



AMERICAN LITERATURE 1800-1870

English BC 3180y ☛ Spring 2018
MW 2:40-3:55 ☛ Diana 203

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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 particularly 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 consider 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 answers ways in which other writers have answered those questions, and the new questions raised by their answers. Issues that we'll consider include the literary implications of political independence, the problem of history, the status and representation of Native Americans, the nature of the self, slavery and abolition, gender and woman's sphere, and the viability of American literature and of America as a nation.

TEXTS:

Baym, ed. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 8th edition, volume B (Norton)
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 the LeFrak Center. Links to texts available online, as well as links to supplementary material, are available on the course blog. **To join the blog, go to <http://edblogs.columbia.edu/englx3180-001-2018-1/> and log in using your uni.** Texts marked with a **W** on the schedule of readings below are available online, but are password protected. When you click on these links, you will be asked to enter a username and password. Enter the username **gordis** the password **texts**.




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

EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS:

The texts we'll be studying together are wonderful but challenging. The course is structured to help us work through these texts together, illuminating the issues and themes of the texts through close reading and through consideration of nineteenth-century American history and culture. For each reading assignment, I'll post reading notes offering some issues and questions to help you approach the reading. I'll also post some passages to which you will want to pay particular attention. The posted material will help you to navigate these texts, but you will still have to work actively to make sense of these challenging texts and to make them meaningful to you. The commonplace book assignment (explained below) will help you to make these texts your own.

The following assignments must be completed on the **course blog**:

- Profile editing, due January 24:** 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 may also click on "Your Avatar" in the menu at the left of the page to upload an image you'd like to use as an avatar. Also, please fill out the student data form at <https://airtable.com/shrIlrVUm8MhxhaSh>. (Follow the QR code at right or the link on the blog.)
 
- Close reading:** For each text, I'll post introductory materials under the category reading notes. Each set of reading notes will include several provocations—passages for close examination, themes to consider, topics about which to collect examples from the text. These provocations will help you to work with the text, and will also ground our discussions. **Each week**, you're required to post a comment in response to at least one of the provocations, for **a total of at least ten responses** over the course of the semester. (You have a few free weeks, which you may distribute as you choose across the semester.) To post a response to a provocation or a classmate's comment, click on **reply** beneath the post or comment.
- At least **twice during the semester**, you're required to post a comment on the **Questions and Reflections** page on the blog. These posts offer opportunities to take a step back, to think across course texts, to note patterns or issues that recur across the texts, to compare texts, or to consider issues of canon. To post, go to the **Questions and Reflections** page and click on reply, either to the instructions on the page or to a classmate's post.

You'll also keep a **commonplace book**, which you'll share on the course blog during the term and then on submit on paper at the end of the semester. A commonplace book is a literary collection, a set of passages and quotations copied into a book or notebook. Your commonplace books will anchor our class discussion, help us to follow themes and questions across course texts, and help you to develop paper topics. Each week, you'll choose one passage (1-20 lines) from the assigned reading, and copy it into a word-processing file. You should include the passage itself (with page references), as well as a few sentences about why you selected it and what questions it raises for you. Your commonplace book will take two forms, one personal and one communal:

- You'll compose your **personal commonplace book** on your computer, adding to it weekly. As the semester progresses, you may want to reorganize the list of passages, grouping them by

theme as you see connections emerge, or keeping the passages in chronological order. At the end of the semester, you'll hand in a **printed version** of your commonplace book.

- The printed version of your commonplace book should include a **reflection** (one to three paragraphs long) on the commonplace book and the experience of keeping it. Look over the passages you've chosen and your comments about them. Do you notice any patterns or common themes in the passages you've chosen? How does the printed version seem different from the online version? If you like, you may revise, reformat, or illustrate your commonplace book.
- You should have a **minimum of ten** commonplace book entries. As with the close reading assignment, this allows you to skip a few weeks when you're especially busy.
- To create a **class commonplace book**, you'll post each commonplace book entry on the blog, including both the passage and your comments about it. **To post your passage to the blog**, copy your post from the word processed document you've composed. Then go to the blog dashboard by logging into the blog. You should see a black bar at the top of the screen, where you can click on **"New"** and then click on **"Post."** This will take you to an editing screen, and you can copy and paste your text there. Once you've adjusted the format to your satisfaction, **assign your post to the category "Commonplace books"** and to the relevant categories for **your name** and for the passage's **author and title**. Then click **"Update"** at the right side of the screen.

