This sample unit outline is provided by CHC for prospective and current students to assist with unit selection.

Elements of this outline which may change with subsequent offerings of the unit include Content, Required Texts, Recommended Readings and details of the Assessment Tasks.

Students who are currently enrolled in this unit should obtain the outline for the relevant semester from the unit lecturer.
**Unit Name**  
American Literature

**Unit Code**  
EL230

**Awards**  
Bachelor of Education (Secondary) - English teaching area  
Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education (Secondary) - English major

This unit is able to be undertaken towards other CHC awards according to course rules and the meeting of prerequisite requirements, as applicable.

**Core/Elective**  
Elective

**Prerequisite**  
20 credit points of 100-level EL units

**Mode**  
Internal

**Delivery/Contact hrs**

| Class contact | 33 hours |
| Engagement with unit materials | 44 hours |
| Assignment preparation | 63 hours |
| **Total** | **140 hours** |

**Unit Rationale**

While American writers have appeared relatively late on the scene when compared with the great literary traditions of Europe, the last two hundred years have seen the development of a thriving literary culture which has played an influential role in shaping the direction of English literature. Indeed, one could argue that the “New World” provided an invigorating environment in which to develop innovative approaches to universal themes, uncluttered by the cultural baggage of the centuries. The rapid expansion of America from a frontier society to a world superpower, and the unique social circumstances created by material prosperity and the ethnic “melting-pot”, have created fertile soil for literary creativity and social commentary.

This unit introduces students to the major themes and authors of the American literary tradition. They will examine works by leading writers from a range of periods and genres. As well as providing a general chronological presentation of the development of American literature and society, a number of important inter-connecting themes and motifs will be highlighted, such as man’s relationship with the natural environment, the search for spiritual meaning, the American Dream, race relations, social conflict, and the journey motif.

In order to introduce students to as wide a range of authors and perspectives as possible, the focus of this unit will be on poetry and short stories, supplemented by longer pieces of prose. In this way, students will be given a broad introduction to the dominant concerns, interests, styles and settings of American literature. As American culture, and therefore American literature, film, and television continue to penetrate the whole of Western culture, a knowledge, understanding and appreciation of American literature is essential for students of English.

**Learning Outcomes:**

On completion of this unit, students will have provided evidence that they have:

1. Discussed the works of leading American writers of various periods and genres.
2. Applied Christian perspectives to the study of American literature, including critical review of key themes in the works of leading American writers.
3. Compared and contrasted individual works of literature in terms of their themes, characterisations, imagery and stylistic features.
4. Related the works of literature to the political, social, spiritual, economic and intellectual history of America.
5. Appreciated the importance of social commentary and criticism as a major purpose for American writers.
6. Presented cogent, well-written arguments observing the conventions of literary criticism.
7. Written at an appropriate tertiary standard (with special attention to correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, usage, sentence structure, logical relations, style, referencing and presentation).
Content:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction: Overview of American literature, and review from Christian perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>Transcendentalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>Slavery and Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>America in 1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The 1920s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The 1930s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>Black Writers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>C20th Poetry and Contemporary Themes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Set Text Requirements:


Recommended Readings:

Assessment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Item</th>
<th>Topic/s</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes assessed</th>
<th>Week Due</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay (1500 words)</td>
<td>Choose one of the following topics:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) A particular theme of nineteenth century American literature is the view that the New World should produce a new kind of character. Discuss the features of this American ‘type’.</td>
<td>1-7</td>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Nature and the natural world have a major part to play in the work of Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman. Discuss the uses these authors make of American Nature in their writings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman each have strong views about both the limitations and the potential qualities of American society. Discuss the ways in which these two ‘sides’ of America are presented in Nature.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay (1500 words)</td>
<td>Respond to the following statement:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For any writers, the conditions of the societies in which they live provide the basis for the works they produce. With reference to <em>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</em>, “A Clean, Well-lighted Place”, and <em>The Great Gatsby</em>, discuss the ways in which Twain, Hemingway and Fitzgerald express their views concerning the material and spiritual qualities of the worlds which they inhabit.</td>
<td>1-7</td>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unit Overview:

This unit is a broad introduction to American Literature, examining and exploring the major themes, authors and genres over a number of historical eras. It examines in some depth recurring American themes and motifs, and examines some poetry, short stories, and longer prose works.