot war narratives and a Charles Brockden Brown novel for the two weeks the schedule currently dedicates to the Rowson text.

**August 25**
Thomas Harriot, *A Briefe and True Report*
John Smith, excerpt from his works (CP)

**September 1**
John Winthrop, *A Modell of Christian Charitie* (CP)
Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness*, excerpt (CP)
Sacvan Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, excerpt (CP)
Edmund Morgan, *Puritan Dilemma*, excerpt (CP)
Theodore Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives*, excerpt (CP)


Patricia Caldwell, “Morphology of American Conversion” (CP)

**September 8**
Roger Williams, *Key Into the Language of America*
John Winthrop, Journal excerpts (CP)

**September 15**
Anne Bradstreet, poems (selections TBA)
Edward Taylor, poems (CP)

**September 22**
Mary Rowlandson, *Sovereignty and Goodness of God*
Sarah Kemble Knight, *Journal*
September 29
Franklin, *Autobiography*

October 6
Olaudah Equiano, *Narrative*
Phillis Wheatley, poetry (selections TBA)

October 15
*The Contrast*

October 20
*The Coquette*
Lord Chesterfield’s Letters (on-line at http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/gutbook/author?name=Chesterfield%2C%20Earl%20of)

October 27
*Indian Princess*
Washington Irving, “King Philip” (CP)
William Apess, “Eulogy on King Philip” (CP)

OCTOBER 29: PROPOSALS DUE FOR FINAL PROJECT

November 3
*Reuben and Rachel*, Vol. 1

November 10
*Reuben and Rachel*, Vol. 2

November 17
*Early Native Literacies*

November 24
No class—Thanksgiving

December 1
*Early Native Literacies*

DECEMBER 3: FINAL PROJECTS DUE

December 8
Mock Conference