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ENG 3701-001: American Romanticism

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English 3701 – 001: AMERICAN ROMANTICISM (Spring 2004)

Purpose: As stated in the General Catalog, English 3701 focuses on American works produced from about 1830-1860. 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, 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 an approach 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 series of six written responses of 250-300 words each, a critical essay of at 8-10 pages of argument, and a final examination. The final will include two parts. Part I will require you to write two paragraph-length responses (at least 250-300 words each) based on two of four items; Part II will require you to write an essay (600-800 words) based on one of three items.

Components of the Grade

--Final (25%):

-- Six Written Responses (30%)

--Critical Essay of 8-10 Pages of Argument (45%)

Grading: When I evaluate written work for your written responses, critical essay, and final examination, 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.

Missed Work: If you miss a written response, you will not be permitted to make it up unless you have an excused absence. 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 medical 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.

Absence 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 American Romanticism. Moreover, your participation in discussion and questioning, even as a listener, is an important learning experience that distinguishes classroom education from correspondence school and self-education. After three unexcused absences, your final grade will be deducted 5% for each unexcused absence thereafter. For an excused absence, you must provide verification from the Health Service, a physician, or an appropriate member of Eastern’s faculty or staff.

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 12
   --Introduction to Course; Handout: “Rising Glory” Poem
   --Crevecoeur, from *Letters from an American Farmer* (448-63)

2. Week of January 19
   --King’s Day: No Classes
   --Irving, "The Author’s Account of Himself" (626-27, 635-36), “Rip Van Winkle” (637-650)

3. Week of January 26
   --Cooper, "Preface to The Leather Stocking Tales, from *The Deerslayer*, and from *The Pioneers* (685-707)
   --Emerson, from *Nature* (819-32, 844-48)
   --"The American Scholar" (849-62)

4. Week of February 2
   --"Self-Reliance" (874-891)
   --"The Poet" (892-906)
   --Poems: "The Rhodora" (907), "Each and All" (907-8), "The Snow-Storm" (908-9), "Concord Hymn" (909), "The Problem" (910-11), Handout: "Uriel"

5. Week of February 9
   --Poems: "Days" (917), "Terminus" (918), Handout of "Uriel"
   --Douglass, *Narrative of the Life* (1682-1705)
   --Lincoln’s Day: No Classes

6. Week of February 16
   --Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience" (1342-1358)
   --from *Walden* (1359-1403)
   --from *Walden* (1403-1413)

7. February 23
   --Longfellow, *Walden* (1454-88)
   --Poe, "Sonnet to Science" (731-34), "To Helen" (734-35), "Israfel" (735-36)
   --Poe, "Ulalume" (742-45) and "Annabel Lee" (745-46)
8. Week of March 1
   --"The Raven" (739-42) and "The Philosophy of Composition" (805-14)
   --"Ligeia" (746-57)
   --"The Fall of the House of Usher" (771-85)

9. Week of March 8
   --"The Tell-Tale Heart" (785-88), "The Purloined Letter" (788-801)
   --Hawthorne, "The Minister's Black Veil" (943-45, 976-84) and "The Birthmark" (985-996)
   --"The Artist of the Beautiful" (996-1011) and "Ethan Brand" (1012-22)

Spring Break

10. Week of March 22
    --The Scarlet Letter (1048-87)
    --The Scarlet Letter (1087-1110)
    --The Scarlet Letter (1110-39)

11. Week of March 29
    --The Scarlet Letter (1139-66)
    --The Blithedale Romance ("Preface" and chapters I-IV)
    --The Blithedale Romance (chapters V-IX)

12. Week of April 5
    --The Blithedale Romance (X-XVI)
    --The Blithedale Romance (XVII-XXIII)
    --The Blithedale Romance (XXIV-XXIX)

13. Week of April 12
    --"Bartleby, the Scrivener" (1148-74)
    --"Benito Cereno" (1174-1200)
    --"Benito Cereno" (1201-1233)

14. Week of April 19
    --Billy Budd, Sailor (1270-1309)
    --Billy Budd, Sailor (1309-1328)
    --Whitman, from "Song of Myself" (1787-88, 1804-1812, 1817, 1821-24, 1849-51)

15. Week of April 26
    --Critical Essay Due; "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" (1862-67)
    --"The Wound Dresser" (1874-76); Melville's "Shiloh" (1329) and "The College Colonel" (1330-31)
    --Student Evaluations; Examination Topics