English 331.001
American Romanticism and Transcendentalism

Instructor: Steve Marsden
Department: English and Creative Writing
Class Hours: 12:00-12:50 MWF
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Course Description
Our course catalogue states that this course is

American Romantic/Transcendental Literature - A close study of American Literature from the early 1800s through the Civil War. The course will cover literary schools of the period and major authors, such as Cooper, Irving, Emerson, Thoreau, Dickinson, Fuller, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, Douglass and Whitman.

Course Outcomes
By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- Recognize and understand the varying ways that Romantic and related ideas informed some canonical (and less canonical) works in the period
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the main authors of the period / movement and their chief contribution to American letters, thought, and popular culture
- Demonstrate your understanding of some of the social movements that informed and were informed by American Transcendentalism
- Research and present on historical topics important to the literature, ideas, and figures covered
- Use appropriate research skills to produce a high-quality scholarly or literary-critical paper

Program Outcomes
This course should help serve the following official outcomes for the English major and minor:

- The student will demonstrate the ability to read complex texts, closely and accurately.
- The student will demonstrate the ability to comprehend both traditional and contemporary schools/methods of critical theory and apply them to literary texts to generate relevant interpretations.
- The student will demonstrate knowledge of literary history in regard to particular periods of World, British and American literature.
- The student will demonstrate ability to effectively conduct literary research.
• The student will demonstrate the ability to write clear, grammatically correct prose for a variety of purposes in regards to literary analysis.

**Required Textbooks**


There may be many other short works provided in handout and online.

Some works may also be assigned through online copies or through electronic course reserves. It would be wise to print these out or bring them on a laptop, phone or tablet (whatever way will work for you). Background information will frequently be provided in the form of web links or handouts: you’re responsible for reading and keeping up with these.

**Course Policies**

**Phones**
If you have a cell phone, please silence it and keep it put out of your line of sight during our course, unless you are conducting research on a point of current discussion or answering a question. If I see you texting or browsing, I may ask what you’re looking up. Have an answer related to the course.

If you must receive calls due to some developing emergency, please set the phone to a silent setting. If you must talk on your phone due to some earth-shattering emergency, please leave our classroom to do so.

**Eating, Drinking, Sleeping and So On**
Feel free to drink coffee or eat anything that's not loud, messy, and/or smelly. Please clean up after yourself, however. If you sleep in class, you will be woken up. At least feigning attention and interest is very important: please don't read the newspaper, listen to headphones or send instant messages during class.

**Reading, Participation, and Note Taking**
This course is reading intensive, and some of the works we will be studying will be quite difficult. Budget your time and read ahead when necessary. Take notes as you read and write out questions about your reading for use in class. Mark up your books. Reread when necessary. Talk about your reading outside of class. Ask questions in class. If you find anything particularly impenetrable and need help, feel free to drop by my office hours to chat about it. My job is to help you understand this stuff.

This course is taught largely as a dialogue—I ask and answer questions. The students who get the most out of the class are those who participate well in class discussion. If you can answer, do.

**Contact by Email**
Correspondence relating to this course must use your sfasu email account. **Please do not use D2L mail**, as it will slow my response. The subject line must be ENG331. I am not certain to respond to emails with any other subject line, especially if they resemble spam. I never accept assignments by email, and emails with attachments will not be opened. If you want me to discuss sensitive matters like grades over email, you must making sure I have a signed letter giving me permission to send information through this potentially insecure medium.

**Plagiarism**
I take plagiarism very seriously. According to SFASU Policies and Procedures:

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp)

If a student’s paper contains plagiarized material, the student will meet with me, and I will determine the outcome, which typically involve penalties from an un-revisable zero on the paper to an F for the course. In addition, an Academic Dishonesty Form may be filed. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, or fear you may not have properly cited something, please talk to me immediately.

