



# Independent Study | in Idaho

Engl 278  
American  
Literature II

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Boise State University — Idaho State University — Lewis-Clark State College

# Course Guide

Independent  
Study | in Idaho

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## English 278 American Literature II

Lewis-Clark State College  
3 Semester-Hour Credits

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## **Welcome!**

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Whether you are a new or returning student, welcome to the Independent Study in Idaho (ISI) program. Below, you will find information pertinent to your course including the course description, course materials, course objectives, as well as information about assignments, exams, and grading. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the ISI office for clarification before beginning your course.

## **Policies and Procedures**

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Refer to the ISI website at [www.uidaho.edu/isi](http://www.uidaho.edu/isi) and select Students for the most current policies and procedures, including information on setting up accounts, student confidentiality, exams, transcripts, course exchanges, refunds, academic integrity, library resources, and disability support and other services.

## **Course Description**

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Topics and issues in American literature, from the 1870s to the present. Writing integrated.

Prerequisite: Engl 102 or Engl 109 [College Writing and Research].

*6 graded lessons, 3 exams*

Students may submit up to 1 assignment at a time/2 per week. Before taking exams, students **MUST** wait for grades and feedback on assignments, which may take up to three weeks after date of receipt by the instructor.

ALL assignments and exams must be submitted to receive a final grade for the course.

## **Course Materials**

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### **Required Course Materials**

- McMichael, George, general editor. *Anthology of American Literature. Volume II, Realism to the Present*. 7th ed. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2000.  
ISBN-10: 0130838152 ISBN-13: 9780130838155
- Crane, Stephen. *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. A library or paperback copy.

## **Course Delivery**

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All ISI courses are delivered through Canvas, an online management system that hosts the course lessons and assignments and other items that are essential to the course. Upon registration, the student will receive a *Registration Confirmation Email* with information on how to access ISI courses online.

## **Course Objectives**

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The course surveys representative works of American poetry, fiction, and criticism written from the 1870s to the present. These works are grouped into nine categories on the bases of chronology, authorship, and literary technique and theme. Each of these nine groups of works forms a lesson. Students are asked to study each work in light of (1) its intrinsic literary features, (2) its contribution to American literary history, (3) its reflection of outstanding ideas from the time, and (4) its concern with particular human experiences that may be viewed as universal to humankind. The course aims at balancing the acquisition of knowledge about American literature and American cultural history with the practice of the basic skills of literary analysis and criticism.

1. Knowledge of significant developments in American literary history, as well as how these developments relate to important cultural, social, economic, and political events of the period.
2. Ability to read exemplary works of American literature with insight, understanding, empathy, and aesthetic appreciation.

3. Ability to apply personal, historical, and critical perspectives to the understanding of individual literary works.
4. Ability to identify a variety of literary genres and subgenres, recognize their structural elements, and understand how these all contribute to literary meaning.
5. Critical perspective on the myths of American culture and how these function in the human situations depicted in American literature.
6. Sufficient control over the thinking processes of comprehension, interpretation, analysis, application, synthesis, and evaluation to write clear and convincing responses to a variety of critical questions, which address outcomes 1-5 above.

## **Course Introduction and Lesson Information**

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Each lesson includes the following components:

1. lesson purpose
2. personal reading assignments
3. journal assignments
4. micro-essay questions
5. critical and historical readings from the text

The course consists of six lessons, three exam preparation self-study lessons, and three exams, which require proctoring. Students will consequently need to make special arrangements when taking the exams.

A list of definitions of key literary terms is also provided for you.

Each lesson and exam is made up of two basic activities: (1) participating in the experience offered by the literature and responding to it from your own personal perspective, i.e., reading and writing to and for yourself; (2) observing and reconceptualizing the literature from a critical perspective, which is necessarily more detached, social, and intellectual, i.e., rereading and writing to and for a broader audience. Both activities are entirely valid and useful within their own domains. What is more important, though, is that they are mutually reinforcing. For a student to gain a full and lasting understanding of either an individual work or a body of related literary works, both levels of reading and responding must take place. The first provides the private dimension of meaning and the second provides the broader public dimension. Both dimensions of meaning are required before genuine understanding and knowledge are achieved.

