

**HISTORY 4351F**  
**American Captivity Narratives**  
**Fall Term 2023**

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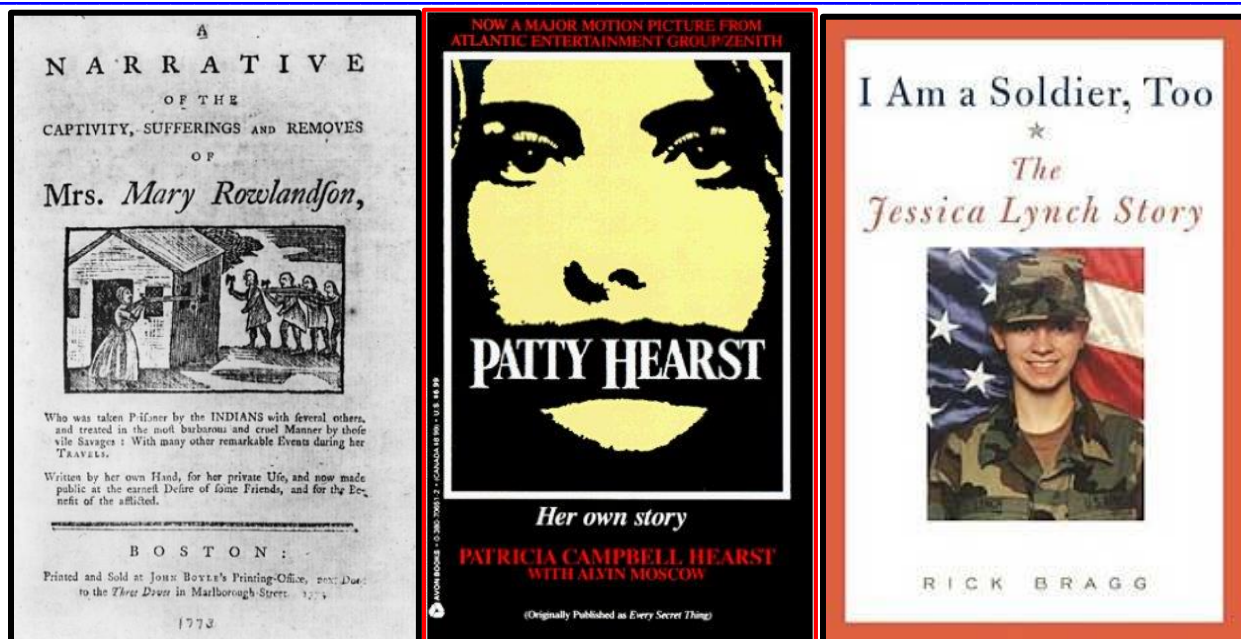


Illustration: The book covers of three famous American captivity narratives. (1) *A Narrative of the Captivity, Sufferings and Removes of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*. (2) *Patty Hearst: Her Own Story*. (3) *I Am a Soldier, Too: The Jessica Lynch Story*.

**This is a draft syllabus. Please see your course OWL site for the final syllabus.**

### Course Description

An examination of American captivity narratives as an historiographical genre. Examples to be studied include colonial-era captivity accounts involving indigenous peoples and white settlers, African American slave narratives, POW memoirs, prison writings, and modern captivity stories. What do these narratives reveal about ethnic, racial, and gender boundaries in America?

## **Prerequisite(s)**

2.0 courses in History at the 2200 level or above.

Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

## **Course Syllabus**

### ***Course Content and Objectives:***

Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when American colonists who had survived abduction by Native American tribes published accounts of their experiences as captives, the “captivity narrative” has been an immensely popular, and significant, form of literature in American culture. In this course, we will examine the genre of captivity narratives, from Mary Rowlandson’s famous 1682 account of being held captive by the Narragansett tribe, to African American slave narratives, POW accounts from various American wars, and prison writings by American prison inmates, including Henry David Thoreau, Jack London, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Huey Newton. We will compare early American captivity accounts to more modern versions of captivity narratives, such as the story of the capture of Private Jessica Lynch during the Iraq War in 2003, heiress Patty Hearst’s account of her kidnapping by a domestic terrorist group in California in 1974, and Travis Walton’s book *Fire in the Sky*, one of the most famous accounts of alleged abduction by a UFO. We will seek to answer the following questions: Why are captivity narratives such a popular and recurring form of American literature? How do captivity narratives stand up as historical documentation? What is their value as primary source material, and how have they been interpreted by historians? What did Americans learn from these widely read depictions of what often amounted to forced cross-cultural encounters? How were the captives’ stories used to meet societal, cultural, and political needs at different times in U.S. history? What do they teach us about ethnic, racial, and gender boundaries in America?

