

## AMERICAN LITERATURE, 1800-1870

English BC 3180y

Spring 2010

MW 11-12:15

Barnard 409

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In 1941, F. O. Matthiessen published *American Renaissance*, using the term to refer to the years between 1850 and 1855 and to the texts of Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman. In subsequent years, scholars have used the term more broadly to describe a fruitful period in American literary history. Moreover, they've debated what kind of renaissance, if any, occurred, and which writers defined it. In English BC 3180y, we'll be considering both the American Renaissance described by Matthiessen and more recent views of nineteenth-century American literature. We'll begin with Irving and the questions he raises about the possibilities of a specifically American literature. Then, we'll explore some of the answers that various writers suggest, and the new questions raised by their answers. Issues that we'll consider include the problem of history, the representation of Native Americans, the implications of independence, the nature of the self, slavery and abolition, gender and woman's sphere, and the viability, not only of American literature, but of America itself as a nation.

### TEXTS:

Baym, ed. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 7th edition, volume B  
James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* (Penguin)  
William Apess, *A Son of the Forest and Other Writings* (University of Massachusetts Press)  
Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Norton)  
Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (Penguin edition, edited by Andrew Delbanco)  
Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Barnes & Noble Classics)  
Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Harvard University Press)

All texts have been ordered at the Columbia University Bookstore. In addition, editions of each text (though not in every case the same editions ordered) will be available at Barnard Reserves in Wollman Library.

Most materials are found on the course blog. To join the blog, go to [http://edblogs.columbia.edu/englx3180\\_001\\_2010\\_1/](http://edblogs.columbia.edu/englx3180_001_2010_1/) and log in using your uni.

**Please inform me immediately if you have difficulty obtaining any of the course texts or logging in to blog.**

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

You are expected to attend class regularly, to participate in discussion (in class and/or via the blog), to write two essays, and to complete a series of blog assignments as well as a final examination.

If you find yourself unable to complete an assignment by the due date, you must speak to me in advance about an extension. Work that is late without an extension will be penalized.

I strongly encourage you to consult with me as you write your essays. I'm happy to speak to you about ideas, about tentative outlines, and about rough drafts. However, I will not accept revisions beyond the initial due date of the paper except in catastrophic cases.

All essays must be typed, double-spaced, on white paper in standard fonts. Please don't use very small or very large fonts to squeeze or stretch out your essay. The page guidelines apply to standard 12-point fonts. Papers should follow MLA guidelines for essays; see the English department guide to the preparation of papers, *Rules for Writers*, *A Writer's Reference*, or *The MLA Handbook* for details.

The Barnard English department, like Barnard College as a whole, values intellectual integrity very highly. Plagiarism is a serious violation, and I report *all* cases of plagiarism to the Dean of Studies *without exception*. If you are at all confused about appropriate acknowledgment of sources, please see me for clarification.

I will calculate your grade based on the following formula:

essay #1:	25%
essay #2:	25%
blog assignments:	15%
final exam:	25%
class participation:	10%

Note that class participation includes class attendance as well as participation in discussion both in-class and on the blog.

### **BLOG ASSIGNMENTS:**

The following assignments must be completed on the course blog:

- **Profile editing, due January 25:** Log into the course blog using your UNI. From the Dashboard, click on your username in the upper right hand corner to access your profile. Edit the setting "Display name publicly as" to show your first and last name, and add any other information you like to your profile.
- You are required to make **three other posts** to the blog, which you may do in any order. One post must be made by **February 8**, a second by **February 24**, and a third by **April 18**.
  - **Close reading:** Choose a passage (roughly 8-20 lines long) from one of the course texts, and copy it, then perform a close reading of that passage. (See close reading instructions on the blog.) Assign your post to the category "Close reading" and to the appropriate category for the author and text.
  - **Response to reading notes or class discussion:** Discuss a question that I raise in my reading notes, or follow up on a question that arises in class. Assign your post to the category "Discussion" and to the appropriate category for the author and text.
  - **Post a perplexity:** Choose a passage or question that you find difficult or confusing, and work at it. What makes it difficult? What questions do you have about the passage, or about its relation to the work as a whole? Offer some possible answers to those questions. Assign your post to the category "Perplexity" and to the appropriate category for the author and text.
  - **How to post:**
    - You should first **compose your** post in a word processor. Each post should be 300 to 600 words in length.
    - Then go to the blog **dashboard** by following the link to "**blog backend**." At the

left side of the screen, click on “**Posts**” and then on “**Add New.**” You can copy and paste your text into the editing screen. There’s a button specifically for pasting from Microsoft Word. There are also templates, if you want to add images. (Images should be added as links to images, as we have a space quota.)

- Once you’ve fiddled with the format, click “**Update post**” at the right side of the screen.
- You should also assign your post to the relevant **categories**—the assignment, as well as the relevant author(s) and or text(s).
- You are also required to post **three comments** on your classmates’ postings.
  - You must post **one comment on a close reading, one on a discussion, and one on a perplexity.**
  - To comment, click on the comment count at the top right of the post on which you want to comment. Type your comment in the text-entry box, and click on “**submit.**”
  - **You must post three comments by May 3.**
- If you choose to make additional contributions to the blog (either posts or comments), these will be noted, and will enhance your participation grade.