### **Personal Journal**

To facilitate your personal participation in the literature, you are expected to record your initial thoughts and feelings about the assignment in a personal journal. Several journal questions are provided with each lesson to help you focus these responses. Be frank and honest in your responses; the object is to discover just exactly how the selection affected you. Did it involve you? In what specific ways? To what degree? If it did not, what apparently inhibited that involvement, and why was that involvement inhibited?

Your journal responses do not have to be any certain length. They should, however, reveal a thoughtful and conscientious effort to answer the assigned questions. Submit your journals to Canvas on the day of taking each exam. If your journal responses are conscientiously done, you can receive up to 12 additional points on your grade for each of the three exams. A thorough and thoughtful journal is thus critical to achieving an “A” grade on each of the exams. (See *Grading* for details on grading policy.)

### **Critical Reading Assignment**

In the critical section of the lesson or exam, you are expected to shift from your personal perspective to a more detached, analytical, and evaluative perspective. Your role is now that of a teacher or persuader:

someone writing from a position of understanding and insight. You are not writing to yourself now but to an *audience*, one that either knows less about the topic than you do or one whose view of the topic differs from your own. You may be asked to sort out an author's view on an issue and relate it to the view of another author. You may be asked to show how an author's ideas reflect religious, social, political, or philosophical views common to America of that time. Or you may be asked to evaluate the effectiveness of one author over another, or to defend or refute a claim, either adulatory or derogatory, about an author's work. In general, you are expected to assume a position and convince the audience that your position is well-reasoned and based on accurate evidence.

### **Micro-Essay Assignment**

Each micro-essay should be planned as a single, integrated paragraph. Your paragraph should be constructed around a controlling idea that is insightful rather than obvious. Subordinate ideas should be clearly related to your main idea and should develop its most significant aspects. Evidence (details or examples) from the literature should be used to support your argument, but used circumspectly. Do not quote at length to provide support. One or two short and succinct quotations are about all that can be used effectively in a 200-word paragraph. A carefully *organized* and clearly *reasoned* paragraph is the goal to strive for on each of your micro-essay answers.

### **Study Hints**

- Keep a copy of every assignment submitted.
- Complete all reading assignments.
- Set a schedule allowing for course completion one month prior to your personal deadline. An *Assignment Submission Log* is provided for this purpose.
- Web pages and URL links in the World Wide Web are continuously changing. Contact your instructor if you find a broken Web page or URL.

Refer to the ***Course Rules*** in Canvas for further details on assignment requirements and submission.

### **Exams**

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- You must wait for grades and comments on lessons prior to taking each subsequent exam.
- For your instructor's exam guidelines, refer to the ***Course Rules*** in Canvas.

On each exam there will be four micro-essay questions, taken from the exam preparation self-study assignment immediately preceding each exam. You should, therefore, be prepared to respond to all of the questions on the exam preparation lessons.

You may use your textbook as a resource during the exam, but no notes, outlines, or other materials are allowed. Your exam must be written in the bluebook provided by the ISI office. You will have 80 minutes to write your responses, which means you should plan on 20 minutes per question. See the exam preparation assignments for further information.

See *Grading* for specific information on exams, points, and percentages.

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### **Grading**

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The final course grade will be based upon the following considerations.

Students are expected to write several personal journal entries and *four* micro-essays on each lesson and exam. You should be prepared to respond to all of the questions on the exam preparation lessons.

Journal responses are mandatory. Journals must be submitted to Canvas on the day of taking the exam. Your journal entries for lessons 1, 2, and the first exam are thus due on the day of taking exam 1. (The same procedure applies with exams 2 and 3.) Your instructor will evaluate your journal responses for the two lessons and exam at that time and award you up to 12 points on your micro-essay exam score for exam 1. For example, if you earned the maximum possible score of 88 points on your four exam answers, plus the maximum 12 points for your journal responses, your final score for exam 1 would be 100.

Since your journal comprises 12 percent of each possible exam score and since exam grades are weighted almost twice as heavily in computing the final course grade, completing a conscientious journal on each lesson can affect your course grade significantly.

