

American Studies 335
New England
M, TH 3:30 - 4:50
GHH 109
Roger Williams University
Spring Semester 2010

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Week of September 15

Happy Presidents Day

Roger Williams University likes to mess with the calendar more than most places I know. So Monday happens on Wednesday this week. But this particular Wednesday complicates this this procedure for some of us even more than usual. It is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. I have an obligation to sing a service at 5:30 in Providence, and as I type this I'm not certain what time I'm called for rehearsal. I think the safest thing for me to do is to cancel class on Wednesday, and if necessary I can hold a makeup class later in the semester. You can guarantee that *won't* be necessary by reading like little demons, and by bringing up questions about what you need explained or clarified. There is a double dose of reading here...but you've a week to complete it.

For **Thursday, February 18**

Read, in *Wood*, Part II, Chapters 1-9, pp. 75-97,

Continue Reading, from ***Mourt's Relation***, ,

Parts	II - A Journey to Packanokick. . .	159 - 172
	III - A Visit Made by Ten of our Men. . .	173 - 178
	IV - A Journey to the Kingdom of Namaschet. . .	179 - 184
	V - A Relation of our Voyage to the Massachusetts	185 - 191
	VI - A Letter Sent from New England. . .	192 - 203

Before you panic looking at the number of pages, remember you're responsible for *only* the sections which comprised part of the original book, and *not* the copious footnotes and genealogies. Some of these pages have no more than one or two lines of text on them. In the original, they numbered pages 40 - 85.

Following his discussion of flora and fauna, Wood turns his attention to the indigenous Native American Population. Much of the material in *Mourt's Relation* also concerns contact with Native Americans.

- I want you to be observant of attitudes and prejudices which the narratives contain.
- What similarities and what differences are there between our sources?
- Are there ways to explain the differences?
- You'll find a mixed bag, here, with positive and negative observations. Take note

(and notes, if that's helpful) of each.

Note: One of our difficulties with this section is going to be keeping our prejudices separate from the prejudices of our sources. We *expect* the early settlers to have negative views of the Native Americans, and those expectations color what we see and how it sticks in our brain. In some cases it is a matter of slight changes in word meanings. We see *savage* and our image includes concepts like brutal and animalistic. Not so for Englishmen of the 17th century. Here's an example of what I mean. The authors of *Mourt's Relation* refer to the natives as Savages, but go on to describe them thus: "They are a people without any Religion, or knowledge of any God, yet very trusty, quick of apprehension (by which they mean quick to understand), ripe-witted, just..." Furthermore, at a time when people took the idea of royalty very seriously, these Pilgrims constantly refer to the Native American leaders using the same language as they would to refer to King James: Greatest King, etc. So while we shouldn't expect the Pilgrims or Puritans to be equalitarians or humanitarians in the modern sense, we shouldn't be too quick to dismiss them as rampant racists, either.