ENGL 330: American Romanticism
Tu/Th 2-3:15 | Sturges 134
Spring 2004

Professor Alice Rutkowski
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Course Description
In the years before the Civil War, writings in the United States captured both the vital spirit of the young republic and its already troubling contradictions. Students in this course will read a number of works written during this dynamic and restless period, both from “classic” authors such as Hawthorne and Thoreau as well as more “popular” writers such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Harriet Beecher Stowe. We'll also look closely at the historical and cultural contexts for these works especially as it relates to popular culture and reform movements.

Course objectives
Students will gain a thorough knowledge of American literature from the first half of the nineteenth century and be able to place works in a historical, biographical and cultural context. In addition, they will learn how to read and use literary criticism in the interpretation of literary works, develop original theses and construct critical arguments.

Required texts:
All texts are available at the campus bookstore, Sundance. If at all possible, please buy the edition indicated, to make finding page numbers easier for us all; for the starred (*) items, you must buy the edition indicated because they contain extra material not found elsewhere.
Douglass, Frederick. Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (Dover)
Emerson, Ralph Waldo. Self-Reliance and Other Essays (Dover)
*Fuller, Margaret. Woman in the Nineteenth Century (Norton critical)
Hawthorne, Nathaniel. House of the Seven Gables (Dover)
Jacobs, Harriet. Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (Penguin)
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. Favorite Poems (Dover)
Melville, Herman. Billy Budd and Other Stories (Penguin)
Poe, Edgar Allan. The Raven and Other Favorite Poems (Dover)
Poe. Tales of Terror and Detection (Dover)
Stowe, Harriet Beecher. Uncle Tom’s Cabin (Penguin)
*Thoreau, Henry David. Walden and Civil Disobedience (Houghton Mifflin)
Whitman, Walt. Leaves of Grass, 1855 ed. (Penguin)
*custom reader (Pearson Custom Library)
Plus, Electronic Reserve readings (ERes); class password is “romance”

Recommended Texts:
A good essay-writing handbook, such as The Bedford Handbook for Writers (Diana Hacker, Bedford) or the MLA Handbook for Writers (Joseph Gibaldi, MLA)
Evaluation
10-page critical essay  30%  
final exam  20%  
participation  20%  
bulletin board posts  20%  
group presentation  10%  

Final grades in my courses are not meant to come as a surprise and the calculations I use to arrive at them should not be mysterious. If, at any point during the semester, you would like to know what grade you have earned up to that point in the course, let me know. The procedure for inquiring about your current overall grade is as follows: 1) let me know you’d like to know your current grade (by email, in person, etc.) and then 2) schedule an office appointment with me. This will give me time to calculate your grade and then together we can discuss your performance in class.

Reading Assignments:  Reading assignments must be completed by the date they appear on the syllabus. Often the reading assignments are somewhat complicated – that is to say, there are several readings from several different places, so pay close attention to the syllabus. Students are expected to bring the assigned text to class; when the reading is from ERes, students must print a hard copy and bring it to class.

Essays:  see course schedule for due dates
Annotated bibliography and longer essay:  A bibliography/paper proposal will precede the paper and is designed to ensure every student’s paper addresses and interesting and arguable question. The proposal will not be graded, although I will comment extensively on it to help in the writing of the paper itself. Students who fail to complete the proposal will not be allowed to write the paper. The final version of the paper will be worth 30% of the final grade.

Format:  Papers should reflect attention to the conventions of standard English, including appropriate documentation (MLA).

Due dates:  papers are due in class on the day listed on the syllabus. Under extraordinary circumstances, extensions may be granted, provided you speak with me in advance. Late paper policy is as follows: penalties begin to accrue at 5 PM on the day the paper is due; up to one day (24 hours) late, penalty is 1/3 letter grade (e.g. A becomes an A-); up to two days late, 2/3; three days, 1 full grade; four days, 1 1/3; five days, 1 2/3; six days, 2 full grades; seven days, 2 2/3; more than seven days late, not accepted for credit without excuse certified by the Dean of Students’ office (this includes Counseling center).

Bulletin Board Posts
In lieu of a short first paper, students will post – ten times over the course of the semester – a short but pithy question/interpretation to the course electronic bulletin board. Students are responsible for keeping track of their own posts (although there are functions on the site to help you with this). At the end of the semester, students will turn in a portfolio of their best posts and this will count for 20% of the final grade. See assignment for more details on the logistics of this assignment.

Grading:  To receive an “A” on a paper or exam, you must do excellent work in all these areas: original thinking, organization, clear analysis, use of sufficient and specific evidence, and consistent and correct grammar and mechanics. I consider a grade of “B” a very good grade for work that is shy of excellent. Students who earn C’s and D’s fall short in these areas. In particular, they often
fail to have a thesis, i.e. an arguable point, and they fill their essays with summary rather than analysis. Visit the Writing Center on the second floor of Welles for help in any of these areas.

