ENG 3702-002: Nineteenth Century American Literature

Stephen Swords
Eastern Illinois University

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In this class, we’ll be focusing on the literature and culture of the second half of the nineteenth century, from just before the Civil War to roughly somewhere in the early decades of the twentieth century. Looking back, every period always seems to be full of great change and development, but that is especially true for this portion of American history. The aftermath of the Civil War, immigration, economic and geographical development, the coming of machines, electricity, and modern communications—these, among other forces, transformed America from what it had been to something that looks in many ways like the society we have now. As we work together through the readings for the class, my hope is that you can come to some understandings of the kind of country America became in these years, the sort of cultural concerns and hopes that shaped it, and the legacies it has left us with.

This class will function primarily as a discussion class, so class participation counts a lot, as does attendance. If you are there and talking regularly, you will do well; if not, not. There will be quizzes and such to make sure you keep working at the reading. There will likely be a take home midterm, a take home final, and perhaps other forms of impromptu writing. I reserve the right to come up with assignments as we go along. Final grades for the class will be based on your overall performance.