The four micro-essay questions on each of the six lessons can earn up to 25 points each, for a possible total of 100 points for each lesson. The four questions on exams 1, 2, and 3 can earn up to 22 points each for a possible total of 88 points, plus 1-12 journal points on each exam. ("A" = 90-100 points, "B" = 80-89, "C" = 70-79, "D" = 60-69, "F" = below 60.) Lesson grades are also weighted on a gradually ascending scale to give you additional credit for improving your critical skills throughout the course sequence:

<u>Lesson or Exam</u>	<u>Percent of Course Grade</u>
Lesson 1	8 percent
Lesson 2	8 percent
Exam 1	14 percent
Lesson 3	9 percent
Lesson 4	9 percent
Exam 2	15 percent
Lesson 5	10 percent
Lesson 6	10 percent
<u>Exam 3</u>	<u>17 percent</u>
	100 percent

Grades on lessons 1-6 total 54 percent of your course grade. Grades on exams 1-3 total 46 percent of your course grade.

#### **Micro-essay characteristics for an "A"**

- Confident understanding of the question.
- Consistent critical perspective.
- Appropriate sense of the assigned audience.
- Ideas that reveal a clear understanding of the text(s), clear sense of the relationship between parts and wholes, and clear distinctions between literal and inferential meanings.
- Perceptive controlling idea, broken down logically into 3 to 5 supporting ideas.
- Supporting ideas that *develop* the main idea with logical explanations and/or strategic examples/details from the text(s).
- Supporting quotations that (if used at all) are succinct and strategic to development of the argument.
- Sophisticated word choice and variety of sentences.
- Almost no errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

#### **Micro-essay characteristics for a "C"**

- Satisfactory grasp of the question, but with some misunderstanding, avoidance, or indirectness.
- Critical perspective that is sometimes confused with personal perspective.
- Sense of audience that is confused enough to partially interfere with the audience's *learning* the

answer to the question.

- Ideas that show satisfactory understanding of the text(s) and the relationship between parts and wholes, but weaker distinctions between literal and inferential meanings.
- Satisfactory controlling idea, broken down into at least three supporting ideas.
- Supporting ideas that satisfactorily explain and/or illustrate the main idea, but with some ambiguity or vagueness.
- Quotations that (if used) show some weakness in relevancy or are too long to be strategic.
- Sentences and word choice lacking variety and sophistication.
- Some errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

#### **Micro-essay characteristics for an "F"**

- Avoids answering the question and/or shows little or no understanding of it.
- Critical perspective that is confused entirely with personal.
- Absence of sense of assigned audience.
- Ideas that show little attempt to understand the assigned texts.
- Main idea either unfocused or so obvious as to justify little interest from a reader.
- Disconnected or irrelevant supporting ideas, examples, or details; tells the story without any attempt to reconceptualize it.
- Quotations that (if used) are used as unrelated padding.
- Distracting number of errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, or sentence structure.

The final course grade is issued after **all** lessons and exams have been graded.

### **Academic Integrity**

Acts of academic dishonesty, including cheating or plagiarism are considered a very serious transgression and may result in a grade of F for the course.

PLAGIARISM is the dishonest representation of language from another source as your own--phrases, sentences or paragraphs, without indicating in quotation marks and a citation in your text, what your source is, whether print or internet.

The penalty for plagiarism in this course is SEVERE. ONE example of your use of language from another source without acknowledging it in quotation marks and the citation of the source will earn you a failing grade in this course, NOTE: only one example is all it takes.

In case of such a determination, you will receive notice from your course instructor of a pending failing grade in the course. You will have 3 days to respond to this notice before your grade will become final.

### **Contacting Your Instructor**

Instructor contact information is posted on your Canvas site under *Course Rules*.



## **Definitions of Basic Literary Terms**

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**Plot:** The sequence of major incidents, scenes, and events that make up the story.

**Conflict:** A clash of actions, ideas, emotions, or motives. This clash may be physical, psychological, or moral. The main character may be pitted against some other person or group of persons, against some external force (physical nature, society, or fate), or against some part of his/her own nature. Conflict may be simple or multiple; the character involved may be aware or unaware of his/her involvement.

**Protagonist:** The central character in the conflict, whether sympathetic or unsympathetic.

**Antagonist:** The force(s) arrayed against the protagonist, whether persons, things, conventions of society, or traits of his/her own character.

