



# **IN THE SPOTLIGHT: A SURVEY OF US-AMERICAN LITERARY HISTORY**

**Session 01: How to Do Literary Studies**

# DEFINITION(S) OF LITERATURE

- vary from entertainment to conveying knowledge to discussing cultural values
- usually refers to a set of texts which **tell stories** or **express thoughts** through either **narrative**, **performative** or **lyrical** reflection
- Important: the way the literary text is written – the **literary technique** – is as much part of the product as the content!

## Literary Products:

- **variety** can be included in the definition of literature
- may also be included: movies or television series
- BUT: term often refers to **written texts** like novels or poems

# LITERARY STUDIES

- text: **product made of language**, which responds to some part of the world
- going **beyond the subjectivity** of one reader to uncover new insights about the meanings of texts
- use of **collective rules and assumptions**, as well as a **shared vocabulary**, to analyze and interpret texts:
  - In which way is a text written?
  - Why was the text written in that way?
  - What role could this play in communicating the message of said text?

# (1) GENRE

- categorization of texts according to **common patterns** and **conventions**
- allows us to identify typical and atypical characteristics
- can provide assistance in predicting common plot lines and characters
- most significant genres: **drama** – **poetry** – **prose**

*Sorry,  
the rest of the presentation is only available  
to the participants of the course...*