

History of American Literature

This lecture course will provide you with an overview of the history of American literature from the orally transmitted myths and legends of Native American cultures to the latest developments. The individual lectures will describe the major concerns of a particular literary period, outline the cultural context of the most important writers and their works and talk about significant historical events. Our discussions will thus lead us from the Puritan world view to Enlightenment and the cultural scene of the Early Republic. We will then trace what has come to be seen as the beginning of American literature in the first half of the 19th century, the era of Romanticism, and then move on to the late 19th century, a literary period that was dominated by the conventions of realism. After crossing the threshold to the 20th century we will examine modernist and post-modernist forms of expression and will then end with a survey of contemporary literary developments in the US.