ENG 3701-001: Nineteenth Century American Literature: 1800-1850

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Purpose: This course focuses on American works produced from about 1800-1860. The period includes what F.O. Matthiessen called the ""American Renaissance,"" a time of extraordinary literary expression from the likes of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Frederick Douglass, Henry David Thoreau, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman. Because the period had a long foregrounding in the earlier writings of the age, we will also examine the literature that preceded the 1800s. Such a procedure will allow us to see the larger context in which the major figures responded so powerfully to a call for a distinctive American literature. Among the themes we will touch on during the semester are the significance of "NATURE," the centrality of the individual, the importance of creative imagination, the image and function of the noble savage, the uses of gothic artifice, the promises and dangers of American democracy, and the intellectual and cultural undercurrents that began to erode Romantic idealism. We will study the literature not only to increase our appreciation for its aesthetic merits but also to consider its abiding relevance.

Scope: During the semester you will read a wide range of essays, stories, novels ("romances"), works of personal record, and poems. Your performance will be evaluated by means of class participation, a final examination, a series of written responses, and a critical essay. You can earn credit for participation by responding to questions, asking questions, and volunteering comments. The final will include two parts. Part I will require you to write two paragraph-length responses (about 300-400 words each) based on two of three items; Part II will require you to write an essay (about 600-800 words) based on one of three items. During the semester, you will submit five typed written responses (approximately 400-500 words each) addressing topics and questions that I will pose in class, usually at the end of class. These responses must be supported by evidence and reasoning. In addition, you will prepare a typewritten critical essay of 8-10 pages of argument. In your critical essay, which you must hand in at the classroom on the last day of class, you will provide an extended answer to a critical question about a range of poems, a range of stories, and/or a major work. I will hand out "Guidelines" to provide additional information about the critical essay.

Components of the Grade

--Participation (10%)

--Final (15%)

--Five Written (typed) Responses of approximately 400-500 words each (30%)

--Critical Essay of 8-10 Pages of Argument (45%)
Grading: When I evaluate written work for your final examination and critical essay, I consider content, coherence, grammar, and mechanics. By content I mean a relationship between purpose, reasoning, and evidence. By coherence I mean orderly unfolding of ideas and evidence in your argument, as well as smooth transitions and accurate language. By grammar I mean the use of standard English grammar in the construction of sentences. And by mechanics I mean standard punctuation and MLA documentation. Of course, content is most important, but a written performance, especially the critical essay, can receive a low grade, even a failing grade, if it is radically incoherent or riddled with errors of grammar and/or mechanics.

Missed Work: If you miss a response, you will not be permitted to submit it later. However, if you have an excused absence, I will not count the response in your average. Should you miss the final examination, you may take a make-up examination only if you have an excused absence. An excused absence requires a confirmation from the Health Service, a university official, or a doctor. I expect you to turn in your critical essay on time. If you fail to do so, your essay will pay a five-point penalty for each of the first two days of lateness. After two days, I will not accept the essay.

Attendance Policy: Class attendance is important. During class, I will often provide information about literary history, theory, and criticism — information that you should learn in a course about in a literary-historical survey. Moreover, your participation in discussion and questioning, even as a listener, is an important learning experience. And, of course, your participation contributes to the learning of other students. Your grade will be deducted 2% for each unexcused absence.

Students With Disabilities: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Electronic Writing Portfolio: You may submit a written response or the critical essay for the EWP. EWP submissions must include at least 750 words.

Plagiarism Policy: Plagiarism is a serious offense; it is intellectual theft and fraud. Accordingly, plagiarism will be punished in conformity with English Department and University procedures. Here is the English Department's statement concerning plagiarism:

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism — "The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's own work" — (Random House Dictionary of the English Language) has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of "F" for the assigned essay and a grade of "F" for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.
THE PIONEERS

1. Week of January 13
   -- Introduction to Course
   -- Handout of “Poem on the Industry of the United States;” I’ll e-mail a link to Freneau’s “The Power of Fancy.”

2. Week of January 20
   -- **King’s Birthday: No Classes**

3. Week of January 27
   -- Cooper (62-64), from “The Leather-Stocking Tales” (64-86);

THE TRANSCENDENTALISTS AND REFORMERS

   -- Emerson (211-14), from *Nature* (214-17, 222-27), “The American Scholar” (243-56)

4. Week of February 3
   -- “Self-Reliance” (269-86)
   -- “The Poet” (295-310); Handout of “Uriel”

5. Week of February 10
   -- Thoreau (961-64), “Resistance to Civil Government” (964-79); from *Walden* (981-1007)
   -- **Lincoln’s Birthday: No Classes**

6. Week of February 17
   -- from *Walden* (1023-33, 1061-82)
   -- Douglass (1170-74); *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (1174-1208)
--Narrative (1208-1239); Fuller (740-43), “The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men. Woman versus Women” (743-53)

THE ROMANCERS

7. Week of February 24
   -- Hawthorne (369-73), "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" (373-86), "Young Goodman Brown" (386-95)
   --“Rappaccini’s Daughter” (430-50)

8. Week of February March 3

Spring Break

9. Week of March 17
   -- Poe, “The Tell-Tale Heart” (691-95), “The Black Cat” (695-701)
   -- "Ulalume--A Ballad" (640-43), Annabel Lee” (643-44)

10. Week of March 24
    -- Hawthorne, from "The Custom House" (450-57, 465-71), The Scarlet Letter (476-509)
    --The Scarlet Letter (509-550)

11. Week of March 31
    --The Scarlet Letter (550-94)
    --Melville (1424-27), “Hawthorne and His Mosses” (1427-39), from Moby-Dick (1440-54)
    --from Moby-Dick (1454-75)

12. Week of April 7
    --from Moby-Dick (1475-83), “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (1483—96)
    --“Bartleby” (1496-1509), “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids” (1509-16)
    --“The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids” (1516-25), “Benito Cereno” (1526-45)
13. Week of April 14
   --“Benito Cereno” (1546-82)
   --Billy Budd, Sailor (1587-1607)
   --Billy Budd, Sailor (1607-32)

14. Week of April 21
   --Billy Budd, Sailor (1633-43); Whitman (1310-14), “Preface to Leaves of Grass (1314-29)

   THE NATIONAL BARD

   --from “Song of Myself” (1330-49, 1369-74)
   --“Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” (1383-87), “Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking” (1387-92)

15. Week of April 28
   --Whitman, “Beat! Beat! Drums!” (1395), “The Wound Dresser” (1399-1401);
   --Whitman, “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” (1402-8); Critical Essay Due in Class (two copies);
   --Orientation for Final Examination