

## Representations of Pocahontas

English 3960, Spring 2009  
Senior Seminar  
W, F, 2:30-4:25:  
Lind 216

Edward M. Griffin  
210E Lind Hall  
Office hours, W, Th, 1:15-2:15 and  
by appointment ([griffin@umn.edu](mailto:griffin@umn.edu))

### GENERAL:

This course will operate, as far as is practicable, along the lines of a graduate seminar. That is to say, we identify a circumscribed subject (the representations of Pocahontas over time and the myths that have informed American literature) that we try to encounter in a deep, meaningful, and comprehensive way by means of independent research (each student will have research responsibilities) and wide-ranging discussion in small groups. A sizable portion of the seminar will be conducted via electronic texts based heavily on the "Pocahontas Archive" developed at Lehigh University by Professor Edward Gallagher and his students there. That archive is keyed to the electronic versions of many of the texts we shall study this semester, but students will also be expected to consult numerous print versions as they conduct their research. The URL is

<http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/pocahontas/index.php>

Class participation is inherent in a seminar, and it will be expected here. This course, moreover, presumes a team approach: each member, including the instructor, is expected to contribute to the learning of the seminar community. I propose as our motto, "Cooperate and graduate."

### Required Texts:

Abrams, Ann Uhry. *The Pilgrims and Pocahontas: Rival Myths of American Origin*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1999. ISBN 0-8133-3497-7.

Custalow, Linwood, and Angela L. Daniel. *The True Story of Pocahontas: The Other Side of the Story*. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum, 2007. ISBN 978-1-55591-632-9.

Tilton, Robert S. *Pocahontas: The Evolution of an American Narrative*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1994. ISBN 0-521-46959-7.

**ASSIGNMENTS:** *Reading.* It is imperative that each member of the class do the readings and stay current with them. Engagement with the reading assignments for each meeting is not only expected, it is required. Study questions for many of the meetings will be provided as a basis for seminar discussion, and thoughtful response to those questions is expected of each student.

## Calendar of Reading Assignments

**Note: In this calendar, the Pocahontas Archive is abbreviated PA, with subsections Bib (Bibliography), Img (Images), Tml (Timeline), Hst (History), Epth (Epithets), Dbnk (Debunking), Tch (Teaching).**

**Note: The Calendar is complete through March 4. Subsequent assignments will be made as the interests of the class develop and emerge.**

### *JANUARY*

21 Introduction and Organization

#### 23 **UNIT ONE: THE PRIMARY HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS**

PA-Tml, 1595-1699; PA-Hst, 1 through 23; PA-Bib: Choose 5 items on the bibliography from 1608-25 that link to electronic versions and read the electronic versions.

28 PA-Tml, 1700-1799; PA-Hst, 24-25; PA-Bib: Choose 5 items on the bibliography from 1705-98 that link to electronic versions and read the electronic versions.

30: Review of Unit One.

### *FEBRUARY*

#### 4 **UNIT TWO: THE DEBUNKING OF THE HISTORY**

PA-Tml, 19<sup>th</sup> century.

PA-Dbnk. Read all the entries through Neil (1869), *History of the Virginia Company of London*. Read all the electronic versions in the Debunking section through the 1869 Neil item. The Henry Adams essay (1867) is the most famous, and probably the most important, attack, as it is written by the most famous American writer. Read the electronic version. It's not on PA, but you can find it here:

Henry Adams, "John Smith" *North American Review*, 214.14, 1-30. Get the electronic text through your U of M Library site or at <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/sgml/moa-idx?notisid=ABQ7578-0104-3>

6 PA-Dbnk. Read all the entries from the review of *A Discourse of Virginia* by Edward Maria Wingfield and *A True Relation of Virginia by Capt. John Smith*. *Southern Review* 6 (July 1869) to Henry, William Wirt. Review of *The First Republic in America* by Alexander Brown. *Virginia Historical Magazine* (1898). This will take the controversy through the nineteenth century.

Read the electronic texts of either Bryant (1876), Poindexter (1893), or Brown (1898).

11 PA-Dbnk. Read the remaining 20<sup>th</sup>-century/21<sup>st</sup>-century entries from Morse, Jarvis M. "John Smith and His Critics: A Chapter in Colonial Historiography" (1935) to Custalow (2007).

13: Read Custalow and Daniel, *The True Story of Pocahontas*. (Required text.)

18 Discussion of Custalow and Daniel in context of debunking controversy.

## 20 **UNIT THREE: THE MYTHS AND MYTH SCHOLARSHIP**

Ann Uhry Abrams, *The Pilgrims and Pocahontas: Rival Myths of American Origin.*, Preface and pp. 3-162.

25 Abrams, pp. 163-282.

27 Robert S. Tilton, *Pocahontas: The Evolution of an American Narrative* (Required Text). Pp. 1-92.

### **MARCH**

4 Tilton, *Pocahontas*, pp. 93-186.

PA-Epth, all.

## **UNIT FOUR: THE SENIOR PAPER**

### **MARCH**

6 INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES (20 MINUTES EACH)

11 INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES (20 MINUTES EACH)

13 PRESENTATION OF WRITTEN PROSPECTUS TO SEMINAR (2 PAGES DOUBLE SPACED)

18 Spring Break

20 Spring Break

25 RESEARCH WEEK (No formal seminar meeting; I will be available in my office for consultation.)

27 RESEARCH WEEK (No formal seminar meeting; I will be available in my office for consultation.)

## ***APRIL***

1. ORAL PROGRESS REPORTS TO SEMINAR (15 MINUTES EACH)
3. ORAL PROGRESS REPORTS TO SEMINAR (15 MINUTES EACH)
- 8 CIRCULATION OF FIRST WORKING DRAFTS AND DISCUSSION IN CLASS
- 10 CIRCULATION OF FIRST WORKING DRAFTS AND DISCUSSION IN CLASS
- 15 CIRCULATION OF REVISED WORKING DRAFT AND DISCUSSION IN CLASS
- 17 CIRCULATION OF REVISED WORKING DRAFT AND DISCUSSION IN CLASS
- 22 WRITING DAY (Time free to write and revise final draft)
- 24 WRITING DAY (Time free to write and revise final draft)
- 28 SUBMISSION OF FINAL DRAFT WITH COPIES TO THE SEMINAR

## ***MAY***

- 1 IN-CLASS DISCUSSION OF SEMINAR PAPERS
- 6 END OF SEMESTER WRAP-UP

### **Writing.**

You will have three short writing assignments during the semester and one long, major seminar paper. These assignments will be described as the seminar proceeds.

