Description
To whom do I owe my allegiance? What is the highest power that rules over me? Do I possess control over my own fate? Where is my home? Life in colonial and revolutionary America forced many men and women to ask themselves these questions. In this course, students will examine the answers of some of the most significant figures in early American literature.

With adventurer playwright Aphra Behn, students will reflect on the transformative promise of the New World. How did Virginia offer ordinary men and women the chance to live like royalty? In the life of Olaudah Equiano, the class will encounter the other side of the colonial enterprise: how could a man of royal descent cope with being sold into slavery? Mary Rowlandson’s account of her captivity amongst the Wampanoag finds proof of God’s supervising plan in the midst of bitter hardship. Reading Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography*, students will consider how a man from the same New-England Puritan culture could come to consider himself the master of his own destiny.

Covering a wide variety of literary forms and genres, this course will serve as a solid foundation for further study of the colonial and revolutionary periods. It will also give students a fresh perspective on issues of personal and national sovereignty that continue to be controversial today.

Required Texts
Warner and Jehlen (eds), *The English Literatures of America: 1500-1800* (Routledge 9780415908733)
Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette* (Dover - 0486796191)

All other texts (those marked with a *) to be posted online.

Assessment
Participation and Preparation 10%
Bibliographic Exercise 15%
Term Paper 25%
Final Exam 50%

Participation and Preparation
Each Monday, two discussion questions will be posted in a thread on the course website. Students must write brief answers to both of these questions and post their answers on the thread. Answers must be posted online by 12 noon on Wednesdays, the day before class. Answering these questions is compulsory.
Bibliographic Exercise

Working in small groups, students will identify an interesting (and brief) early American text from an online database. They will then produce an edition of the text, including a short introduction, a bibliographic record, and any footnotes necessary for the comprehension of a general reader. Students should be able to finish most of this assignment in class on the 8th of September.

Late Penalties

Late work submitted without an approved extension will be penalized one half-mark per day late – an A paper submitted one day late would drop to an A-, etc.

Plagiarism

Please see the Division of English’s statement on plagiarism here.

Seminar Schedule

1. 17th August
   The idea of America
   Amerigo Vespucci, from the letter to Pier Soderini (1504), J&W 19-23.

2. 24th August
   Colonial Virginia: Explorers, Settlers, Rebels

3. 31st August
   Colonial Massachusetts: Puritan Ideology

4. 7th September
   The Captivity Narrative and The Indian Question
   Roger Williams, A Key into the Language of America (1643), J&W 494-497.

5. 14th September
   The Book in the Atlantic World
   Bibliographic Exercise.

6. 21st September
   The Salem Witch Trials
   Deodat Lawson, A Brief and True Narrative (1692), J&W 475-481.
   *Cotton Mather, Wonders of the Invisible World (1692).
   Robert Calef, More Wonders of the Invisible World (1700), 482-487.
7. 28th September  

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8. 12th October  
Slaves and Slave Holders  
*Cotton Mather, The Negro Christianized* (1706).

9. 19th October  
Pirates and Fortune Hunters  
*Selected texts posted online.*  
In-Class Peer Review Session———bring draft of term paper.

10. 26th October  
New Puritans: Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin  

11. 2nd November  
Writing the Revolution: Jefferson and Freneau  
Philip Freneau, “On the Emigration to America and Peopling the Western Country” (1784), J&W 1104-1106; “The Indian Burying Ground” (1788), 1107-1108; “To the Americans of the United States” (1797), J&W 1110-1111.

12. 9th November  
Early American Novels: *The Coquette*  
Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette* (1797).

13. 16th November  
Revision and Exam Preparation———term paper due in class.