***To pass this course you must attempt all stages of the paper and the exam. Please keep a back-up copy of papers when you hand them in (either hard copy or disk). Should we disagree about whether or not you have turned in a paper, you will be able to produce a duplicate immediately.

**Group presentation:** These presentations will occur throughout the semester and will involve reading an extra critical article about the assigned primary text, explaining the article to the class and generating discussion. In the beginning of the semester, students will be assigned to groups according to their interests. A more detailed list of requirements and expectations about this assignment will follow; but in general, think of this as an opportunity to teach your classmates. These should be interactive, informative, and relatively polished presentations.

**Participation:** Participation in class discussion is critical to the success of the course, and therefore will figure into the final grade. I will keep track of both the quantity and the quality of each student’s contributions; this factor can raise-- or lower -- the final grade significantly. For more details on the expectations and standards for participation, please see the attached sheet.

**Policies**

**Attendance:** Attendance is expected and required; excessive absences can adversely affect your grade.

**Academic Honesty:** It is expected that the work you submit belongs to you and you alone. Any act of plagiarism or cheating will result in a failing grade on the assignment and the notification of the Dean of Students. Plagiarism includes using anyone else’s ideas or words without giving him or her credit, whether the author is a fellow student, a published author, or a web page on the Internet. It doesn’t matter how much you change the words if you are basically paraphrasing someone else’s ideas. If you want to engage with or acknowledge someone else’s ideas, include a clear and through citation. If you have any questions about plagiarism, feel free to speak to me. You may also find this Geneseo website helpful: http://library.geneseo.edu/~Liles/plagiarism.htm

**Course Calendar**

Tu Jan 13: Introduction to the course

Th Jan 15: exalting and tearing down the American Renaissance: (all ERes) Matthiessen, preface to *The American Renaissance*; Tompkins, “Masterpiece Theater,” Reynolds, introduction to *Beneath the American Renaissance*

Tu Jan 20: Poe, biographical headnote (reader, 1-6) and “The Poetic Principle” (reader, 7-27); from *The Raven and Other Favorite Poems*, “Sonnet – To Science,” “To Helen (“Helen, thy beauty is to me”), “Israfel,” “The City in the Sea,” “The Sleeper,” “The Valley of Unrest,” “Dream-land,” “The Raven,” “Ulalume,” “Annabel Lee,” “Alone.”

Th Jan 22: Poe, *Tales of Terror and Detection*; read all five stories

Tu Jan 27: Emerson, “Self-Reliance,” “The Over-Soul” and “The Poet” (19-38, 51-64, 65-82)

Th Jan 29: Fuller, “Autobiographical Romance” (Norton critical ed., 143-161), letters to and from Emerson (189-191) and begin *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Norton, 5-54).

Tu Feb 3: Fuller cont’d. Finish *Woman* (54-136) and reviews of Fuller: Brownson (213-216), Child (220-221) and Poe (223-226).
Th Feb 5: Douglass, *Narrative of the Life* (whole text including preface and letter); biographical headnote (reader, 29-35) and Fuller review (ERes)
Tu Feb 10: Sigourney, biographical headnote and all selections in reader (69-93)
Tu Feb 17: Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience” (15-36), Emerson, “Man the Reformer” (in Thoreau, 314-328) and *Walden* ch 1- ch 2 (39-106)
Th Feb 19: Thoreau, *Walden* ONLY ch 3- ch 6 (107-143) and ch 17 & conclusion (240-264) and Alcott, “Transcendental Wild Oats” (in Thoreau, 360-373).
Tu Feb 24: Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, author’s preface – ch 7 (ix – 78)
Th Feb 26: Hawthorne cont’d, ch 8 – ch 13 (79-166)
Tu Mar 2: Hawthorne cont’d, ch 14 – end (167-224)
Tu Mar 9 spring break
Th Mar 11 spring break
Tu Mar 16: Stowe cont’d, ch 13- ch 21 (214-377)
Tu Mar 18: Stowe cont’d, ch 22 – 32 (378-499)
Tu Mar 23: Stowe cont’d, ch 33 – end (500-629)
Th Mar 25: Douglass, “The Heroic Slave” (reader, 36-68); bibliography/proposal due
Tu Mar 30: Whitman, intro to *Leaves of Grass* (5-24) and begin “Song of Myself” (sections 1-32 or pp. 25-56)
Th Apr 1: Whitman, finish “Song of Myself” (57-86) and “The Sleepers” (105-115) and “I Sing the Body Electric” (116-123).
Tu Apr 6: Melville, bio headnote and “Hawthorne and His Mosses” (reader, 101-122) and “Benito Cereno” (159-258)
Th Apr 8: Melville, “Billy Budd” (287-385)
Tu Apr 20: Jacobs, finish text (127-259).
Th Apr 22: Whitman, war poetry from *Drum Taps* (ERes); final paper due

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, April 29, 12-3 PM