Course Description: America has long been interested in reconstructing the lives of early American women in film and literature. This course will examine what these women’s lives were like, the forces that constrained their freedom, how a few of them used writing to respond to their condition, and society’s reaction to this expression. Our goals will be to discern myth from reality and to gain a better understanding of these women and their culture, as well as our own relationship to them. As part of our study, we will compare contemporary depictions of early American women—such as John Berryman’s “Homage to Mistress Bradstreet,” the most recent film versions of The Crucible and The Scarlet Letter, and Sherley Anne Williams’s “Meditations on History”—with a range of historical texts by both men and women (e.g., Anne Bradstreet, Cotton Mather, Mary Rowlandson, Hannah Foster, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Harriet Jacobs). These texts all foreground the experiences of women who transgress the boundaries or limits of accepted codes of behavior in early America. In considering these texts, our guiding questions will be:

1. What do representations of early American women’s transgressive behavior and their own transgressive acts of writing reveal about femininity and the construction of gender norms?
2. How can transgression be a transformative agent?

Student Learning Outcomes: Students who successfully complete the course will be able to:

- analyze American literature in the context of critical theories, cultural differences, and historical changes regarding gender and its representation;
- demonstrate competency in literary research at the graduate level; and
- integrate research with their own critical insights.

Required Texts to Buy:


**Required Texts to Print (available via Blackboard):**


These readings are a mixture of brief literary texts and secondary texts of criticism and theory. I ask that you examine the secondary texts (in addition to others) so that you can bring to our class discussions the insights of experienced scholars, as well as your own observations. Having an understanding of these critical and theoretical conversations should also help you to formulate your own theses for your writings and presentations. If possible, I recommend that you print all these readings at the beginning of the semester, so you are sure to have them available when you
need them. Also included with your syllabus is a supplemental list of suggested book-length secondary texts to further your study and research.

**Evaluation and Grading:**

Reading journal 20 points  
Short study 15 points  
Class participation 10 points  
Discussion facilitation 15 points  
Independent research project  
- Critiques of two sources 3 points  
- Annotated bibliography 5 points  
- Abstract of your argument 2 points  
- Final paper 30 points

A=90-100 pts.; B=80-89 pts.; C=70-79 pts.; D=60-69 pts.; F=below 60 pts.

**Reading Journal:** Throughout the semester, you will keep a journal in which you respond to and engage with the readings in an academic conversation. Please be sure that you type each entry and write about each of the assigned readings (theory/criticism/contexts and literature). The purpose of this assignment is not to summarize the readings. Instead, use the journal as a learning tool to raise questions, to make connections, and to engage critically with the texts that we read. No reading journal is due on 1/22, 2/24, 4/7, or 5/5, and you also are not required to turn in a journal on the readings due the week of your discussion facilitation. Otherwise, a journal entry for the week’s readings is due at the beginning of class each Monday (10 total entries). Prompts will be provided for some of these entries, while others will be free responses. Since the main purpose of the journal is to help you prepare for class discussion, late journals will not be accepted.

**Short Study:** Taking inspiration from a segment from one of your journal entries, you will develop a short study of five to six pages (typed and double-spaced). Arguing from a firm cultural/historical base and theoretical framework, the essay should use a focused thesis of your choice to analyze the representation of early American women’s lives in Anne Bradstreet’s poetry, in the captivity narrative of Mary Rowlandson or Hannah Dustan, or in Catharine Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie*. While it will be appropriate to cite relevant secondary sources that we have read and discussed in class and/or that you have discovered in your own related research, the emphasis should be on your insights and interpretation. The paper will be evaluated on the complexity, sophistication, and originality of your thesis, the selection and strength of the evidence that you use to support your claims, the clarity and coherence of your interpretive argument, your personal engagement with the primary text and related theory, and your command of MLA documentation requirements, writing conventions, and surface features.

**Participation and Attendance:** Because this course is a graduate seminar, attendance and participation are fundamental to success. You are expected to prepare all assignments on time and come to class prepared and willing to discuss the readings. In this class, the responsibility for originating and maintaining discussion rests principally with—and equally among—the students, rather than with the instructor. The course format will consist of both teacher- and student-facilitated discussion. In addition, students will work in small groups throughout the semester to discuss the readings. Consistent and informed participation in class discussion is essential, and
attendance is required. You can miss one class without penalty; for every subsequent class you miss, two points will be subtracted from your class participation grade.

**Discussion Facilitation:** You will also be responsible for facilitating approximately 30-minutes of class discussion and related activities for one of the primary texts. Your task is *not* to present the material that we read but instead to lead us in examining a significant issue of your choice that is relevant to that day’s reading assignment. Do *not* read to the class. Instead, *teach* the class by using appropriate small group activities, support materials, visual aids, handouts, etc. On the class session immediately following, you will also provide a one-page self-assessment that describes and critiques the facilitation and related preparation (including a bibliography of the research that you did). Note: You will need to contact me by the Thursday before your presentation to let me know what you plan to cover.

**Independent Research Project:** In *Sexual/Textual Politics*, Toril Moi writes, “The monster woman is the woman who refuses to be selfless, acts on her own initiative, who *has* a story to tell—in short, a woman who rejects the submissive role patriarchy has reserved for her” (58). Using three early American (pre-1865) literary/cultural texts that foreground the experience of women as modeled by resistant female characters, respond to this claim by creating an argument about the role(s) and potential of such representations. As is appropriate to your thesis, your chosen texts may be by women, men, or a combination of the two. If you wish, you may also use an additional contemporary text (making four in all) as a further point of comparison. At least two of the texts you choose to write about should *not* be part of our course readings. For success, your approach should be historically and culturally grounded and incorporate insights from relevant feminist/poststructural theory, as well as from existing criticism about the texts. To help you research and prepare the final paper, which should be 15-20 pages (typed and double-spaced) and in MLA format, you will:

- Prepare a one-page (typed and single-spaced) critique of each of two secondary sources not read for class. These critiques should analyze and evaluate the sources, pointing to the relevance they have for your purposes.
- Prepare an annotated bibliography of all of the sources you plan to include in your paper, including a two- to three-sentence explanation of the relevance of each source. This bibliography should be in MLA form.
- Prepare a one- to two-page (typed and double-spaced) abstract of what you plan to argue in your paper. Such an abstract, which should include your thesis, can often be revised slightly to form the introduction of the paper.

