

## AMERICAN AUTHORS TO 1875

Instructor: Phil Grech

Course: AML 2010-1

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Days: Tue/Thur

Office: WMS 331

Time: 3:45-5PM

Office Hours: Mon/Wed 3-5PM, and by appt.

Room: BEL 0003

“What then is the American, this new man?...He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds...Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world...Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labour; his labour is founded on the basis of nature, self-interest; can it want a stronger allurements?...The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions...This is an American.” —J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer*, Letter III

“Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails,  
and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress,  
rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe.”  
—Frederick Douglass’ speech in 1886 on the 24th anniversary of Emancipation, Washington, D.C.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will mainly examine American literature from the nineteenth century, a period that many consider the most influential in terms of mythmaking and the formation of American identity, culture, and values. Yet, in order to understand nineteenth-century American identity, we will look at the literature produced by the preceding two hundred years of colonial history. We will engage with authors both within and on the margins of the canonical tradition of American literature, coming to terms with the faultiness of a singular American narrative and instead embrace a chorus of voices. We will develop critical perspectives on privilege and sovereignty, the implications of racialist strategy, and the voices and cultures who affected—and who were affected by—the lives of diverse communities. As we come across contradictions and troubling depictions of certain communities we will also work to avoid the “facile normalization of the present” (David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*). In other words, we will refuse to essentialize differences between “us” and the historical “them” of our enquiry, and look to these texts for our “now.” To understand the importance and value of nineteenth-century literature today, we will focus on the significance and meaning of these text’s in our daily class discussions. Here are some important things to keep in mind as we continue through our reading:

- Learn the author and date for each text.
- Ask yourself why each text is relevant to the class and time period.
- Understand how each author and text relates to and corresponds with other authors and ideas of the period.
- Understand how these authors, texts, and ideas are reflected in our own culture(s) and identities.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students who participate actively and complete all assignments will:

- Learn to recognize key formal and thematic elements in American literature to 1875.

- Gain familiarity with issues of literary style, theory, and history.
- Think through multiple categories of identity.
- Gain experience using various approaches to analyzing texts.
- Improve ability to develop independent thought.
- Improve ability to think and write critically and analytically with a high level of clarity.

#### SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY

Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

#### REQUIRED TEXTS

*The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition

#### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

*Reading:* Assignments should be read and/or written prior to class meetings on the date assigned. The amount of reading for this course is considerable. We will meet only twice a week with the expectation that students will have read substantial amounts of the works between sessions. Note: If a Bb reading is scheduled bring a hard copy or electronic copy to class.

*Student Participation:* Learning about literature requires you to be actively engaged participants. While the size of the class makes a classic seminar format difficult to achieve, I do expect you all to be engaged in discussions and readings and to attend class regularly. All students should be ambitious participants in their own learning process, as well as contributors to a lively intellectual community. If you are called on, and you are unprepared to respond, points will be deducted from your participation grade.

*Attendance and Lateness:* Attendance is required. Missing the equivalent of more than two weeks of class (more than four absences), excluding excused absences, can be cause for failure of the course. Being late to class three times equals one absence. If you arrive more than fifteen minutes late to class, you will be counted as absent. Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

All students are expected to abide by this class attendance policy. Students must also provide, when possible, advance notice of absences as well as relevant documentation regarding absences to the instructor as soon as possible following the illness or event that led to an absence. Regardless of whether an absence is excused or unexcused, the student is responsible for making up all work that is missed.

University-wide policy also states that students who do not attend the first class meeting of a course for which they are registered should be dropped from the course by the academic department that offers the course. In order to enforce this policy, instructors are required to take attendance at the first class meeting and report absences to the appropriate person in their department or school/college.

*Presentation:* Each student will be responsible for giving a 15-minute group presentation to the class. The purpose of presentations will be to highlight the relationship between the literature we are reading and the cultural history surrounding the texts.

*Discussion Questions:* Each student will submit discussion questions (DQs) based on individual insights, reactions to, and close readings of texts. One (1) question from each student is due by 10pm the day before

discussion of the assigned texts. It should be submitted to the instructor's email address: [pgrech@fsu.edu](mailto:pgrech@fsu.edu). By semester's end, you must submit 15 discussion questions for full credit. Your questions help the instructor gauge responses to the texts and ensure the readings are being critically and thoughtfully close read. Ultimately, student questions shape in-class discussions. Late Discussion Question submissions will not be counted.