In addition to your printed commonplace book, you will write a **6-8-page essay**. I'll distribute details about the essay assignment in a few weeks. You'll also write an in-class **final examination**.

Essays must be typed, double-spaced, on white paper in standard fonts. Papers should follow MLA guidelines for essays. If you find yourself unable to complete an assignment by the due date, please speak to me in advance about an extension. Work that is late without an extension will be penalized, but it's always better to submit work late than not to submit it at all.

The Barnard English department, like Barnard College as a whole, values intellectual integrity very highly. Using the work of others without proper attribution is plagiarism, a serious violation of academic standards and of the Barnard Honor Code. 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.

In addition to the written assignments described above, you are expected to **attend class** consistently. You should arrive on time, and you are responsible for signing in each day. You should come prepared to discuss the assigned reading. This means bringing your texts and relevant notes (especially if you've been reading on reserve or online), as we will be working closely with the texts in class. We'll sometimes extend discussion of a text into the next class meeting, so pay attention to where we stop each day and pack your texts accordingly.

I will calculate your grade based on the following formula:

essay:	30%
commonplace book:	20%
blog comments:	15%
final exam:	30%
class participation:	5%

SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

NA=*The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 8th edition, volume B

- January 17 Introduction
Washington Irving, *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent* (1819-20): "The Author's Account of Himself" (handout and NA 27-29)
- January 22 *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, continued:
"The Art of Book Making" (online), "Christmas Day" (online), "Traits of Indian Character" (online), "Rip Van Winkle" (NA 29-41), "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (NA 41-62), "Philip of Pokanoket" (optional, online).
- January 24 James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826)
DUE: Blog assignment: profile editing
- January 29 Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*, continued
Statements from the debate on Indian Removal (online)
- January 31 William Apress, *Eulogy on King Philip, as Pronounced at the Odeon, in Federal Street, Boston* (1836) (in *A Son of the Forest and Other Writings*, pages 103-138); "Native Americans: Removal and Resistance" (NA 349), Boudinot, "To the Public" (1828) (NA 357-60); "Memorial of the Cherokee Council, November 5, 1829," (NA 361-366)
- February 5 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (1836) (NA 214-43)
Possible optional screening of "The Last of the Mohicans," 7:30 pm in Barnard 302
- February 7 Emerson, *Nature*, continued
- February 12 Emerson, continued: *The American Scholar* (1837) (NA 243-56), *The Divinity School Address* (1838) (NA 256-69), "Self-Reliance" (1841) (NA 269-286)
- February 14 Emerson, continued: "Experience" (1844) (NA 310-26), "John Brown" (1860) (NA 326-8), "The Poet" (1844) (NA 295-310)
- February 19 Walt Whitman, Preface to *Leaves of Grass* (1855) (NA 1314-29), "Song of Myself" from *Leaves of Grass* (1855, 1881) (NA 1330-1374), "Letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson" (1856) (NA 1409-1416)
- February 21 Whitman, continued;
DUE: Preliminary essay proposal
- February 26 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (1854) (NA 980-1155)
- February 28 *Walden*, continued
- March 5 Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (1845) (NA 1174-1239)
- March 7 Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (3-105)
- March 12 *** SPRING BREAK--NO CLASS**
- March 14 *** SPRING BREAK--NO CLASS**
- March 19 Edgar Allan Poe, "Sonnet--To Science" (1829, 1845) (NA 633), "The Raven" (1845) (NA 637-40), "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846) (NA 719-27),

