

Final Examination Review

The midterm is worth 20% of your final grade for the semester. Please bring a blank blue book or blank loose-leaf paper for your answers. You may not use your books or notes. There will be three parts to the exam.

Part 1. Identifications. This section will be worth twelve (12) points. I will give you five quotations from texts we've read this semester. You will need to identify four of them by providing the name of the author, the title, and an explanation of the quotation's significance.

Part 2. Short Answer. This section will be worth eight (8) points. It will have some short answer questions.

Part 3. Essay Question. This section will be worth eighty (80) points. I will provide you with questions selected from the following list. You will write an essay in response to **two** of them. The final arrangement of the questions will allow for some choice. Please make your answer as specific as possible.

1. Using references to texts we've studied to illustrate your ideas, describe what you think are the main features of the American Enlightenment. Then select a text from this era that seems to challenge Enlightenment thinking. In what ways does it oppose, resist, subvert, or question the Enlightenment worldview?

2. Imagine that you have been asked to review a proposal for a new anthology of American literature before 1800. The editor's introduction to this anthology opens with the following:

The history of American literature begins in 1620 when the Pilgrims came to the New World and recorded in religious terms their heroic experiences. The spiritual quality of seventeenth-century literature eventually gave way to the Age of Reason, as our Founding Fathers wrote of equality, freedom, and hope--the values that characterize the literature of the early Republic.

Using any of the texts that we have read this semester to explain your main points, respond to this editor's overview of early American literature.

3. Identify and define three of the kinds of literary forms available to early American writers. What circumstances shaped the choice of form in each case? How did these writers invent within these forms or change these forms? What forms would survive for later writers?

4. Explain what role religion plays in the unconventional (perhaps feminist, perhaps not) thinking and behavior of three of the following early American women: Hutchinson, Bradstreet, Rowlandson, Dustan, Griffiths, Warren, Stockton, Adams, Ashbridge, Foster, Murray, or Wheatley. Use their writings as evidence to support your argument.

5. Imagine that the Provost has been startled by your Early American Literature reading schedule. He is concerned that you are reading gothic tales, sentimental novels, books about shipwrecks and Muslim pirates, Indian captivity narratives, *The Adventures of Daniel Boon*, nonfiction that's really or partly fictional (Equiano perhaps), fiction that's thinly disguised criticism of American patriots (Crèvecoeur perhaps), sermons about murder and drinking, and stories about witches, illicit sexual encounters, the murder of sleeping innocents, and monster babies, instead of studying great books of high literary quality. But, before firing the teacher and getting the course permanently canceled, he has written to all the students in the course, asking you for more information. He wants to know more about the relative merits of the texts you've been studying. He asks, "Please explain to me what possible purpose or value there can be in studying such awful, trashy writing." Write him a letter offering your view.

6. Describe the marginalized voices of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century America. Why are they marginalized? How do they respond to their exclusion from power or the social center? Do they reflect in any way the ideology of the culture that dominates them? You will not have time to write about all of the marginalized voices of this era, so focus your attention on three important ones.

7. Think of the dozens of non-poetic and non-fictional texts we read this semester: explorer's reports, letters, journals, theology, history, political tracts, biographical writing, and so on. Choosing three such texts as your examples, can you locate moments of "literary: interest (in something like the modern sense of that word)? Why do they strike you as literary? How would you go about studying these three texts as literary works? Note: To answer this question well, you'll have to have a sense of what you mean by "literary."

8. Is *Daniel Boon* (or *The Algerine Captive*) a "boy's book"? Is *The Coquette* a "girl's book"? To what extent are they designed to appeal to a particular, gendered audience? How well do they meet or thwart those gendered expectations? Following your discussion of these two narratives, use the same framework of issues and questions to discuss *Ormond*.

9. "In American literature, there are basically two different versions of The American Dream. The first is a vision of America as the land of capitalistic opportunity and material success. The other dream sees America as a place of spiritual self-realization." Do you agree, partially agree, or disagree with the above statement? Using examples from any of the authors whom we read this semester (Columbus and Bradford to Franklin and Foster or Brown) to support your ideas, write a brief essay discussing this statement. You may attack or defend the above thesis.

10. What can one learn about America in the 1790s from reading American novels of the 1790s? One doesn't really learn any "facts" per se. So what is it that one could learn about the society, culture, ideas, feelings, Zeitgeist ("spirit of the times), or anything else about the era? Answer this question in an essay that makes use of *Ormond*, *The Algerine Captive*, and *The Coquette*.

11. Early America seems to have been a rather culturally diverse place, though the Founding Fathers were generally white, male, and propertied. In what ways do the texts of African writers (Equiano, Wheatley, etc.) or Native peoples (O'Connell, Killbuck, etc.) or women (Murray, Adams, etc.) differ from the writings of the white men who are most often associated with the founding of America (Franklin, Jefferson, etc.)? Write a short essay that compares and contrasts the ideas and texts of the Founding Fathers with the ideas and texts of *one* of the three groups noted above (women, Native peoples, or African Americans).