*Annotated Bibliography & Paper Proposal:* Annotate 7-10 articles, books, or book chapters that coalesce around the topic for your final paper. Use proper MLA form for citations.

Annotations should not be a point-by-point summary of the source, but a restatement of the overall argument as it relates to your topic. Annotations should include specific textual references and explain key terms and concepts. Additionally, they should provide a sense of the text's significance to the field and relation to other texts, especially other texts on your list.

I am not a page counter, but 1/2-1 page single spaced per annotation is typical. The better rule, however, is that annotations should be long enough to accomplish the goals outlined above in a way that will be useful for your final project. Too long, and the annotation doesn't help you gain critical focus or synthesis. Too short, and the process of annotation does little to advance your thinking.

Preface annotations with an overview of your paper topic, including an explanation of what is at stake in the topic and why the angle you take is important to literary studies. Feel free to run paper ideas past me any time.

*Research Essay:* Students will write one 8-10 page researched, critical essay for this course. Essays should engage critical conversations in the field (you can find these through journal articles and texts) and should be considerate of social and historical contexts that inform the primary texts discussed. Students must consult with at least 5 outside sources, no websites allowed. All essays should demonstrate a scholarly approach to literary interpretation as well as conceptual agility. All essays should be typed and properly documented according to MLA guidelines. Late papers will be downgraded 1 letter grade per day. Papers more than 3 days late will not be accepted. Under no circumstances will I accept rewrites. However, I am willing to respond to specific questions about drafts up to one week before this paper is due.

Note: While online sources may be helpful both in locating materials and even in illuminating topics, you should not rely on websites for papers (only online databases through the library are acceptable). Online materials are frequently inadequate, inappropriate sources for scholarly research. Obviously, students are encouraged to use scholarly online subscription databases, such as JSTOR, Project Muse, etc available through the library. Otherwise, be wary of online sources, even those promoting themselves as educational resources. Remember, *you* can put up a website. **ALL PRESENTATIONS THAT FAIL TO USE SCHOLARLY SOURCES WILL RECEIVE A FAILING GRADE.**

#### GRADING POLICY

Participation: 15%

Discussion Questions: 15%

Presentations: 20%

Annotated Bibliography & Paper Proposal: 20%

Final Paper: 30%

## COURSE PROTOCOLS (to be affirmed and/or amended)

Whatever your reasons for choosing this course, your decision reveals your commitment to the subject matter as well as your interest in helping to create a productive learning environment. The following list comprises your responsibilities for maintaining productive and respectful classroom dynamics:

- Come to class having fully read the text(s) assigned along with questions and comments provoked by your reading.
- Among other reasons, you have chosen this course in order to learn something about its proposed topic. To do so, you must be exposed to in-class insights and assigned readings with which you may disagree or make you uncomfortable. No matter your political, social, and/or religious loyalties, engage these insights and readings with intelligent thoughtfulness. Avoid responses based solely on what you believe; instead, logically evaluate the strength of an argument based on its rhetorical and literary strategies.
- Be careful how you phrase your perceptions of the world, the readings, and/or other members of the community. Name-calling, accusations, verbal attacks and/or other negative exchanges are both counterproductive and unacceptable to the learning environment we are committed to creating.
- Recognize that not all social groups or identity categories are visible. Sexual orientation, nationality, disability, ethnicity, HIV status, mental health status, economic and/or social class, as well as one's conservatism, liberalism, fascism, radicalism, and/or religion are some of the categories that may be represented in the classroom but may not be visible to the eye. Please don't make assumptions based on what you think you see.
- Be mindful that an individual from a particular group does not represent that entire group. Refrain from in/directly asking any individual (including yourself) to do so.

## CIVILITY CLAUSE

This class will tolerate neither disruptive language nor disruptive behavior. Disruptive language includes, but is not limited to, violent and/or belligerent and/or insulting remarks, including sexist, racist, homophobic or anti-ethnic slurs, bigotry, and disparaging commentary, either spoken or written (offensive slang is included in this category).