**Characters:** Persons involved in the story. One can ask questions about their consistency, motivation, plausibility, simplicity, or complexity. A *static* character is the same sort of person at the end of the story as he/she was at the beginning. A *developing* (or dynamic) character undergoes a permanent change in some aspect of his/her personality or way of looking at the world.

**Theme:** The central insight of the literary work. It is the story's unifying notion about life, whether stated or implied. To derive the theme of a story, one must ask what its central purpose is: What view of life underlies the story? What insight into life does it reveal?

**Symbol:** Something that means more than what it literally or objectively is. It may be an object, a person, a situation, or an action that is literally what it is in the story, but that also suggests or implies other meanings as well. Symbols may reinforce and add to a story's meaning, or they may carry the meaning. Symbols are a way of adding meaning indirectly.

**Speaker/Narrator:** The point of view from which the story is told; literally, the voice telling the story. This voice may be all-knowing (omniscient), limited to the viewpoint of one (or more) characters, or it may disappear entirely, so that the reader is placed in the position of watching a movie or play. The narrator or speaker may or may not speak for the author, and may or may not give reliable information to the reader.

**Style:** How a speaker or writer says what he/she says. A writer's style can be determined by looking at his/her choice of words (diction); sentence structure and syntax; figurative language (metaphor, simile, etc.); and patterns of rhythm and sound.

**Irony:** A contrast or opposition in which one side of the contrast in some way reverses, undermines, or mocks the other side. *Verbal irony* is the simplest type of irony; in this type, there is a discrepancy between what is said and what is meant. In *dramatic irony*, the contrast is between what a character says and what the reader knows to be true; this type of irony gives one perspective on the speaker or his/her expectations. In irony of *situation*, the discrepancy is between appearance and reality, or between expectation and fulfillment, or between what is and what would seem appropriate. Like symbolism, irony makes it possible to generate meanings without stating them directly.

## Assignment Submission Log

Lesson	Reading	Written Assignment	Date Submitted
1	Personal and Critical Readings	Journal Assignment Micro-essays	_____
2	Personal and Critical Readings	Journal Assignment Micro-essays	_____
<b>Exam 1 Journal Assignment Exam Preparation</b>	Personal and Critical Readings	Journal Assignment (Turn in on the day of taking exam 1.)	<b>Self-Study</b>
<b>It is time to take Exam 1.</b>			
3	Personal and Critical Readings	Journal Assignment Micro-essays	_____
4	Personal and Critical Readings	Journal Assignment Micro-essays	_____
<b>Exam 2 Journal Assignment Exam Preparation</b>	Personal and Critical Readings	Journal Assignment (Turn in on the day of taking exam 2.)	<b>Self-Study</b>
<b>It is time to take Exam 2.</b>			
5	Personal and Critical Readings	Journal Assignment Micro-essays	_____
6	Personal and Critical Readings	Journal Assignment Micro-essays	_____
<b>Exam 3 Journal Assignment Exam Preparation</b>	Personal and Critical Readings	Journal Assignment (Turn in on the day of taking exam 3.)	<b>Self-Study</b>

**It is time to take the Final Exam.**

## Lesson 1 Regional Realism

### Lesson Purpose

The purpose of the initial part of lesson 1 is to allow you to experience the literature firsthand and without a preconceived sense of historical and biographical context. The primary context at this stage should be your own personal experience. Please read the following selections *without reference* to the historical and biographical information about the period and the authors provided by your text.

To enhance your participation in the experiences related in these readings, you will need to respond to each selection in writing. Immediately following the reading assignment are two journal questions. After reading each selection, you should answer at least *one* of these questions, preferably both. Keep these responses so that they can be submitted to Canvas on the day of taking the first exam for your journal points. You should also refer to these responses when you work on your required micro- essays. A conscientious effort on your journal will facilitate your success with the micro-essay questions in this lesson.

