

**English 203:  
Introduction to American Literature  
Spring 2023**

**Instructor:** Tim Personn

**Email:** <[tpersonn@uvic.ca](mailto:tpersonn@uvic.ca)>

**Course Description:**

This course is a 'greatest hits' sampler of more than 300 years of American literature, from the early romantics and modernists to the Beats, Black artists, and feminist science fiction writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The course will take the form of a historical overview of American literary culture, focusing on fiction, poetry, and essay writing. Along the way, we will take sideglances at other media and other disciplines to frame our reading of key US literary works. This will help us understand the unique contributions of American thought to the history of ideas—e.g., transcendentalism, pragmatism, and pluralism—and the development of the American imaginary as it grapples with some of the defining contradictions that are internal to the project of “America”: the role of the individual vs. the community, the legacy of slavery and genocide, the promise of freedom and the reality of inequality. We will also try to get a sense of what is “American” about these works, and how they cohere as a body of national writing—as a kind of ongoing literary conversation about the United States.



**Proposed Assignments:**

- Mini-assignments (quizzes & creative tasks) (21%)
- Major Assignments (one long essay or two short essays) (42%)
- Final Assessment (37%)

**Proposed Authors:**

- Ralph Waldo Emerson
- Edgar Allan Poe
- Marianne Moore
- Toni Morrison
- Allan Ginsberg
- Ursula Le Guin

- ... and others