

072LE - LETTERATURA ANGLOAMERICANA II
ANGLOAMERICAN LITERATURE II SYLLABUS

Course title:

“Always a Knit of Identity”

Major Works in 19th-century American Literature



Thomas Eakins *Shad Fishing at Gloucester on the Delaware River* (1881)

Instructor: Dr. Agnese De Marchi

Office Hours: by appointment only, write to ademarchi@units.it

1. Lingua/Language: English

2. Contenuti/Course description

The course will focus on significant (female and male) voices of American literature which characterized the second half of the 19th century such as: Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson; Kate Chopin; Henry James; Stephen Crane, and Mark Twain.

We will analyze a variety of texts belonging to different genres by the above-mentioned authors: novels, poems and short stories. These American authors reflected the polyphony which defined American culture during the highly complex period of the Reconstruction Era.

Through the analysis of these literary texts and the historical, cultural, and artistic contexts within which they were created, a number of issues will be dealt with: the relation between individual and communal identity, the Civil War and the Reconstruction, the role of 19th century American women in society, the cultural relationship between America and Europe, and finally, the development of American identity.

3. Testi di Riferimento/texts:

READING LIST

Walt Whitman: "Song of Myself" from *Leaves of Grass*, First Edition (1855); "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer" (1865). **Mark Twain:** *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). **Stephen Crane:** *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) and the short story "The Veteran". Henry James: "The Aspern Papers". **Emily Dickinson:** "After great pain, a formal feeling comes", "One need not be a Chamber-", "Some keep the Sabbath going to Church", "Wild Nights – Wild Nights!", "There's a certain Slant of Light", "I dwell in Possibility –", "She rose to His Requirement – dropt". **Kate Chopin:** "Desiree's Baby" (1883).

BACKGROUND READING: R. Gray, *A History of American Literature*, Blackwell, 2004 for the cultural and historical context; introduction to the authors' lives and work: Whitman: pp.232-237; Dickinson pp.237-244; Chapter 3, 'The Development of American Literature 1865-1900' pp. 245-250; Twain pp. 250-257; James pp. 287-296; Crane pp.303-305; Chopin K. pp.270-274 (page numbers may vary depending on the edition). One critical essay (mandatory reading) per author (it will be uploaded on Moodle).

4. Obiettivi del corso/Course objectives: D1 Knowledge and understanding:

Students will learn about the development of American literature and culture in the second half of the 19th century, through close readings of a selection of texts belonging to different genres (poems, novels and shorts stories).

D2 Applying knowledge and understanding: students will be able to analyze a selection of American literary texts, and appreciate the distinctive qualities of different literary genres and American authors; they will also be able to comprehend issues in American literature in relation to the historical, cultural and artistic contexts, such as the relation between individual and communal identity, the Civil War, the Reconstruction Era and war narrative, the role of 19th century American women in society, the cultural relationship between America and Europe, and finally, the birth and development of American identity. Making judgments: by the end of the course, students will become sophisticated readers who can effectively express their own opinions on literary texts and cultural issues in an informed manner. Communication skills: by the end of the course, students will be able to articulate their own opinions and questions clearly. Learning skills: by the end of the course, students will have developed and improved critical thinking abilities.

5. Prerequisiti/Prerequisites: Anglo-American Literature I; good English language skills (B2 level of the European Framework of Reference for Languages).

6. Metodi didattici/Teaching methods: Lectures and close reading of literary texts in class. Students are invited to attend (whether online or in-person) classes regularly and bring the texts with them (electronic format or paper format). Students will be strongly encouraged to actively participate in class discussions about the analyzed texts and authors. Students are required to read the primary sources in full in order to take the exam. PowerPoint presentations will be used to introduce major topics, historical context, and authors, together with audio files, films and videos. Both primary and secondary sources (essays, websites, digital archives) will be made available on the MOODLE platform.

7. Evaluation methods: Student learning will be assessed through a written exam. The exam will consist of two parts. Part 1: students will answer ten closed questions pertaining to the periods, authors, and texts covered in class. This part is worth 30% of the final grade. Part 2: students will answer four essay questions

pertaining to the texts covered in class. Students may be asked to discuss a particular topic and/or identify, comprehend and analyze a passage/more passages from a literary text. This part is worth 70% of the final grade.

Should it be necessary to make any changes to this syllabus in compliance with safety protocols related to the COVID19 emergency, an announcement will be posted on the Department and Degree Course websites.