

Fall 8-15-2005

# ENG 5009-001: Studies in Nineteenth-Century American Literature: Bearing Witness: History and Transcendence

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English 5009 Section 001

Loudon

Studies in Nineteenth-Century American Literature:

Bearing Witness: History and Transcendence

1900-2130 R

**Description:** We shall seek to define and to clarify what in seminal texts from mid-19<sup>th</sup> C. America remains useful to us by speaking out of its own time and what remains provocative by speaking beyond its own time. What is the visionary voice and what is prophetic voice? Exploring the role aesthetic construction plays in both grounding the voice in and freeing it from its own time and place, we shall begin with Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of...an American Slave...*, proceed to selected essays from Emerson, reflect briefly on Margaret Fuller's essays, work carefully through Thoreau's *Walden* and selected essays, consider Rebecca Harding-Davis's *Life in the Iron-Mills*, and conclude with substantial readings from Whitman's 1860 ("historical") edition of *Leaves of Grass* while comparing selections from it with the 1892 ("transcendental") edition.

**Requirements and Grading:** Discussion (20%), short essay [4-5 pages] (20%), long essay [12-15 pages] and oral presentation (40%) and final essay examination (20%); or, grading by contract in some similar combination of writing and proposed projects.

**Texts:**

- Zoe Trodd and John Stauffer, ed., *Meteor of War: The John Brown Story*, Naugatuck, CT: Brandywine, 2004.
- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*, ed. David W. Blight, NY: St. Martin's/Bedford, 1993.
- Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville, *Two Slave Rebellions at Sea* [FD, "The Heroic Slave" and HM, "Benito Cereno"], ed. George and Willene Hendrick, Naugatuck, CT: Brandywine, 2000.
- Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Emerson's Prose and Poetry*, ed. Joel Porte and Sandra Morris, NY: Norton Critical Edition, 2001.
- Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed. Larry Reynolds, NY: Norton Critical Edition, 1997.
- Rebecca Harding Davis, *Life in the Iron-Mills*, ed. Cecelia Tichi, Bedford Cultural Edition, Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998.
- Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Resistance to Civil Government*, ed. William Rossi, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, Norton Critical Edition, 1992.
- Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings*, ed. Michael Moon, 2<sup>nd</sup> (revised and expanded) ed, Norton Critical Edition, 2002.
- Walt Whitman, *The Neglected Walt Whitman: Vital Texts*, ed. Sam Abrams, NY: Four Walls Eight Windows (Avalon/Thunder's Mouth), 1993.

**Format:** We'll proceed in seminar fashion, reading before class, raising questions and issues, exchanging perceptions, and arguing, modifying and, perhaps, changing our viewpoints as we play (seriously) with texts and ideas. Please feel free to express reservations as well as affirmations of the process as the seminar unfolds and defines itself.

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Course *Syllabus* (tentative):

**August**

25: Course introduction/initial queries and premises: *vision* and *prophecy*

**September**

1: Working definitions and premises: come prepared to share your definitions, stipulations, premises and sources on *vision* and *prophecy*—bring a one-page response (to evoke discussion) to be distributed to seminar participants (bring 15 copies).

8: *Narrative of Frederick Douglass...*

**Discussion leaders:**

Jennifer Clark, Tabitha Dosch, Shannon Littleton and Emily Ramage

15: *Emerson's Prose and Poetry*: "Nature," "The Divinity School Address" and "The American Scholar"

**Discussion leaders:**

Sarah Colwell, Sue Krukenberg, Lavada R. Simpson and Joe Webb

22: *Emerson's Prose and Poetry*: "Self-Reliance," "The Poet" and "Fate"

**Discussion leaders:**

Janice Derr, Tabitha Dosch, Sue Krukenberg and Lavada R. Simpson

29: Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*

**Discussion leaders:**

Janice Derr, Alsu Shakirova, Loretta Ullrich and Carrie Viel

**October**

6: Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Resistance to Civil Government*

**Discussion leaders:**

Sarah Colwell, Eun Young Lim, Shannon Littleton and Sarah Mims

13: *Walden and Resistance to Civil Government*

**Discussion leaders:**

Jennifer Clark, Eun Young Lim, Sarah Mims and Alsu Shakirova

20: *Meteor of War: The John Brown Story*

**Discussion leaders:**

Josh Robinson, Loretta Ullrich, Carrie Viel and Joe Webb

27: Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville, *Two Slave Rebellions at Sea* [FD, "The Heroic Slave" and HM, "Benito Cereno"]

**Discussion leaders:**

Jennifer Clark, Shannon Littleton, Emily Ramage and Josh Robinson

**November**

3: Rebecca Harding Davis, *Life in the Iron-Mills*

**Discussion leaders:**

Janice Derr, Frank Hatten, Josh Robinson and Loretta Ullrich

10: Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings*

**Discussion leaders:**

Eun Young Lim, Emily Ramage, Alsu Shakirova and Carrie Viel

17: *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings*

**Discussion leaders:**

Tabitha Dosch, Frank Hatten, Sue Krukenberg and Joe Webb

**December**

1: *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings*

**Discussion leaders:**

Sarah Colwell, Frank Hatten, Sarah Mims and Lavada R. Simpson