- "Ligeia" (1838) (NA 644-53), "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) (NA 654-67), "William Wilson. A Tale" (1839) (NA 667-80), "The Imp of the Perverse" (1842) (online)
- March 21 Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) (NA 450-593), Preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* (NA 594-5)
- March 26 *The Scarlet Letter*, continued
- March 28 Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (1851) (Read at least to the end of chapter 42, pp. xxxvii-212 in the Penguin edition.)
- March 29 **DUE: Essay working draft (optional but highly recommended)**
- April 2 *Moby-Dick*, continued (Read at least to the end of chapter 82, p. 398 in the Penguin edition.)
- April 4 *Moby-Dick*, continued (Finish the novel.)
- April 9 Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) (Read at least to the end of chapter 30, p. 386 in the Barnes & Noble edition.)
- April 11 *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, continued (Finish the novel.)
- April 16 Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861)
- April 18 *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, continued
- April 23 Emily Dickinson, (Franklin edition) Poems 39, 112, 123, 124, 146, 194, 202, 207, 225, 236, 256, 260, 279, 320, 339, 355, 359, 365, 373, 372, 381, 407, 409, 411, 446, 448, 466, 477, 479, 519, 576, 588, 591, 598, 620, 764, 788, 857, 1096, 1263, 1577, 1665, 1715 (NA 1663-1700) plus selected additional poems (handout)
- DUE: ESSAY**
- April 25 Emily Dickinson, (Franklin edition) Poems 194, 225, 269, 279, 339, 355, 372, 381, 409, 411, 466, 479, 576, 588, 591, 598, 620, 648, 760, 764, 788, 857, 1096, 1263, 1577, 1665 (NA 1663-1700) plus selected additional poems (handout)
- April 30 Civil War Poetry and Conclusion
Dickinson, Poem 138 (handout); Whitman, *Drum-Taps* (1865) (excerpts in NA 1395-1402 plus handout); Melville, *Battle Pieces and Aspects of War* (1866) (excerpts in NA 2461-2465 plus handout)
- * DUE: PRINT COMMONPLACE BOOK**
*** DUE: ALL REQUIRED BLOG POSTINGS AND COMMENTS**
- May 2 **OPTIONAL REVIEW SESSION in Diana 203**

FINAL EXAMINATION scheduled by registrar, currently projected for **Wednesday May 9 at 1 pm** in **Diana 203**.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Students will read wondrous works of nineteenth-century American authors. They will consider these texts in light of the history and culture of nineteenth-century America. In the process, they will develop their abilities to think critically, to read analytically, and to use textual evidence in support of oral and written arguments.

Reading Strategies

The readings for this course are quite challenging, and will require very active engagement from you. When you read the assigned texts, you should prepare to participate actively in class discussion. The reading notes posted on the blog will help you to navigate specific texts, but you should also bear the following general strategies in mind.

General approaches:

Depending on the length of the text, you may need to read some sections of it quickly. But choose some sections to read closely, paying attention to details of language, imagery, syntax, and argumentative strategy.

Consider broader patterns in the text as well. Does the author repeat certain phrases, or favor a certain image or kind of imagery? Consider the overall shape and structure of the text. How is it put together?

As you read, consider how the text addresses issues we've been discussing over the course of the term. Which texts does it resemble most closely? How does the author's approach compare to the approaches of other authors we've been studying?

Don't let these issues stand in the way of your own idiosyncratic approach. How do you react to the text? If you like it, what do you like? If you dislike it, what bugs you about it? Once you've identified these elements, see what you can learn from them.

Strategies:

Take notes as you read. You need not outline the reading, but you should mark and make notes about, jot down, or copy and paste (if you're working with online texts) passages that seem particularly significant or interesting.

Also mark or take notes on passages that seem difficult or confusing, and spend some time trying to figure out what's going on in those passages. Some of our readings will be challenging. In most cases, you need not figure out every detail of the author's argument, but you should try to figure out what's at stake and try to understand how the author is approaching the issue or question. What makes the passage (or text) challenging? Try to pinpoint what's confusing you. Feel free to email me or to raise these questions in class.

Use the blog—the reading notes, the passages I post, and your commonplace book—to raise questions and to address those questions in conversation with your classmates. I encourage you to read the reading notes for each assigned text before you dive into the text itself. You might also want to bookmark the pages for which there are provocations, so that when you reach them in your reading, you'll know to refer to the blog posts.

A note on logistics:

You should come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading. This means bringing your texts and relevant notes (especially if you've been reading on reserve or online), as we will be working closely with the texts in class. We'll sometimes extend discussion of a text into the next class meeting, so pay attention to where we stop each day and pack your texts accordingly.