Course Description:
This introduction to American literature will address some of the major themes of human experience and culture, from the Puritan period to the present. These include the individual in relation to the social world; the meaning and fashioning of the self; class, race and democracy; and the myth of the American West. In exploring these themes, we will seek to understand the artistic and social meaning of particular literary genres such as autobiography, drama, essay, novel, short story, and poetry. Additionally, we will aim to develop literary critical skills, to improve our capacities as readers, thinkers, and writers. By understanding and analyzing such elements in interpretation as context, audience, figural language, and narrative structure, we will explore how literature not only represents and informs us about U.S. culture but also shapes it.

Course Objectives:
Reading, thinking, speaking, and writing carefully in order to better understand the culture that surrounds us and to think critically about the past’s relation to the present. An aim of any survey course is not to check boxes of “the hits” but to get the big picture – often through the details.

Required Texts:
Thomas Shepard, Autobiography (1634; handout)
Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography (1791)
Ralph Waldo Emerson, Self Reliance and Other Essays
Henry David Thoreau, Civil Disobedience and Other Essays
Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845)
Walt Whitman, “The Sleepers” (1855; handout)
Emily Dickinson (1830-1886), selected poems (handout)
Willa Cather, My Ántonia (1918)
Allen Ginsberg, “A Supermarket in California” and “America” (1955)
Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (1963; handout)
Flannery O'Connor, "Everything that Rises Must Converge" (1961; handout)
Joan Didion, Slouching Towards Bethlehem (1968)
Anna Deavere Smith, Twilight: Los Angeles, (1992)
Tony Kushner, Angels in America (1993; 2013)

Requirements and Grading:
1. Two papers (20% each; 5-7 pages, due 10/16 and 11/29).
3. Final examination, Dec. 6, 11-1 (20%): Identifications, short answer.
4. Participation (20%): includes attendance, participation in discussion, and short writing assignments.

Late papers will be marked down two-thirds of a letter grade for each day they are late. More than four unexcused absences will result in a failing participation grade.
Schedule

Aug. 21  Introduction
Aug. 23  Shepard, Autobiography; Franklin, Autobiography (to p. 28)
Aug. 28  Franklin, to p. 105.
Aug. 30  Emerson, "The Over-Soul" (1841)
Sept. 4  Emerson, "Self-Reliance" (1841), "Divinity School Address" (1838)
Sept. 6  Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience" (1849)
Sept. 11 Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (handout)
Sept. 13 Frederick Douglass, Chs. 1-9
Sept. 18 Douglas, Chs. 10-11 and Appendix
Sept. 20 Walt Whitman, "The Sleepers" (handout); Ginsberg, "A Supermarket in California" and "America" (handout)
Sept. 25 Emily Dickinson, selected poems (handout)
Sept. 27 Flannery O’Connor, “Everything that Rises Must Converge”
Oct. 2  Willa Cather, My Ántonia, Book I
Oct. 4  Midterm Exam
Oct. 9  NO CLASS  Watch “Willa Cather: The Road Home” on line
Oct. 11 NO CLASS  (Handley away at a conference)
Oct. 16 Cather, Books I and II  1st paper due.
Oct. 18 Cather, Books III, IV, and V
Oct. 23 Didion, Parts I and II
Oct. 25 NO CLASS (Handley away at a conference)
Oct. 30 Didion, Part III
Nov. 1 Anna Deavere Smith, Twilight: Los Angeles 1992
Nov. 6 Smith, Twilight
Nov. 8 Smith, Twilight
Nov. 13 Angels in America, Part I
Nov. 15 Angels in America, Part I
Nov. 20 Angels in America, Part I

Thanksgiving Recess, Nov. 21-25

Nov. 27 Angels, Part II
Nov. 29 Angels, Part II  2nd paper due

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems
Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: sarc.usc.edu

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086 Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. equity.usc.edu

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

The Office of Disability Services and Programs Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. dsp.usc.edu

USC Support and Advocacy (USCSA) – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

USC Emergency Information
Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime. Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu