**ENGL 2110**

**American Literature II**

**Fall 2016**

**Essay #1—The Short Essay**

For the early part of this course, we have been exploring the nature of the American Narrative, from the Puritans to the Age of Enlightenment, as well as a bit of buggery. Thus far, the free-flowing conversations have been quite enlightening in terms of new perspectives on old works in the discussions you’ve brought to the table, or, rather, this shitty classroom.

Being mindful of all this, this is your literary mission:

**In a minimum 1,000-word essay, how would you define the American Narrative up to this point, halftime, if you will? And, how do you think it plays a role in our culture (high and low, pop or otherwise) and literature now?**

Some of you may be thinking this won’t be difficult. Some of you will be thinking you’ve hit the “oh shit” moment in the term, and we’re just getting warmed up. Regardless, I am leaving this pretty wide open to see what you come up w/ in your analysis.

Meaning, if you wish to apply some of the ideas of from the early works of the Puritans or Franklin to some more contemporary poems or stories, or you want to connect his work to elements of pop culture now, knock yourself out. You could connect to literature, music, sports, politics, social media, or any element that represents creation and expression.

There are any number of ways you may approach this. You could look at Ben Franklin’s connection to the self-help movement in general or in terms of all the books that clog the aisles in bookstore. You could look at Anne Bradstreet and how maybe her impact on literature is one that isn’t as glaring as Franklin’s, but it is there. You could even try to connect Franklin to *Twilight* or *The Notebook*. I would dig it, but I dare you to do it!

The one stipulation I have w/ this assignment is that you center your essay on your chosen author(s) /works or the particular era (the Puritans or the Age of Reason), using words or lines or ideas from those works (or others from the Nortons not assigned) and bring in other examples, not the other way around. In other words, don’t just mention, say, Ben Franklin and use him as a springboard to talk mainly about social media, for example.

The basic requirements for your essays are as follows:

* I ask that you use the MLA format for headings and page numbers like so:

Name

ENGL 2110-006

Professor Cathy Whaley

Day Month Year

* Use 12-point font, preferably Ariel, to be consistent.
* Create a good title for your essay. Remember, a title is a clue for what the reader will encounter
* When referencing any works in the Nortons, just include the page numbers as in-text citations, you don’t need a Works Cited page for this.
* However, and this is not a requirement for this essay, if you choose to reference a work not in your Norton, do add in-text citations as well as a Works Cited page. And rule of thumb for this: if it ain’t common knowledge, cite it!
* Refer to authors by last name after first mention by full name.
* And double space your essays, damn it!

If you have any questions at all along the way, email or Facebook me in a private message, and I’ll help you in any way possible. Or come see me in Starbucks, for you know where to find me. You can send ideas or drafts for me to look over as well. So have fun and knock yourself out w/ this! You’ve had a lot of cool ideas in class, so use this as an opportunity to perhaps flesh them out a bit more.