



English 444

American Romanticism

Joe Lockard

Line no. 71453
MW 1:40-2:55 LL 105

Office Hours and Contact Information

MF 9-10 and 4:15-5, or by appointment -- 209 LL – 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, ranging from philosophical texts to popular culture, cover both familiar texts and seek to expand understandings of the term 'American Romanticism.'

Course Texts

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*, 1845 edition ([Internet resource](#) at the Antislavery Literature Project)

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essential Writings* (Modern Library)

Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Norton)

Herman Melville, *Billy Budd and Other Stories* (Penguin)

W.D. Ritner, *Juan, or the White Slave* (Internet resource at the Antislavery Literature Project)

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The Minister's Wooing* (Penguin)

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings* (Modern Classics)

Course Requirements

- Two 8-10 page papers [30 percent each, 60 percent total]
- Discussion [40 percent]

Attendance

Attendance is required throughout the course. Two section 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. The Transcendentalist movement relied heavily on shared readings and group conversations – 'education parties' William Henry Channing called them -- to educate: so shall we.

The readings are arranged to provide an intensive introduction to canonical writers of American Romanticism, followed by a two-week poetry interlude in mid-semester, and then close readings of Stowe and Melville. Three classes will be devoted to student-led discussions based on their own papers and discussion preparations.

Office Hours

Students will be required to attend a minimum of two 15-minute office hours sessions during the semester. 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.

I will keep announced open office hours together with scheduled hours. 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.

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

Grading will be based on participation (20 percent) and writing (80 percent). There will be two 8-10 page papers, and no midterm or final examinations. 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 concern for making the request. Upon receiving a grade query, I will either raise or confirm the grade. I take grade queries seriously and will revise a grade upwards given a reasonable case for doing so.

Accommodations

If you have a learning variation that makes online assignments difficult, please let the instructors know and we will arrange another method of evaluation. If certain instructional styles work better for you than others, please let us 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.*

Monday, August 21 **[1]**

Introduction
Discuss Schiller, "On the Sublime" (handout)

Wednesday, August 23 **[2]**

Read: Schiller, 'On the Sublime'; Cavell, 'The Philosopher in American Life (Toward Emerson and Thoreau)', pp. 3-26 (handout); Emerson, *Nature*, pp. 3-39.

Monday, August 30 [3]

Read: Emerson, *Essays: First Series*, pp. 113-283.

Wednesday, August 31 [4]

Read: Emerson, *Essays: Second Series*, pp. 287-418.

(Labor Day – Monday, September 5)

Wednesday, September 7 [5]

Emerson discussion.

Monday, September 12 [6]

Emerson, 'The Adirondacs,' pp. 722-732; 'Walden,' pp. 736-737; 'Thoreau,' pp. 809-825.
Thoreau, *Walden*, pp. 3-163. [recommendation – read entirety of *Walden* at one sitting]

Wednesday, September 14 [7]

Thoreau, *Walden*, pp. 164-312.

Monday, September 19 [8]

Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, pp. 315-456.

Wednesday, September 21 [9]

Thoreau, 'Civil Disobedience,' pp. 663-693; 'A Plea for Captain John Brown,' pp. 717-743.
Paper 1 assigned.

Monday, September 26 [10]

Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of an American Slave* [digital edition] (entire)

Wednesday, September 28 [11]

Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of an American Slave*

Monday, October 3 [12]

Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, 'Autobiographical Romance,' 'Mariana,' 'Leila,' 'Boston Conversations,' pp. 143-180; text - pp. 5-105.

Wednesday, October 5 [13]

Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*; reviews by Orestes Brownson, Edgar Allan Poe, anonymous seamstress, variously at pp. 213-232; criticism by Robinson, Chevigny, Ellison, Zwarg, and Steele, pp. 243-297.

Paper 1 due. Student presentations.

Monday, October 10 **[14] THE POETRY INTERLUDE**

Emerson, 'The Transcendentalist,' pp. 81-95; 'The Problem,' pp. 686-688; 'Threnody,' 699-706.

Wednesday, October 12 **[15] THE POETRY INTERLUDE**

Thomas Cole ('Lament of the Forest,' 'The Voyage of Life') and Jones Very readings (handout and Powerpoint presentation)

Monday, October 17 **[16] THE POETRY INTERLUDE**

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow readings (handout)

Wednesday, October 19 **[17]**

Ritner, *Juan, or the White Slave* [digital edition] (entire)

Monday, October 24 **[18]**

Stowe, *The Minister's Wooing*, Introduction and pp. 3-106.

Wednesday, October 26 **[19]**

Stowe, *The Minister's Wooing*, pp. 107-216.

Monday, October 31 **[20]**

Stowe, *The Minister's Wooing*, pp. 217-332.

Wednesday, November 2 **[21]**

Melville, 'The Encantadas,' pp. 69-136.

Monday, November 7 **[22]**

Melville, 'Bartleby,' pp. 3-46.

Wednesday, November 9 **[23]**

Melville, 'Bartleby'

Paper 2 assignment.

(Veterans Day – Friday, November 12)

Monday, November 14 **[24]**

Melville, 'Benito Cereno,' pp. 161-258.

Wednesday, November 16 **[25]**

Melville, 'Benito Cereno'

Monday, November 21 **[26]**

Melville, 'Billy Budd,' pp. 287-386

Wednesday, November 23 **[27]**

Melville, 'Billy Budd'

(Thanksgiving Break – November 24-25)

Monday, November 28 **[28]**

Student presentations

Wednesday, November 30 **[29]**

Student presentations

Monday, December 5 **[30]**

Paper 2 due.