### Personal Reading Assignments

Mary E. Wilkins Freeman,	"A New England Nun,"	pages 173-182.
Sarah Orne Jewett,	"A White Heron,"	pages 183-190.
Bret Harte,	"Tennessee's Partner,"	pages 191-197.
Charles Waddell Chesnutt,	"The Gophered Grapevine,"	pages 212-220.
Joel Chandler Harris,	"Free Joe and the Rest of the World,"	pages 222-230.
Mark Twain,	"The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County,"	pages 234-238.
Ambrose Bierce,	"An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,"	pages 658-664.
Kate Chopin,	<i>The Awakening</i> ,	pages 679-771.

### Journal Assignment

Answer one, and preferably both, of the following questions about *each* of the assigned selections.

1. Could you relate to or sympathize with the protagonist in this story? In what way, mainly? If you could not, what seemed to prevent it?
2. Describe your feelings or thoughts while reading this story. What were they after you finished it?

### Micro-Essay Assignment

Before beginning the first written assignment, refer to the *Course Rules* in Canvas for your instructor's assignment requirements. If emailing assignments to your instructor, please copy the ISI office at [indepst@uidaho.edu](mailto:indepst@uidaho.edu).

#### **Micro-Essay Directions**

Study each of the following questions. You must write on *four* of the ten questions. (Choices are indicated.) Settle on which four questions you wish to answer. Then read each of the related selections from the critical reading assignment that follows the questions, beginning with the general introduction, "The Age of Realism." As you proceed through this part of your reading, you should *reread* each relevant selection from the authors, taking pertinent notes from *both* sets of readings. Next, draft an answer to each of the four questions, using your notes and the techniques of outlining and prewriting. You may find it more effective to complete a draft answer to one question before you go on to the reading and writing on the next question. Allow each response to cook for a day or two before redrafting

it into a single, polished micro-essay of a minimum of 200 words. Submit these final micro-essays Canvas for evaluation by the course instructor.

### Micro-Essay Questions

Remember: Unless otherwise indicated, you are the instructor and the other students in this class are your audience. You are thus addressing them when you answer each question.

Write on *one* question out of questions 1-3 (200 words).

1. Analyze the motives for Louisa's decision not to marry Dagget. What narrative judgment about this decision is implied by the symbols of the caged canary and the chained dog?
2. "A White Heron" is a story about initiation. Briefly describe the choice Sylvia must make and then explain how not telling the heron's secret stems from deeper and wiser values than those offered by her grandmother and the ornithologist.
3. "Tennessee's Partner" is an early example of regional fiction, which exploited the techniques and themes of what was to become known in America as literary realism. One of these techniques was to present dialogue in local dialect. Briefly describe three other techniques that Harte uses to give this story local color.

Write on *one* question out of questions 4-6 (200 words).

4. The stories by Chesnutt and Twain both rely on the device of irony (refer to Basic Literary Terms) to generate humor for the reader. Describe at least *two* types of irony in *one* of these stories, and then explain how they create humor for the reader.
5. How does Free Joe react to his freedom? What does his reaction reveal about his own view of himself?
6. Bierce's story illustrates how conflict can operate at more than one level. Using the definitions of basic literary terms provided in this study guide, describe at least *three* distinct levels or types of conflict in this story.

Write on *two* questions out of questions 7-10 (200 words each).

7. One way to understand the process of Edna Pontellier's awakening is to see it as a continuing series of rebellions. Briefly trace this series from beginning to end, and then explain what these combined acts reveal about the causes of her rebelliousness.
8. Some critics have argued that Edna's awakening is primarily sexual and erotic in nature. Defend or refute this view.
9. Edna associates herself (and is associated) with imagery of the sea from the very beginning of the story. Discuss the significance of the sea as a symbol in relation to the story's protagonist.

10. You are Edna Pontellier on the night before your walk into the sea. You have received Robert's note of rejection and you have sorted your options. Compose a letter to your two children, explaining why you are going to do what you are going to do.

### **Critical Reading Assignment**

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"The Age of Realism,"	pages 1-8.
"Mary E. Wilkins Freeman,"	pages 172-173.
"Sarah Orne Jewett,"	pages 182-183.
"Bret Harte,"	pages 190-191.
"Charles Waddell Chesnutt,"	pages 211-212.
"Joel Chandler Harris,"	pages 220-221.
"Mark Twain,"	pages 231-233.
"Ambrose Bierce,"	pages 657-658.
"Kate Chopin,"	pages 678-679.