



Asher Durand, 'Dover Plains, Dutchess County, New York,' 1848; courtesy Smithsonian Museum of American Art

**English 444**

## **American Romanticism**

**Joe Lockard**

Line no. 22736  
MW 2-3:15pm Cowden 218

### **Office Hours and Contact Information**

W 9-12, or by appointment -- 209 LL – [Joe.Lockard@asu.edu](mailto:Joe.Lockard@asu.edu) -- 727-6096 [do not leave voicemail]

### **Course Description**

The generation prior to the Civil War constitutes a defining period in American literature. How could US literature distinguish its own voice and narrative culture? This course examines how relationships with nature, race and slavery, the roles of women, religious culture, political conscience, and other social features of US society manifested themselves within the movement called 'American Romanticism.' The readings cover both familiar texts and seek to expand understandings of the term 'American Romanticism.'

## Course Texts

James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* (Penguin)  
Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*, 1845 edition (Dover)  
Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essential Writings* (Modern Library)  
Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Norton)  
Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (Penguin)  
Herman Melville, *Billy Budd and Other Stories* (Penguin)  
Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin: or, Life among the Lowly* (Penguin)  
Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings* (Modern Classics)  
Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Dover)

## Course Requirements

- Two 6-7 page papers [25 percent each, 50 percent total]
- Final examination [40 percent]
- Discussion [10 percent]

## Attendance

Attendance is required throughout the course. Two absences without prior excuse will result in the lowering of a student's final course grade by one letter. Four absences will result in failure. Attendance sign-in will be taken at all classes.

## Reading

A complete knowledge of the day's assigned reading is required. This course is predicated on give-and-take discussion, and without a reading knowledge of the text it is difficult or impossible to participate meaningfully in class discussions. This is more than a standard syllabus clause; it is a matter of respect towards the class discussion.

## Coffee Group

The Transcendentalist movement relied heavily on shared readings and group conversations – 'education parties' William Henry Channing called them -- to educate: so shall we. There will be an extra-credit (one-half grade) student-organized coffee group to discuss class readings and assignments.

## Office Hours

I strongly encourage you to visit office hours (W 9-12), whether to discuss class-related issues or just to chat. For Paper 1, I will require you to schedule a visit with draft in hand. Sign-up sheets will be passed around for special office hours days devoted to consultation on draft papers.

If I must cancel an office appointment, I will try to notify you by e-mail. To cancel a scheduled appointment, send me an e-mail note. It is poor form to skip an appointment without prior notice.

Please feel encouraged to visit without an appointment during these hours, to discuss coursework or just to chat.

## Online

There is a MyASU course-site for this course. Course materials will be posted there regularly. Consult this site regularly, visible and accessible via your MyASU homepage.

## Writing

Your writing is a crucial element of your success in this course. I will be available in office hours to discuss paper ideas, and to read and comment on paper drafts. For in-depth editorial work on your writing, visit the Writing Center at LL340 or call them for a tutorial appointment at (480) 965-4272.

High rates of plagiarism have been noticed in English literature courses. Plagiarism violates the ASU Student Code of Conduct, available online at: <http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/sta/sta104-01.html>. Plagiarism will be regarded with utmost seriousness and university procedures will be followed to resolve such problems.

## Grades

Grades are an archaic form of evaluation. Emerson, Fuller, and Thoreau would scoff contemptuously at the notion of assigning grades for intellectual effort. Well-known members of the Transcendentalist movement, such as Elizabeth Peabody and Bronson Alcott, were radical educators. The first kindergartens in the United States were established by teachers associated with Transcendentalism.

Your instructor will betray ruthlessly this noble tradition. He appreciates having a university salary, so the course gives honest grades — untenable as this concept ultimately may be — using clear criteria.

Grading will be based on writing (50 percent), a final examination (40 percent), and class participation. The course emphasizes regular reading preparedness.

You have the right to rise in rebellion, to query or challenge any grade given during this course, without risking Ahab's harpoon in response. Upon receiving a grade query, I will either raise or confirm the grade. I take grade queries seriously and will revise a grade upwards — and only upwards — given a reasonable case for doing so.

## Accommodations

If you have a learning variation that makes online assignments difficult, please let the instructor know and I will arrange other methods. If certain instructional styles work better for you than others, please let me know: e.g., if you need handouts in large print, if certain visual formats are more difficult for you to understand than others, if all printed material needs to be in black and white instead of colors, etc. Such accommodation requests should be made at the beginning of the semester.

This is a child-friendly class. If you have a child-care emergency or arrangements problem that otherwise might prevent you from coming to class, please bring your children to class and we shall be delighted to see them.

