



'The Strike', wood engraving in *Harper's Weekly*, May 1, 1886, after Robert Koehler.
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English 536

Studies in American Literature: American Literature and Human Rights

Joe Lockard

Spring 2009

Line no. 22737

MW 5-6:15pm – 270 Languages & Literatures Bldg.

Course Description

This course will examine issues of American history, culture, and law through novels, short stories, and other genres, published during a 'long' nineteenth century. We will interrogate the question of the degree to which and how American literature both formulated and reflected public concepts of human rights. To pursue such questions, we will examine representative texts of early American dissent and rebellion; Euro-american conquest and indigenous rights; slavery and post-emancipation segregation and violence against African Americans; the advance of women's rights and suffrage; the roles of labor and capital in creating US society; and the suppression of human rights in the United States.

Office Hours and Contact Information

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

Course Texts (reading order)

American Revolt

Declaration of Independence (1776)

Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings* (Oxford World Classics)

Henry David Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government" (1849)

Closing the Commons

James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826)

William Apess, *A Son of the Forest* (1829)

Helen Hunt Jackson, *Ramona* (1884)

Slavery & Racial Oppression

David Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829)

William Wells Brown, *From Fugitive to Free Man: the Autobiographies of William Wells Brown Plessy v. Ferguson*

Charles Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901)

Women Rising

Judith Sargent Murray, "On the Equality of the Sexes" (1790)

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Solitude of Self* (1892)

Susan Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1890)

Labor Rights & Anti-Capitalism

Frank Norris, *The Octopus* (1901)

Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (1906)

Jack London, *The Iron Heel* (1906)

Course Requirements

- One 25-30 page seminar paper [90 percent]
- Discussion [10 percent]

Attendance

Attendance is required throughout the course. 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 reading and discussion pace will be quick: we shall spend at most three class meetings on a novel, and most material will pass in one or two class discussions. For this reason, consistent class attendance is very important.

Office Hours

I strongly encourage you to visit office hours, whether to discuss class-related issues or just to chat. For your seminar paper, I will require you to schedule at least one consultation. Sign-up sheets will be passed around for special office hours sessions devoted to draft paper review.

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 free to visit without an appointment during office 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

This is a graduate-level course and it is expected that your writing will meet a high standard. Given the publishing demands of the English profession, your writing is critical to your success in the profession as well as this course. One standard by which your seminar paper will be evaluated will be its proximate readiness for submission to a journal. I urge you to think in terms of future thesis/dissertation use and publishing possibilities from the outset of this course.

Begin to formulate your seminar paper concept early in this course. I will require an abstract within two weeks after the course begins. You will be writing a 20-page draft by April 1. It will be critical to articulate an argument based in human rights discourse and 19th-century American literature. This may require substantive reading beyond the course texts.

In order to provide support and encouragement during this writing process, the class will be formed into **writing groups** for mutual critique of drafts.

Papers may be submitted in either MLA or Chicago style.

Grades

Grades are an archaic form of evaluation. The notion that we can assign grades for intellectual effort is antiquated and I urge you to work for the day when this system will no longer prevail. Until then, this instructor 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 writing (90 percent) and class participation (10 percent). The course emphasizes regular reading preparedness.

You have the right to query or challenge any grade given during this course, without concern for suffering consequences. Reasoned protest is a good sign that you are taking your education seriously. 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. A semester without a schedule adjustment is unusual.*
- *Bold numbers in square brackets refer to class session number. There are 28 MW classes for this course.*
- *Chapter numbers have been provided in order to accommodate those with different editions.*

Wednesday, January 21 **[1]**

Introduction

Discussion of seminar paper

Read & discuss: Beitz, "What Human Rights Mean" [online]

Castronovo, "Political Necrophilia" [online]

Henry, "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" [online]

Monday, January 26 **[2] American Revolts**

Read & discuss: *Declaration of Independence* (1776) [online]

Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789) [online]

Declaration of Sentiments (1848) [online]

Paine, *Common Sense*

Wednesday, January 28 **[3]**

Read & discuss: Paine, *Rights of Man*

Monday, February 2 **[4]**

Read & discuss: Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government" & "A Plea for Captain John Brown" [online]

Wednesday, February 4 **[5] Closing the Commons**

Read & discuss: Cooper, *Last of the Mohicans*, introduction & chaps. 1-11

Monday, February 9 **[6]**

Read & discuss: Cooper, *Last of the Mohicans*, chaps. 12-22

Wednesday, February 11 **[7]**

Read & discuss: Cooper, *Last of the Mohicans*, chaps. 23-33

Monday, February 16 **[8]**

Read & discuss: Apess, *A Son of the Forest*

Wednesday, February 18 **[9]**

Read & discuss: Jackson, *Ramona*, chaps. 1-13

Monday, February 23 **[10]**

Read & discuss: Jackson, *Ramona*, chaps. 14-26

Wednesday, February 25 **[11] Slavery and Racial Oppression**

Read & discuss: Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured People of the World*

Monday, March 2 **[12]**

Read & discuss: Brown, *Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave*

Wednesday, March 4 **[13]**

Read & discuss: Brown, *My Southern Home*

March 8-15 **Spring Break**

Monday, March 16 **[14]**

Read & discuss: *Plessy v. Ferguson*
Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*, chaps. 1-16

Wednesday, March 18 **[15]**

Read & discuss: Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*, chaps. 17-37

Monday, March 23 **[16] Women Rising**

Read & discuss: Murray, *On the Equality of the Sexes* [online]
Stanton, *The Solitude of Self*
Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*

Wednesday, March 25 **[17]**

Read & discuss: Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*

Monday, March 30 **[18] Labor Rights & Anti-capitalism**

Read & discuss: Norris, *The Octopus*, Book 1

Wednesday, April 1 **[19]**

Read & discuss: Norris, *The Octopus*, Book 2
Submit 20-page paper draft

Monday, April 6 **[20]**

Read & discuss: Norris, *The Octopus* (entire)

Wednesday, April 8 **[21]**

Paper discussion – writing group meetings

Monday, April 13 **[22]**

Read & discuss: Sinclair, *The Jungle*, chaps. 1-10

Wednesday, April 15 **[23]**

Read & discuss: Sinclair, *The Jungle*, chaps. 11-20

Monday, April 20 **[24]**

Read & discuss: Sinclair, *The Jungle*, chaps. 21-31

Wednesday, April 22 **[25]**

Read & discuss: London, *The Iron Heel* (entire)

Monday, April 27 **[26]**

Read & discuss: London, *The Iron Heel*

Wednesday, April 29 **[27] Reprise: Human Rights and American Literature**

Readings TBA

Monday, May 4 **[28]**

Student presentations