#### **STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

- Students will learn to think critically, to read analytically, and to use textual evidence in support of oral and written arguments.
- They will study the history and culture of nineteenth-century America.
- They will read with pleasure the wondrous works of nineteenth-century American authors.

#### **SCHEDULE OF READINGS:**

NA=*The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 7th edition, volume B

January 20	Introduction Washington Irving, <i>The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent</i> (1819-20): "The Author's Account of Himself" (handout)
January 25	<i>The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.</i> , continued: "The Art of Book Making" (online), "Christmas Day" (online), "Traits of Indian Character" (online), "Philip of Pokanoket" (online), "Rip Van Winkle" (NA 953-965), "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (NA 965-985) <b>* DUE: Blog assignment: profile editing</b>
January 27	James Fenimore Cooper, <i>The Last of the Mohicans</i> (1826)
February 1	Cooper, <i>The Last of the Mohicans</i> , continued Statements from the debate on Indian Removal (handout and web)
February 3	William Apess, <i>Eulogy on King Philip, as Pronounced at the Odeon, in Federal Street, Boston</i> (1836) (in <i>A Son of the Forest and Other Writings</i> , pages 103-138); "Native Americans: Removal and Resistance" (NA 1252-3), Boudinot, "To the Public" (1828) (NA 1260-3); "The Cherokee Memorials," (NA 1263-1268) <b>screening of "The Last of the Mohicans," 7:30 pm location TBA</b>
February 8	Ralph Waldo Emerson, <i>Nature</i> (1836) (NA 1110-1138) <b>* DUE: One of three blog posts</b>
February 10	Emerson, <i>Nature</i> , continued.

- February 15 Emerson, continued: *The American Scholar* (1837) (NA 1138-1151), *The Divinity School Address* (1838) (NA 1151-1163), "Self-Reliance" (1841) (NA 1163-1180)
- February 17 Emerson, continued: "Experience" (1844) (NA 1195-1210), "John Brown" (1860) (NA 1211-1213), "The Poet" (1844) (NA 1180-1195)
- February 22 Walt Whitman, Preface to *Leaves of Grass* (1855) (NA 2195-2209), "Song of Myself" from *Leaves of Grass* (1855, 1881) (NA 2210-2254), "Letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson" (1856) (NA 2289-2296)
- February 24 Whitman, continued; Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (1854) (NA 1872-2046)  
**\* DUE: Second of three blog posts**
- March 1 *Walden*, continued
- March 3 Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (1845) (NA 2060-2129)  
**\* DUE: ESSAY #1**
- March 8 Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (3-105)
- March 10 Edgar Allan Poe, "Sonnet--To Science" (1829, 1845) (NA 1532), "The Raven" (1845) (NA 1536-1539), "Ligeia" (1838) (NA 1543-1553), "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) (NA 1553-1565), "William Wilson. A Tale" (1839) (NA 1566-1579), "The Imp of the Perverse" (1842) (online)
- March 15 **\* SPRING BREAK--NO CLASS**
- March 17 **\* SPRING BREAK--NO CLASS**
- March 22 Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) (NA 1352-1493)
- March 24 *The Scarlet Letter*, continued
- March 29 Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (1851) (Read at least to the end of chapter 42, pp. xxxvii-212 in the Penguin edition.)
- March 31 **\* NO CLASS**
- April 5 **\* NO CLASS**
- April 7 *Moby-Dick*, continued (Read at least to the end of chapter 82, p. 398 in the Penguin edition.)
- April 12 *Moby-Dick*, continued (Finish the novel.)
- April 14 Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) (Read at least to the end of chapter 30, p. 386 in the Barnes & Noble edition.)  
**\* DUE: Third of three blog posts**
- April 19 *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, continued (Finish the novel.); Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861)
- April 21 *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, continued
- April 26 Emily Dickinson, (Franklin edition) Poems 39, 112, 123, 124, 146, 194, 202, 207, 236, 256, 279, 320, 365, 373, 407, 409, 411, 446, 466, 477, 576, 598, 760, 788, 895, 1096, 1263, 1577, (NA 2558-2597) plus selected additional poems (handout)
- April 28 Dickinson, continued Poems 225, 269, 339, 355, 359, 372, 381, 448, 479,

588, 591, 620, 648, 764, 857, 935, 1665 (NA 2558-2597) plus  
selected additional poems (handout)

May 3 Conclusion: Whitman, *Drum-Taps* (1865) (excerpts in NA 2275-2282 plus  
handout); Melville, *Battle Pieces and Aspects of War* (1866)  
(excerpts in NA 2461-2465 plus handout)

**\* DUE: ESSAY #2**

**\* DEADLINE FOR POSTING OF BLOG COMMENTS**

May 5 **OPTIONAL REVIEW SESSION**

**FINAL EXAMINATION** scheduled by registrar, currently listed for **Monday May 10 at 9 am** in  
**Barnard 409.**