## Detailed Schedule

- *This schedule is subject to adjustments and alterations, which will be announced both in class and online.*
- *Bold numbers in square brackets refer to class session number. There are 28 MW classes for this course.*
- *Page numbers refer to the edition preferred and ordered. Where relevant, chapter numbers have been provided for those with different editions.*

Wednesday, January 21 [1] **Nature and the Idea of the Sublime**

Introduction

Read & discuss: Schiller, "On the Sublime" [online]; Emerson, 'The Adirondacs' [online].

Monday, January 26 [2]

Read & discuss: Thoreau, "On Walking" [online]; Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* [online]

Assignment: watch online video reading of Thoreau's "On Walking" (41 min.)

Paper 1 assigned (*Moby Dick* chapter explication)

Wednesday, January 28 [3]

Read & discuss: Melville, *Moby Dick* [see focus chapter list], Introduction, Etymology, Extracts & 3-124 (to chapter 25)

(draft paper consultation day)

Monday, February 2 [4]

Read & discuss: Melville, *Moby Dick*, 125-312 (chaps. 26-61)

(draft paper consultation day)

Wednesday, February 4 [5]

Read & discuss: Melville, *Moby Dick*, 313-454 (chaps. 62-93)

Monday, February 9 [6]

Read & discuss: Melville, *Moby Dick*, 455-625 (chaps. 94-Epilogue); Annesley, "Melville's No Logo" [online]

Paper 1 due

Wednesday, February 11 [7]

Read & discuss: Melville, *Moby Dick*

Paper 1 discussion

Monday, February 16 [8] **Transcendentalism and Theories of Action**

Read & discuss: Emerson, 'Walden,' 736-737; 'Thoreau,' 809-825; Thoreau, *Walden*, 45-219 (to "The Ponds") [recommendation – read entirety of *Walden* at one sitting]

Wednesday, February 18 [9]

Read & discuss: Thoreau, *Walden*, 220-382 (to "Conclusion").

Monday, February 23 [10]

Read & discuss: Thoreau, 'Civil Disobedience,' 385-414; 'A Plea for Captain John Brown' [online]; Emerson, "John Brown," 795-798.

Wednesday, February 25 [11]

Read & discuss: Emerson, "Nature," "The American Scholar," "The Transcendentalist"

Paper 2 assigned (Emerson comparison essay)

Monday, March 2 [12]

Read & discuss: Emerson, "Essays: First Series," 113-283

Wednesday, March 4 [13]

Read & discuss: Emerson, in "Essays: Second Series" – "The Poet," "Politics"; from Poems, "The Problem" & "Threnody"

March 8-15 **Spring Break**

Monday, March 16 [14]

Read & discuss: Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of an American Slave* (entire)

Wednesday, March 18 [15]

Read & discuss: Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of an American Slave*; "The Meaning of July 4<sup>th</sup> for the Negro" [online]

Monday, March 23 [16]

Read & discuss: Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, 'Autobiographical Romance,' 'Mariana,' 'Leila,' Boston Conversations'  
Reviews by Orestes Brownson, Edgar Allen Poe, anonymous seamstress, variously at 213-232; criticism by Robinson, Chevigny, Ellison, Zwarg, and Steele, 243-297.

Wednesday, March 25 [17]

Read & discuss: Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* and "Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments" [online]

Monday, March 30 [18] **'I would prefer not to': Melville's Resistances, Rebellions and Mutinies**

Read & discuss: Melville, 'Bartleby,' 3-46; Foley, "From Wall Street to Astor Place: Historicizing Melville's *Bartleby*" [online]  
Paper 2 due

Wednesday, April 1 [19]

Read & discuss: Melville, 'Benito Cereno,' 159-258.

Monday, April 6 [20]

Read & discuss: Melville, 'Benito Cereno'; Downes, "Melville's *Benito Cereno* and the Politics of Humanitarian Intervention" [online]

Wednesday, April 8 [21]

Read & discuss: Melville, 'Billy Budd,' 287-386.

Monday, April 13 [22]

Read & discuss: Melville, 'Billy Budd'; Franklin, "*Billy Budd* and Capital Punishment: A Tale of Three Centuries" [online].

Wednesday, April 15 **[23] Evangelical Passions**

Read & discuss: Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Introduction & 41-304 (chaps. 1-17).

Monday, April 20 **[24]**

Read & discuss: Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 305-487 (chaps. 18-31).

Wednesday, April 22 **[25]**

Read & discuss: Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 488-629 (chaps. 32-41).

Monday, April 27 **[26]**

Read & discuss: Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Wednesday, April 29 **[27] Democratic Vistas**

Read & discuss: Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*  
(recommendation – read at least part aloud)

Monday, May 4 **[28]**

Read & discuss: Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

**Final exam:** Monday, May 11, 12:10-2pm