ENG 3701-001: American Romanticism

John Allison
Eastern Illinois University

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Instructor: John Allison
Office: Coleman 316 F
Phones: 581-6978; 348-0269 (home)
Hours: MWF 10:00-11:00; 1:00-2:00

English 3701 – 001: American Romanticism

Purpose: As stated in the General Catalog, English 3701 focuses on American works produced from about 1830-1860. The period comprises what F.O. Matthiessen called the “American Renaissance,” a time of extraordinary literary expression from the likes of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 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 1830’s. Such a procedure will allow us to see the larger context in which the major figures responded so powerfully to an earlier outcry for American literary nationalism. 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—the whole Romantic movement. We will study the literature not only to increase our appreciation for its aesthetic merits but also to consider its abiding relevance to our society.

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 a final essay examination, a series of pop quizzes, and a critical essay of at least eight pages, not including “Notes” and “Works Cited.” The final will include two parts. Part I will require you to write two paragraph-length responses (120-150 words each) based on two of three items; Part II will require you to write an essay (about 500 words) based on one of three items. You will take at least ten pop quizzes during the semester. These quizzes will include short-answer items concerning details and concepts from readings and lectures. In addition, you will prepare a type-written critical essay of 7 to 8 eight pages of argument. In your critical essay, which you must hand in at class on the last day of class, you will attempt to 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.

Components of the Grade

--Final (35%)

--Quizzes (25%)

--Critical Essay of 7-8 Pages of Argument (40%)

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 an orderly unfolding of ideas and evidence in your argument, as well as smooth transitions and clear language. By grammar I mean the use of standard English rules and syntax in the construction of sentences. And by mechanics I mean standard punctuation. 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. I will grade quizzes for accuracy, clarity, and completeness of responses in relation to oral questions. With five items, usually including two parts (A and B), each quiz will allow you to earn fifty points, plus an additional five bonus points. You can keep track of your average quiz grade by multiplying your total number of quiz points by two, then dividing that number by the number of quizzes you have taken.

Missed Work: If you miss a quiz, you will not be permitted to take it later. However, if you have an excused absence, I will not count the quiz in your average. Should you miss a major examination, you may take a make-up
examination only if you have an excused absence. Note: 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. After two days, I will not accept the essay.

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.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

1. Week of January 13
   --Introduction to course

2. Week of January 20
   --King’s Birthday: No Classes
   --Brown, Wieland (11-118)
   --Wieland (118-207)

3. Week of January 27
   --Wieland (207-76)
   --Irving, “The Author’s Account of Himself” (606-8), “Rip Van Winkle” (608-19)
   Bryant, “Thanatoposis” (928-32), “A Forest Hymn” (935-38), and “The Prairies” (940-42)

4. Week of February 3

5. Week of February 10
   --Emerson, “Self-Reliance” (1079-1106)
   --Lincoln’s Birthday: No Classes
   --from Walden (1554-56, 1571-1621)

6. Week of February 17
   --from Walden (1554-56, 1571-1621)
   --from Walden (1655-89)
   --from Walden (1719-36)

7. Week of February 24
   --“Ulalume—A Ballad” (959-62), “A Dream Within a Dream” (962), “Annabel Lee” (963-64)
   --“The Raven” (956-59), “The Philosophy of Composition” (1027-35)
8. Week of March 3
--"Ligeia" (964-74), "The Fall of the House of Usher" (947-57)
--"The Masque of the Red Death" (987-91), "The Tell-Tale Heart" (991-94), "The Purloined Letter" (1003-1015)
--Hawthorne, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" (1161-76), "Ethan Brand" (1245-55)

9. Week of March 10
--"Rappaccini's Daughter" (1211-30)
--"The Custom House" (1255-60, 1268-75)
--The Scarlet Letter (1279-1300)

SPRING BREAK

10. Week of March 24
--The Scarlet Letter (1300-1343)
--The Scarlet Letter (1343-1387)
- Proposals Due; Discussion of Proposals

11. Week of March 31
--The Blithedale Romance (to 117)
--The Blithedale Romance (117-85)
--The Blithedale Romance (185-51)

12. Week of April 7
--Melville, from "Hawthorne and His Mosses" (1549-54), "Bartleby, the Scrivener" (1390-1416)
--"Benito Cereno" (1416-1439)
--"Benito Cereno" (1440-70)

13. Week of April 14
--"The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" (1470-1485)
--Billy Budd, Sailor (1485-1511)
--Billy Budd, Sailor (1511-38)

14. Week of April 21
--Longfellow, "A Psalm of Life" (1736-38), "Hymn to the Night" (1738-39), "The Arsenal at Springfield" (739-41), "The Jewish Cemetery at Newport" (1741-42), "My Lost Youth" (1743-45), "The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls" (1750)
--Whittier, "Snow-Bound" (1751, 1764-81); Holmes, "The Deacon's Masterpiece" (1786-89).
--Emerson, "The Poet" (1117-31); Whitman, from "Song of Myself" (1866-67, 1892-1896)

15. Week of April 28
--Whitman, from "Song of Myself" (1904-15, 1931-36)
--"Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" (1948-53), "The Wound-Dresser" (1961-63)
--Critical Essays Due In Class; Student Evaluations; Examination Topics

Final Examination: To Be Announced