The final examination will be held on Monday, May 8 at 9 am in Milbank 324.

The exam will be divided into three parts:

Part I: IDENTIFICATIONS (50 points, 50 minutes). You will be asked to identify the author and title of 5 out of 7 passages and discuss their significance. You should briefly situate each passage in the context of the work as a whole. You’ll also comment on any significant themes addressed in the passage, and consider how they relate to the text as a whole as well as to popular concerns in the period that we’ve been studying. Note also any interesting qualities of language. What kinds of images are used? Is the syntax unusual? Are any of the words especially important in the text? Also, you might consider the passage’s engagement of any relevant literary, political, or theological traditions. If you can give the date of the text, you’ll get a point for that as well. Though your answer need not be in essay form, you should use complete sentences for all parts of your response after the author and title.

Part II: CLOSE READING (70 points, 60 minutes). I will provide you with pairs of passages from different works, and with questions relating each pair of passages. You will choose one pair of passages, and write an essay in response to the question. Your essay will involve close reading of the two passages in comparison with one another. You might, for example, be asked to compare a poem by Dickinson with a passage from an Emerson essay, discussing the relationship between nature and the divine in the two texts. While your answer to this question should be most closely concerned with the provided passages, you may, of course, use insights from your general knowledge of the writers and their texts to enrich your argument.

Part III: ESSAY (80 points, 65 minutes). You will be asked to write a synthetic essay, in which you explore a theme or issue through three or four texts, ranging across the full span of the course. You will be free to choose the texts you wish to discuss, but you must include at least one text published in or before 1845 and one text published after 1845. You should allow about ten minutes to plan your answer, as you'll need to develop a specific thesis based on the question, and based on the texts you choose to work with.

STUDY TIPS:

1. Reread texts, going over your notes as you do. Obviously, you won't have time to reread all of the texts we've read this term. But use class notes to point you to important passages, and familiarize yourself with them. Think about passages from different texts that might be profitably compared and contrasted in Part II.

2. Consider themes, issues, problems, and concerns that have resurfaced in multiple texts. As you consider these themes, try to imagine how texts might fit into a discussion of them. For example, many of our writers have explored the relationship between the body and the soul. Consider which writers you could discuss in an essay on this topic, and what you might want to say about each. Even if you don't guess the precise topics that appear on the exam, thinking across texts and making connections will help you prepare for other questions as well.

3. See me if you have questions. I will hold office hours Monday May 1 from 1:30 to 3 pm. In addition, I will hold extra office hours on Thursday May 4 from 2 to 3:30 pm. If you need to reach me at other times, e-mail me or leave a message on my voice mail, and I'll return your call as soon as I can.

Class on Monday May 1 will include both discussion of Civil War poetry by Melville and Whitman and concluding comments. Note that on this occasion, you'll also have an opportunity to fill out course evaluations. On Wednesday May 3 there will be an optional review session at 11 am in our regular classroom. For this review session, please bring in two sample questions:

1. A pair of passages that might be profitably compared, and a question suggesting a comparison. (You needn’t retype the passages--just be prepared to direct your classmates to two passages by page number.)
2. A sample essay question.

In addition, please e-mail me a sample passage for identification, or type or xerox one on a piece of paper (with your name but without other identifying information) and bring it to class on Monday, May 1. I’ll use these passages to prepare a handout for us to use during our review and for you to practice with at home.

We’ll spend part of the review brainstorming the sample items that you supply. We’ll also have time for general questions and clarifications of the course material we've covered, so you might want to keep notes on things you'd like me to address. In fact, if you know in advance that you’d like me to address a particular question, e-mail me or drop a note in my box.