While each of you have a right to your own opinions, inflammatory language founded in ignorance or hate is unacceptable and will be dealt with immediately. Disruptive behavior includes the use of cell phones, pagers or any other form of electronic communication during the class session (email, web-browsing). Disruptive behavior also includes whispering or talking when another member of the class is speaking or engaged in relevant conversation (remember that I am a member of this class as well). This classroom functions on the premise of respect, and you will be asked to leave the classroom if you violate any part of this statement on civility. Remember that you will send me an email that indicates you have read and understand this policy.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

If you submit work that has been copied without attribution from some published or unpublished source (including the Internet), or that has been prepared by someone other than you, or that in any way misrepresents someone else's work as your own, you will face severe discipline by the university. The minimum penalty for plagiarism is a failing grade for the course; the maximum is expulsion from the university.

You are responsible for citing sources fully and correctly according to MLA style guidelines.

Students are expected to learn and uphold the Academic Honor Code published in The Florida State University Bulletin and in the Student Handbook. <http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy>. The academic honor system of The Florida State University is based on the premise that each student has the responsibility (1) to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity in the student's own work, (2) to refuse to tolerate violations of academic integrity in the university community, and (3) to foster a high sense of integrity and social responsibility on the part of the university community.

## DISABILITY SERVICES

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodation to a student until appropriate verification from the Student Disability Resource Center has been provided. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center - 874 Traditions Way - 108 Student Services Building  
 Florida State University - Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167  
 (850) 644-9566 (voice) - (850) 644-8504 (TDD) - [sdrc@admin.fsu.edu](mailto:sdrc@admin.fsu.edu) - <http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

## SUPPORT

### Reading Writing Center (RWC)

The Reading/Writing Center, located in Williams 222-C, is devoted to individualized instruction in reading and writing. Part of the English Department, the RWC serves Florida State University students at all levels and from all majors. Its clients include a cross-section of the campus: first-year students writing for composition class, upper-level students writing term papers, seniors composing letters of applications for jobs and graduate schools, graduate students working on theses and dissertations, multilingual students mastering English, and a variety of others. The RWC serves mostly walk-in tutoring appointments; however, it also offers three different courses for credit that specifically target reading, undergraduate-level writing, and graduate-level writing. The tutors in the RWC, all graduate students in English with training and experience in teaching composition, use a process-centered approach to help students at any stage of writing: from generating ideas, to drafting, organizing, and revising. While the RWC does not provide editing or proofreading services, its tutors can help writers build their own editing and proofreading strategies. Our approach to tutoring is to help students grow as writers, readers, and critical thinkers by developing strategies for writing in a variety of situations. During the fall and spring semesters, the RWC is open Monday through Thursday from 10 - 6 and Friday from 10 -2. Hours of operation vary in summer. Visit the RWC website or call 644-6495 for information.

### Digital Studio

The Digital Studio provides support to students working individually or in groups on a variety of digital projects, such as designing a website, developing an electronic portfolio for a class, creating a blog, selecting images for a visual essay, adding voiceover to a presentation, or writing a script for a podcast. Tutors who staff the Digital Studio can help students brainstorm essay ideas, provide feedback on the content and design of a digital project, or facilitate collaboration for group projects and presentations. The Digital Studio currently has two locations: Williams 222-B and Johnston Ground. Students can use the Digital Studio to work on their own to complete class assignments or to improve overall capabilities in digital communication without a tutoring appointment if a workstation is available. However, tutor availability and workspace are

limited so appointments are recommended. For hours and to make an appointment, visit the studio's website: <http://wr.english.fsu.edu/Digital-Studio/How-to-Make-an-Appointment>.

#### MLA REMINDERS

Below are basic and common MLA requirements.

- All papers must be entirely and thoroughly double-spaced and in Times New Roman font, size twelve (12).
- Paper should be in "No Spacing" format (Select 'Home' in Word – On right side of header, select "No Spacing" (Word defaults this to "Normal"). Make sure this setting is throughout your entire document.
- Last name and page number in upper right-hand corner (e.g. Grech 1).
- In upper left-hand corner, put: Name, instructor name, class, date. For example,

Your name

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- One inch margins on all sides.
- Leave only one space after periods or other punctuation marks.
- Indent the first line of paragraphs one half-inch from the left margin.
- Paper titles are centered and creative!

#### RECOMMENDATION ON BACKING UP

*I will not allow anyone to turn assignments in late due to computer hardware failure.* Your work should always be backed up and saved. I strongly suggest and recommend everyone back up their work regularly throughout the semester, for all of your classes, including this one.

