

ENGL 2201 -- American Literature to 1880

Section | Semester
Meeting Time | Meeting Room

Class Details

Instructor: Kari Daly

Email:

Office:

Office Hours:

Course Description: This course provides a glimpse into the formation of American literature to 1880. As a young nation determined to prove its cultural worth, the United States struggled in the nineteenth century to establish a literary tradition. Transcendental writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Walt Whitman, attempted to answer this call by establishing what they felt was a uniquely American tradition of writing. The work of these writers would be described as part of the “American Renaissance” by F.O. Matthiessen in his 1941 work, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Whitman*. According to Matthiessen, the writers of this period strove to embody the “possibilities of democracy.” Yet alongside this tradition there existed a body of literature devoted to exposing the evils of slavery, a deeply undemocratic system that ruined the lives of millions. Among the writers who forced the American public to confront this evil are Harriet Beecher Stowe and Frederick Douglass. Our course aims to reconcile the injustices of slavery with the work of the writers on which our literary tradition is founded. How can we read about the self-reliance promoted by Emerson alongside the tragic facts of Douglass’s autobiography? How can we continue to revere the work by white, middle-class men who, in some cases, blatantly ignored the men and women suffering around them? There is no easy answer.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, I hope you will:

- Be able to recognize major works of nineteenth-century American Literature
- Develop a basic knowledge of nineteenth-century historical contexts so as to be able to discuss American Literature
- Critique the canon of nineteenth-century literature and make suggestions for improvements to future American Literature syllabi
- Utilize close reading and scholarly research so as to interpret a chosen piece of American Literature in a research paper

Required Texts

The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Vol B (1820-1865) 978-0393264470

Uncle Tom's Cabin (Broadview, 978-1551118062)

The House of the Seven Gables (Penguin Classics, 978-0140390056)

Other readings as assigned on HuskyCT

Grading

Short 4-5 page close reading essay, annotated bibliography, and final research project: 50%

Reading responses and other short writing assignments: 15%

Midterm: 15%

Class participation, presentations, and quizzes: 20%

Because of the collaborative nature of this course, turning in assignments on time is essential. Please be aware that my beginning policy is that late papers will result in *half* a letter grade being subtracted from your final grade for the assignment. This includes rough drafts as well as final drafts, which means that submitting both a rough draft and a final draft late for an assignment will result in the loss of a full letter grade. I am, however, open to renegotiating this policy as the class sees fit; we will revisit it as major assignments draw near.

Course Schedule (subject to change)

Week	Day	Date	Due
1	Tuesday	08/27/19	Introductions
	Thursday	08/29/19	Crèvecoeur, "What is an American?" (HuskyCT); Phyllis Wheatley poems (HuskyCT)
2	Tuesday	09/03/19	Introduction: "An American Renaissance?" (3-21); Lydia Howard Huntley Sigourney (106-14); William Cullen Bryant, "Thanatopsis" (116-19)
	Thursday	09/05/19	Emerson, Introduction (178-81); Emerson, "Self-Reliance" (236-53);
3	Tuesday	09/10/19	Mini close-reading assignment due by class time (printed); Emerson, "The American Scholar" (210-23)
	Thursday	09/12/19	Melville, Introduction (1410-13) and "Bartleby the Scrivener" (1469-95)
4	Tuesday	09/17/19	Thoreau, Introduction (950-52) and excerpt from <i>Walden</i> (969-1012)
	Thursday	09/19/19	Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government" (950-68)
5	Tuesday	09/24/19	Individual conferences; rough drafts of Close Reading paper due by conference time
	Thursday	09/26/19	Individual conferences; rough drafts of Close Reading paper due by conference time
6	Tuesday	10/01/19	Short Close Reading paper due by 11:59:59pm ; Whitman, Introduction and "Preface to <i>Leaves of Grass</i> " (1294-1311); "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," and "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life" (1364-75)
	Thursday	10/03/19	Whitman, "Song of Myself" (1312-56)
7	Tuesday	10/08/19	Douglass, Introduction (1159-63) and "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" (1236-39)
	Thursday	10/10/19	Midterm
8	Tuesday	10/15/19	Douglass, <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass</i> (1197-1228)
	Thursday	10/17/19	Douglass, <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass</i> (1163-82)

9	Tuesday	10/22/19	Douglass, <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass</i> (1182-97)
	Thursday	10/24/19	Stowe, Introduction (793-794), <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>

Week	Day	Date	Due
10	Tuesday	10/29/19	Stowe, <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>
	Thursday	10/31/19	Stowe, <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> ; Final project proposal due
11	Tuesday	11/05/19	Stowe, <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>
	Thursday	11/07/19	Hawthorne, <i>The House of the Seven Gables</i>
12	Tuesday	11/12/19	Hawthorne, <i>The House of the Seven Gables</i>
	Thursday	11/14/19	Hawthorne, <i>The House of the Seven Gables</i>
13	Tuesday	11/19/19	Hawthorne, <i>The House of the Seven Gables</i> ; Annotated Bibliography due
	Thursday	11/21/19	Harriet Jacobs, excerpts from <i>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</i> (909-930)
14	Tuesday	11/26/19	Thanksgiving Break
	Thursday	11/27/19	
15	Tuesday	12/03/19	Workshops (rough drafts for research projects due by workshop time)
	Thursday	12/05/19	Project presentations

Final projects due: TBD

Details for Class Assignments

Reading Responses

You will be expected to write at least four journal entries about our readings (your choice). These should be at least 300 words and must be submitted prior to class discussion of the text.

Close Reading Essay

A short 4-5 page close reading of a passage of your choosing from a text we have read as a class. I will provide more details and an example.

Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography of your research topic consisting of at least 10 pieces of research, 8 of which should come from peer-reviewed sources.

Final Research Project

After conducting your research you will create a final multimodal project based on your chosen topic. I will provide details as we get closer, but you are encouraged to explore modalities such as videos, podcasts, and websites.