

Lit. 3323.501. American Renaissance 1820-1865

Spring 2019

Dennis P. Walsh

JO 5. 608f

Hrs: Tu./Tr. 6:30 p.m. (also by appointment)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The American Renaissance, a period roughly stretching between 1820 and 1865, is the name given to an era during which there was a flowering of compelling and imaginative literary works. Located within the American Renaissance was a shorter period of literary development generally referred to as American Transcendentalism, a largely New England-centered movement that had at its center the question of humankind's relationship to nature and reality. Beginning with a heady optimism captured in the flawed concept of Manifest Destiny, the American Renaissance ended with the fratricidal slaughter of the Civil War. Our course will introduce the student to a variety of 19th century authors, including Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, Margaret Fuller, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Frederick Douglass, Henry D. Thoreau, William Apess, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, E.A. Poe, Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson. Our readings comprise not only fiction but also overtly political polemics. Aside from the theme of nature, we will visit the informing ideologies of the era as well as the divisive issues of slavery, Native American removals, and individual and women's rights that were searing social concerns of the day.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Students are required to write three formal, highly focused, research papers, each five to six pages in length. The papers require at least three outside resources beyond the assigned textbook. Papers will be graded not only on the quality of content but as well on the clarity and correctness of presentation. There also will be spot quizzes that will account for 10 percent of final grade. Each formal paper will account for 30 percent of final grade. Class attendance is essential. Emergencies happen, but please notify me if you are unable to attend the class. A single absence is the same as missing a full week of classes. Unexcused or repeated absences (more than two) are likely to have a negative impact on one's final grade.

Class participation is highly valued. Ask questions; challenge the text; interrogate the instructor; offer opinions.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Students will gain a greater appreciation for and understanding of the authors and literature of America from 1820s to the Civil War, as well as achieve an increased familiarity with the historical and cultural contexts in which that literature was produced. Among the subjects students will engage, are 19th century concerns about nature, religion, race, science, minority rights and the American identity as the rising nation formulates itself in text. Moreover, because of the insistence on quality research and formal writing, students strive to improve their critical thinking, expand their research skills and heighten writing expression.

The following syllabus is subject to change in order to better meet class demands.

- (1. 17) I. Introduction. Requirements. Pedagogy. *Norton, 1-21*.
Research. Lit. Criticism. American Identity.. *Rip Van, 29-41*. History.
- (1. 24) 2. Indian Removal. *Norton, 361-66*; Wm. Apess, 154; The Romance Novel:
J. Fenimore Cooper, 72-86; Catherine M. Sedgwick, 89-106.
- (1. 31) 3. Transcendentalism. (Locke-Coleridge: reason vs. imagination);
Emerson: *Nature*, 214-220, chps. 4, 6, 8.
- (2. 07) 4. Thoreau: *Walden*, “Where I” 1023-33, “Higher Laws” 1090-97,
“Spring” 1136-1147, “Conclusion” 1147-1154.
- (2. 14) 5. **Slavery**: Fugitive Slave Act /Dred Scott. F. Douglass, *Narrative*, 1182-1238.;
(Paper 1 due)
- (2. 21) 6. Romanticism: . E.A. Poe: *Eureka* (handout). *Philosophy of Comp.*, 719-27; *Ulalume*,
640-643. *Ligeia*, 644-53; *House of Usher*, 654-667; *Cask of Amontillado*, 714-719.
- (2. 28) 7. Hawthorne: Theory and History. Preface: *House*, 594-95; *My Kinsman*, 373-386).
- (3. 07) 8. Hawthorne : *Young Goodman*, 386-95; *Minister’s Veil*, 409-18; *Maypole*, 401-9.
- (3. 14) 9. Three Literary Ladies: M. Fuller: 782-786; Fanny Fern: 905-916; Frances E. W.
Harper: 1644-1651. **(Paper 2 due)**
- (SPRING BREAK)
- (3. 28) 10. H. Melville: *Moby-Dick*, 1440-1482, *Bartleby*, 1483-1569; *The Maldive Shark*, 1586.
- (4. 04) 11. Melville (cont.) Walt Whitman: *Song of Myself*, 1330-74.

- (4. 11) 12. Walt Whitman: "A Woman Waits, 1376"; "Whoever You Are, 1381-82.
- (4. 18) 13. Emily Dickinson: -various poems- assign in class.
- (4. 25) 14. R. H. Davis: *Life in the Iron Mills*, 1706-32.
- (5. 02) 15. **(Final Papers due)**