SAMPLE SYLLABUS FOR ENGL 2329, American Literature
Submitted in support of Core Curriculum proposal

ENGL 2303, American Literature. Concentration on works of American literature with focus on how cultural, geographic, and political issues shape and reflect literature in a particular culture. Issues for American literature might include the struggle to discover a national identity, the transition from war to postwar periods, or the tensions of a multicultural society. Examines at least three genres and six authors. Emphasis on critical methods of thinking, reading, and writing.

COURSE PURPOSE STATEMENT. This course satisfies the University of Texas at Arlington core curriculum requirement in Language, Philosophy, and Culture. This requirement’s objectives are critical thinking, communication, personal responsibility, and social responsibility.

CORE OBJECTIVES:
1) Critical thinking skills: creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.
2) Communication Skills: effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.
3) Personal Responsibility: ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.
4) Social Responsibility: to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:
1) Students will acquire, practice, and demonstrate the critical thinking skills of creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.
2) Students will acquire, practice, and demonstrate the communication skills of effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas in written, oral and visual communication.
3) Students will acquire, practice, and demonstrate personal responsibility in their ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.
4) Students will acquire, practice, and demonstrate social responsibility in their intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

SOPHOMORE LITERATURE COURSE OBJECTIVES. Sophomore literature courses are designed primarily to introduce non-English majors to the analysis of works of literature, to hone critical thinking and to develop communication skills.

1) To show students that literary studies are relevant to intellectual, social, and political culture, by engaging students with ideas that extend beyond the English classroom.
   Readings: Engaging literary texts readings that raise significant aesthetic, intellectual, and/or cultural issues. Includes at least one work focused on an ethical dilemma or decision.
   Assignments: Writings in which students relate relevant sections of readings to their experiences. One assignment must be a response paper in which students identify and analyze the ethical dimensions of a text.

2) To show students that a literary work is not simply the product of a single author, but rather is engaged in a complex dialogue with its culture, inflected by intellectual and historical context.
   Readings: Texts which provide historical and cultural context for each work. Context may include relevant material on historical events, intellectual movements, cultural values, and developments
in non-print media such as painting, photography, music, and/or film. These materials should be the subject of class or group discussion.

**Assignments:** Written and oral analyses that reflect on the relation between the values of the student’s culture and those of the culture being studied, and that demonstrate engagement with and understanding of other ways of life.

3) To develop students’ ability to read for style as well as content, by providing a vocabulary of and tools for critical analysis of literary language, form, and structure.

**Readings:** Literary works in at least three genres and by at least six authors. Topics courses that focus on a particular genre or author need not fulfill this requirement but must implement the goal in some other way.

**Assignment:** Students will demonstrate awareness of importance of literary language, form, and structure in written analyses, e.g., exams and/or writing assignments.

4) To develop students’ ability to analyze the language of literary texts orally

**Assignments:** A variety of graded and/or ungraded activities that complement class discussion of questions related to course objectives 1, 2, and 3. Activities might include, but are not limited to, debates, small-group discussions, panel presentations followed by discussion, individual presentations via Skype, podcast, or video.

5) To develop students’ ability to analyze the language of literary texts in writing

**Assignments:** At least two exams, each of which must include one essay question of 1-3 pages (250-750 words) related to course objectives 1, 2, and 3. Out-of-class writing totalling a minimum of 10 pages (2500 words) in at least two assignments that relate to course objectives 1, 2, and 3.

**SIGNATURE ASSIGNMENTS**

1) **Critical Thinking Skills:** to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.

The Signature Assignment for the Critical Thinking core objective will be a textual analysis of a literary work, numbering at least 3 full pages (750 words). This is not an opinion paper or a summary response: the assignment is critical analysis of a literary text. Prompts will not be provided, because a crucial element of this assignment is the student’s demonstrating the ability both to identify and to analyze a significant element of a work. The successful paper will include an arguable claim about the text, quotations from the text in support of the claim, thorough development of each element of the argument, and a final paragraph that presents the conclusion(s) the student reached in the course of the analysis. Papers should be free of spelling, grammar, and format errors.

2) **Communication Skills:** to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.

The Signature Assignment for the Communication core objective will be a project entitled “Making Connections.” The project has two parts: each student will produce a document connecting a work read or watched for the course with four other works, one each of literature, art, music, and film; each student will also be responsible for blog posts responding to classmates’ projects. The student will select one of the texts from the course and a theme, issue, or concept central to it.

1. The student will search for a work of literature, art, music, and film (one of each) which relates to the chosen work from the course and illustrates the theme, issue, or concept being analyzed. Again, the student may use only one item from the course materials. The other four choices must result from the student’s creative and critical thinking and researching. The project may include visuals, song lyrics, or other media.

2. The student will assemble the five items (course work + lit + art + music + film) in a Word document. The document will include the bibliographic information for each of the five items, in alphabetical order and in MLA format. For each bibliographic entry the student will write a two-paragraph
annotation. The first paragraph will briefly summarize/describe/explain the item; the second paragraph will explain how the item connects to the initial work and theme/issue/concept.

3. The student will then post the completed project to the Making Connections Discussion Forum. The format of the project may be, but is not limited to, a web page to accommodate images, a blog, or a PowerPoint—the important element here is to communicate the project to classmates.

4. In the Discussion Forum, the student will engage in a conversation about the course readings and films. The student must respond to the postings of two other classmates. Each post will number at least 100 words and will comment on two or more issues. Successful posts will avoid repeating what others have already said; exhibit original, creative, and critical thinking; and engage thoughtfully and respectfully with others’ ideas.

3) Personal Responsibility: to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.

The Signature Assignment for the Personal Responsibility core objective will be a paper of at least 3 full pages (750 words) which uses a literary text to examine ethical decision-making. This is not an opinion paper or a summary response: the student will select a text from the class that focuses on an ethical dilemma and will analyze the dilemma and its solution in the text. Elements of the assignment should include the following:

--identify the ethical dilemma and identify what must be decided
--identify and delineate possible solutions presented in the text
--investigate, compare, and evaluate arguments for each solution presented in the text
--assess the success of the solution chosen in the text

4) Social Responsibility: to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national and global communities.

The Signature Assignment for the Social Responsibility core objective is an individual or group presentation. The student/group will use a text from the class as a springboard for analyzing a social institution or ideology once accepted but now challenged. This is not an opinion or summary response presentation: along with the text itself, analysis will demonstrate knowledge of the history of the institution or ideology under discussion. In the course of the presentation or at the end of it, students will include self-reflection. This element of the assignment will stress connections: to outside experiences, to readings, and/or to class discussions. Possible topics may include, but are not limited to:

--slavery
--religious dogmas
--human mastery of nature
--gender roles
--natural hierarchy, e.g. of race or class
--torture
--empire
--national identity