Students will share their research insights in class, and we will also peer review complete drafts during the final class session.

**Late Assignments:** Please contact me by e-mail or telephone if an emergency arises and you cannot attend class. I will not accept late assignments unless you have made previous arrangements, and neither journals nor the final paper will be accepted late for any reason. An “Incomplete” will be given at my discretion only and must involve exceptional circumstances. To qualify for consideration, you must have satisfactorily completed two-thirds of the course requirements and met graduate standards for attendance and participation.
Academic Advising: Upon entering the MA in English Program, each student is assigned a faculty mentor by the Graduate Coordinator. You should make an appointment to meet with your faculty mentor every semester to develop a degree plan and monitor your progress toward graduation. Your faculty mentor can also answer questions and provide valuable information about the comprehensive examination, other degree requirements, Ph.D. programs, and career opportunities. To finalize your degree plan and register for graduation, you must also meet with the Graduate Student Academic Advisor in the Academic Advising Center for the College of Liberal Arts. This office is located in Driftwood 203E and can be reached at (361) 825-3466.

Graduate Student Academic Integrity Statement: English graduate students are expected to “conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty” (Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Graduate Catalog). The Student Code of Conduct defines Academic Misconduct as cheating, plagiarism, multiple submissions, complicity, fabrication, falsification, and misrepresentation; in addition to “any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion” (Student Code of Conduct, Article III, 1. Academic Misconduct). Academic misconduct is a serious offence that will result in the professor assigning a serious penalty, possibly including failure for an assignment, failure in a course, or recommendation for dismissal from a program (TAMUCC Graduate Catalog, Academic Honesty). For each Academic Misconduct case, the faculty member must file a record, including a description of the disciplinary action taken, along with any materials involved, with his or her college dean, who will forward a copy to the Office of Student Affairs. Further information regarding the judicial process is available on the website of the Office for Student Affairs.

Dropping a Class: I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. Friday, April 11 is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

Grade Appeal Process: Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

Students with Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in CCH116. You can also visit their website at http://disabilityservices.tamucc.edu/ and contact them by email at
disability.services@tamucc.edu. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom, or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance.

**Blackboard:** To log into Blackboard, go to: [http://bb9.tamucc.edu](http://bb9.tamucc.edu). You must have a NET ID (also known as an Active Directory account or “Islander ID”) to log in. For instructions on how to get this account and more information about using Blackboard, go to: [http://distance-education.tamucc.edu/student_resources.html](http://distance-education.tamucc.edu/student_resources.html). If you need additional help at any time to access, download, or print course materials on Blackboard, please contact the Island Online (IOL) Help Desk by telephone at (361) 825-2825 or by email at iolsupport@tamucc.edu.

**Tentative Class Schedule (subject to change):**
Please note that all readings and your related journal entry should be completed by the start of class on Monday of each week. You must bring a copy of the readings assignments to class each week. Blackboard readings = BB

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading 1</th>
<th>Reading 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>W 01/22</td>
<td>Course Overview. Before class, please read Toril Moi, “Women Writing and Writing about Women” (BB); and Michel Foucault, “A Preface to Transgression” (BB). (NO READING JOURNAL DUE.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/3-2/5</td>
<td>Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, <em>Good Wives</em> (Part One: Bathsheba 3-86); John Berryman, <em>Homage to Mistress Bradstreet</em> (BB); Schweitzer, “Puritan Legacies of Masculinity: John Berryman’s <em>Homage to Mistress Bradstreet</em>” (BB). (Note: Bring Bradstreet’s book of poetry to class again this week also.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/10-2/12</td>
<td>Catharine Maria Sedgwick, <em>Hope Leslie</em> (Vol. I); Philip Gould, “Catherine Sedgwick’s ‘Recital’ of the Pequot War” (BB).</td>
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Witchcraft & Witches in Early America

3/3-3/5 Cotton Mather, Introduction and Part Two of *Ornaments for the Daughters of Zion* (BB); Cotton Mather, “The Trial of Martha Carrier” (BB); David D. Hall, “Witchcraft and the Limits of Interpretation” (BB).

SPRING BREAK (3/10-3/14)


Scarlet Women in Early America


Goodwives, Coquettes, & Republican Motherhood in the New Republic

4/7-4/9 In-class viewing and discussion of PBS documentary on Laurel Thatcher Ulrich’s *A Midwife’s Tale: The Life of Martha Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812*. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR FINAL PAPER DUE 4/9. (NO READING JOURNAL DUE THIS WEEK.)


Female Slaves in Antebellum America


4/28-4/30 Sherley Anne Williams, “Meditations on History” (BB).

05/05 PEER REVIEW COMPLETE DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER. (NO READING JOURNAL DUE.)

THE FINAL PAPER IS DUE ON DATE AND TIME SCHEDULE FOR THE FINAL EXAM
SUGGESTED SECONDARY SOURCES


Samuels, Shirley, ed. \textit{The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in 19\textsuperscript{th} Century America}. New York: Oxford UP, 1992. (Talley)