### ***Learning Outcomes:***

#### ***Depth and Breadth of Knowledge***

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will:

- Be familiar with the origins of the colonial era captivity narrative in American history;
- Be familiar with several such narratives;
- Be able to situate these narratives within the broader context of American history and historiography;
- Be able to identify recurring instances of the captivity narrative format in other periods of American history, and in a variety of forms;
- Be able to explain the significance, durability, and uses of captivity narratives in American culture.

#### ***Research and Scholarship***

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have demonstrated the ability to:

- Locate and use primary and secondary sources to interpret and analyze American captivity narratives;
- Assess differences between primary accounts written in the first person and those written in the third person in terms of their usefulness as historical sources;
- Develop a research question and answer it in a written assignment, integrating both primary and secondary sources;
- Understand and adhere to scholarly conventions in research, writing, documentation, and sharing of research.

### ***Professional Capacity and Communication Skills***

Through the completion of this course, students will:

- Develop improved reading and essay writing skills;
- Practice and improve communication skills through weekly discussions as well as oral presentations.

### **Course Materials**

#### ***Required texts:***

- Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, ed., *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives* (NY: Penguin Books, 1998) (paperback; available for purchase in the Book Store at Western.)
- William Graebner, *Patty's Got a Gun: Patricia Hearst in 1970s America* (Chicago and London: University Press of Chicago, 2008) (paperback edition 2015; available for purchase in the Book Store at Western. Also available as a PDF, available for purchase through the University of Chicago Press website.)
- Additional weekly readings, which will be made available online.

### **Methods of Evaluation**

#### ***Assignments and marks distribution:***

- **2 short papers (4-5 pp. each)** (The first short paper will be due on Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup>. The second will be based on one of the class readings, and the due date will depend on which reading the student chooses.) **20%**
- **Leading class discussion** (in conjunction with the reading chosen for the second short paper) **20%**
- **Essay proposal (1-2 pages)** (due Oct. 17<sup>th</sup>) **5%**
- **Research essay (10-12 pages)** (due Nov. 28<sup>th</sup>-Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>) **35%**
- **Weekly participation** **20%**

#### ***Written assignments:***

Written assignments must be submitted at the specified time on the due date. Assignments are to be submitted in Word format to the submission link on the OWL course website. (By using the submission link on the course website, your paper will automatically be submitted to Turnitin.com.)

Further instructions regarding the above-listed assignments will be provided in class.

Please note that HIS 4351F is an essay course. According to Western's Academic Handbook, an essay course "...must be so structured that the student is required to demonstrate competence in essay writing to pass the course." In this course, that means that, in addition to receiving an overall passing grade in the course, students must complete and submit both short papers and the essay in order to pass the course, regardless of grades received for other assignments.

### ***Absences and late assignments:***

In the event you must miss a class, due to illness or other reason, please notify the instructor as soon as possible. Absence from class (without documentation from Academic Counselling) will result in a grade of 0 for participation for that day. Partial participation marks can be made up by completing an additional assignment; please consult the instructor for this option.

Late assignments: a late penalty of 2% per day (including Saturdays and Sundays) will be incurred for all written work submitted after the due date and time. Papers submitted on the due date but after the due time (*i.e.*, 2:30 p.m.) will be considered late and will be penalized 2%. Keep a copy of each of your written assignments until you receive the grade for it.

A late penalty will not be waived unless the student has provided to the instructor documentation from Academic Counseling. In that case, the student must contact the professor as soon as possible (*i.e.*, within 48 hours of the missed deadline) to discuss an alternate assignment and/or due date.

Late assignments will **not** be accepted more than 10 days after the due date of the assignment.

### ***Expectations:***

- Regular attendance.
- Completion of all assigned readings and active, informed participation in class discussion, based on those readings.
- Courtesy and respect towards all other members of the class.
- Be present: turn off cell phones and other electronic devices, and engage with the class. Laptops are allowed if they are used to take notes or to refer to online course readings. Use of laptops for other purposes in class may negatively affect your participation mark.
- Academic integrity.

### **Additional Statements**

#### ***Communications policies:***

The best way to contact me is by e-mail. (Please put the course number or course title in the subject line of your e-mail.) I may not be able to answer your e-mail immediately, but I will do my best to respond within 48 hours. You are also welcome to speak with me in person before or after class or during breaks, or to drop by my office to see me during my office hours. You can also e-mail me to request a meeting over Zoom. I look forward to chatting with you, and getting to know each of you on an individual basis—so don't hesitate to drop by!

***Use of electronic devices:***

Students may use laptops during class to access course readings and to take notes, but not for any other purposes. The use of other electronic devices (*e.g.*, cell phones) is not permitted during class.

***Use of generative AI tools:***

All work submitted in this course must be your own. You may not make use of generative AI tools like ChatGPT for any assignments in this course.

***Additional information:***

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: [https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/policies.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html) for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.