The long, major seminar paper will grow from your major research assignment for the semester. This seminar paper requires you to conduct a thorough, comprehensive study of the representation of Pocahontas in a work of American literature. In addition to preparing the senior paper, you will give to the seminar an oral presentation of your findings. Below you will find the Department of English's detailed instructions for the preparation and submission of the senior thesis. You are responsible for learning and following these instructions.

The representation you will choose has a life and a history. Of course, it is a product like any other: it was thought up, planned, produced, bought and sold, distributed, perhaps advertised, and "consumed" by some particular members of society. Somebody probably made a profit on it or took a loss. The same could be said of soap. As a literary product, however, it didn't get used up as soap does; its history does not end with its initial

consumption but, helped by certain institutions we have organized in our society for the purpose (libraries, schools, publishers, for instance), it has continued to be used and reused. Some of the stories have had more active useful lives than have others, to be sure, but each has its own composition, consumption, and reading history. And that history is not entirely economic. We must remember that occasionally for soap, but frequently for books, the "product" is received and passed on as a gift, a special present we are delighted to give away and get. (This, of course, is what teachers try to do with it.)

Your task is to recover as much of that textual life and history as you can and to present it to the seminar in a coherent, engaging fashion. You will need to know about the author and the circumstances involved in the "thinking up," planning, and writing stages of the story. You will want to find out what you can about the selling, buying, and publication of the story (including advertising, book and cover design, if appropriate, and distribution). You will want to ask who its initial readers were and what they thought of the story, but you will also want to profile any of its subsequent reading communities that you discover. So you will ask whether it got collected, put into classroom texts, got turned into television or film, got read in public or over the airwaves, got illustrated in paintings and other art work, got appropriated into popular culture, and so forth. And through these researches, you will be curious to figure out who the author imagined the readers to be as well as who those readers actually turned out to be.

Finally, you will want to share with *your* readers *your* assessment of Your Story: what you make of it. I have blocked off the final two weeks of the semester for these presentations.

You will have to find a method to keep your data organized and in some kind of sequence. Each story will require its own approach, naturally, but generally you will need to organize your notes into categories that you can ultimately cross-reference to each other. One hint, based on my own sad experience: take the extra time to be meticulous about copying down the reference and bibliographical data you can find. Then take another couple of minutes and double-check your note against the original for errors you have made in transcription, spelling, punctuation, and so forth. Don't trust yourself to have copied correctly the first time. Three extra minutes spent at the source will save you HOURS, even days, later on. It's maddening when you need to find some piece of information and you discover that you neglected to make a reliable note of it.

In case your friends inquire, you are doing an exercise based on an amalgamation of *l'histoire du livre* (history of the book), *Rezeptionaesthetik* (reception theory), socio-economic criticism, art history, and reader-response criticism. But it is also good, old-fashioned American pragmatism: a controlled case-study ruled by a healthy dose of common sense, logic, and detective work. When you finish, you will have learned how to research a complex subject across disciplines and how to present your findings in a coherent way. A college graduate in the Liberal Arts should know how to do this, and I hope that you will accomplish this essential task with a sense of satisfaction and pride of achievement.

The final, completed version of the paper will be due during final exam week at a date to be announced. It should be presented in academic format, detailed instructions for which are given in the MLA (Modern Language Association) handbook of style.

One final caveat: you cannot cram this assignment into a weekend. It requires a careful plan of work and steady, daily application of effort. Construct a plan and work your plan.

### **Other Information**

**INSTRUCTOR:** The College of Liberal Arts asks instructors to include in the syllabus a brief biographical note about the instructor. Although I am now a thoroughgoing Minnesotan, having lived here since 1966 with my wife (a registered nurse) and having raised my three daughters here, I hail originally from the steel-mill town of Homestead, in western Pennsylvania, where I lived until I was eleven. Then my family moved to San Francisco, where I attended Riordan High School and the University of San Francisco before entering the Army and serving in Germany as a lieutenant of field artillery. Upon my discharge, I studied as a Danforth Fellow at Stanford University, earning a Ph. D. in English and American literature. Upon completing my degree, I came to the University of Minnesota as an assistant professor, eventually advancing to professor. During my years on the Minnesota faculty, I have also held positions as a visiting professor at Stanford, the University of San Francisco, the University of Salzburg (Austria), and the University of Amsterdam (the Netherlands). I have been selected for membership in the University of Minnesota Academy of Distinguished Teachers. I specialize in the literature of British North America during the colonial period and American literature in the early national period., but I have taught quite a range of other courses in British and American literature. I have also taught for American Studies, and I was chair of that department throughout most of the 1980s. I plan to retire at the end of the spring semester, 2010, so this will be my final senior seminar, and I am excited to conduct it with you.

College of Liberal Arts

University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

227 Lind Hall, (612) 625-4592; [englmaj@umn.edu](mailto:englmaj@umn.edu)

<http://english.cla.umn.edu/ugrad/senior.html>