## DAILY SCHEDULE

## WEEK 1

*Introductions, and why does the (early/ nineteenth-century) American novel matter?*

30 August: Syllabus overview

Introductions

1 September: Cathy Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, (PDF on Blackboard), chapters 2-3 (pp. 73-120)

## WEEK 2

*Beginnings to 1700—Native American Literature, Literature of Exploration, Literature of Witness*

6 September: “The Iroquois Creation Story,” pp. 23-5

“Hajineí” (The Navajo Creation Story), pp.26-34

C. Columbus: “Letter to Luis de Santangel,” Letter to Ferdinand and Isabella,” pp. 35-8

8 September: Bartolomé de las Casas: *The Devastation of the Indies*, pp. 39-42

Alvar Nunez de Vaca: *The Relation*, pp. 44-51

## WEEK 3

*New England Puritans*

13 September: Mary Rowlandson: “*A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration...*,” pp. 257-88

15 September: “A Model of Christian Charity,” John Winthrop, pp. 166-77

Cotton Mather: (From) *Magnalia Christi Americana* (Life of William Bradford), pp. 333-39;

“A Notable Exploit,” pp. 354-6

## WEEK 4

*American Literature 1700-1820—Federalism, Deism, and the Enlightenment Spirit*

20 September: Jonathon Edwards, “Sinners in the Hand of Angry God,” pp. 430-41

Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, pp. 641-7

22 September: Thomas Jefferson: *Notes on the State of Virginia*, pp. 668-77

Benjamin Franklin “The Way to Wealth,” pp. 457-63

## WEEK 5

*Slavery, Identity, and Personal Ethics*

27 September: Crèvecoeur: *Letters from an American Farmer* (Letters III, IX, XII), pp.605-18, 620-5

29 September: Sojourner Truth: “Ar’nt I a Woman?”

<http://www.blackpast.org/1851-sojourner-truth-arnt-i-woman>

Phyllis Wheatley: “On Being Brought from Africa to America,” p. 764.; “To His Excellency General Washington,” pp. 772-3; Letter to Rev. Samson Occom,” p.774

WEEK 6

(continuing from Wheatley) *Women in Early American Literature* (...and the epistolary novel)

4 October: Hannah Webster Foster: *The Coquette*, pp. 818-76 (Letters I-XLVI)

6 October: Hannah Webster Foster: *The Coquette*, pp. 876z-916 (Letters XLVII-LXXIV)

WEEK 7

*Women in Early American Literature / Literature of Slavery*

11 October: Harriet Jacobs: Selections from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, pp. 921-942

13 October: Fanny Fern: Selections from *Ruth Hall*, pp. 916-920

Cathy Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, (PDF on Blackboard), chapters 4 (pp. 121-150)

WEEK 8

*Presentation Week*

18 October: Presentations

20 October: Presentations

WEEK 9

*Literature of Slavery*

25 October: Frederick Douglass: *Narrative of the Life*, pp.1174-1208 (preface – chapter IX)

27 October: Frederick Douglass: *Narrative of the Life*, pp.1208-39 (chapter X – XI, appendix)

WEEK 10

*Transcendentalism*

1 November: Ralph Waldo Emerson: *Self-Reliance*, pp. 269-86

3 November: Henry David Thoreau: *Resistance to Civil Government*, pp. 964-79

Due: *Annotated Bibliography & Paper Proposal*

WEEK 11

*American Renaissance: Whitman and Hawthorne*

8 November: Walt Whitman: “Song of Myself” (from *Leaves of Grass*), pp. 1330-74

10 November: Nathaniel Hawthorne: “Young Goodman Brown,” pp. 386-95;

“The Minister’s Black Veil,” pp. 409-18

## WEEK 12

*American Renaissance: Poe*

15 November: Edgar Allen Poe: *The Fall of the House of Usber*, pp. 654-667;

“The Cask of Amontillado,” pp. 714-9

17 November: Edgar Allen Poe: “The Man of the Crowd,” pp. 681-687;

“The Purloined Letter,” pp. 701-14; “The Masque of the Red Death,” pp. 687-691

## WEEK 13

*American Renaissance: Melville*

22 November: Herman Melville: “Billy Budd, Sailor,” pp. 1587-1643; “Benito Cereno,” pp. 1526-1582

24 November: Thanksgiving—no class

## WEEK 14

*American Renaissance: Melville*

29 November: Herman Melville: “Bartleby, the Scrivener,” pp. 1483-1509

Course evaluations

1 December: Discuss final paper

## WEEK 15

*The End*

6 December: Discuss final paper

8 December: Final Paper Due

21 December: Grades available online