**Attendance and Absences**
Regular attendance is required for success in this course. Lectures and discussions will highlight what sorts of things will be on the tests, there will be frequent short writing assignments and frequent reading quizzes will be given at the beginning or the end of classes. Please arrive on time. No homework or in-class assignments may be made up unless your absence is excused or has been pre-arranged with me at least a full day in advance. If you miss a class for a university-excused reason, you must (by the second day you return to class) present me with a typed memo explaining the reason for your absence, and you should attach any documentation (such as a note from your doctor) to this memo.

Regardless of the reason for your absence, you are responsible for all information and work covered in class. If you missed homework or in-class assignments during an excused absence, it is your responsibility to find out what you’ve missed and arrange
with me to make it up.

After four unexcused absences, every additional unexcused absence will result in a deduction of 5 percentage points from your total grade. Usually, that total will already be quite low due to missed quizzes and poor test preparation. According to state and university policy on contact hours, after the equivalent of three weeks’ time missed (9 classes in this course) excused or unexcused, you may not earn a passing grade in the course. Be careful not to exceed this threshold, and talk to me if you fear you will.

**Late Papers and Free Homework Late**
Each student has one (1) free late homework assignment: to use it, write “Oops” clearly at the top of the completed assignment and turn it in within one week of the assigned due date (and before the last day of class). Other than this “oops” assignment, no late homework will be accepted without a university-approved absence or a very compelling excuse (my judgment) in writing, detailing your reasons and providing evidence as necessary.

Major papers turned in after the beginning of the class period on which they are due will be considered late, and will have one full letter grade (10 percentage points) deducted from their final grade. Another full letter grade will be deducted for each weekday that passes. The easiest way to receive a very poor grade in this course is to turn things in late. Do not turn in papers at my office (under the door or in the mailbox outside) without arranging it with me in advance via email. I am not responsible for the loss of papers turned in that way, or your subsequently lower grade.

**Turnitin Submission**
In addition to the paper copy turned in during class, all major papers must be turned in to turnitin (through dropbox in D2l) in electronic copies. I may choose to grade either the electronic or paper copies of major assignments, depending on the time, so you must make them both available. Turnitin submissions are due at the same time the paper is due in class. Students are responsible for making sure the turnitin copy and the paper copy are identical, and that the paper is successfully posted. No major paper will be awarded a score other than 0 without a turnitin submission.

**Extra Credit**
Several times during the semester, I will announce extra credit assignments. Extra credit will only be assigned in class (it will not be posted on the website). Please do not ask me for individual extra credit. Any extra credit assignments I given will be applied to the homework / quiz score, and will be offered to everyone. With extra credit, the daily work score will top at 100%.

**Students with Disabilities**
To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a
timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

Assignments and Grade Determination

We will have two exams, both in a take-home format, a cultural or historical research project presented in new media, and one literary-critical paper project, divided into a proposal, an annotated bibliography, and a short critical paper. The remainder of the course grade will be determined by very short reading quizzes (one or two objective questions), short response papers or an in-class assignments.

**Grade Breakdown**
- Quizzes, responses, daily work: 15%
- Midterm exam: 15%
- Final exam: 15%
- New media / podcast/ screencast project: 15%
- Term paper proposal: 5%
- Term paper annotated bib: 10%
- Term paper: 25%

**Percentage Grade**
- 90-100 A
- 80-89 B
- 70-79 C
- 60-60 D
- 0-59 F

**Tests**
Tests in the course will be in the form of a “take home” midterm and a final. In both, you will choose one of several essay questions on themes that are important to the course, and will link several works together. These will be open book and note exams, but you needn’t use outside secondary sources (you must document them scrupulously if you do). More details will be forthcoming.

**Short Responses**
Often, I'll have you write some relatively informal response to the readings for a day. These should be about a page in length, should be typed, must use MLA 8 format and documentation, and will have other requirements as posted. The intention is to get you thinking and recording what you think about the works, and to prepare you for class.

5 = Excellent, flawless: Very insightful, and otherwise dazzlingly good. I think "wow! I wonder if I can get a copy to teach with next semester!" This is a rare score.
4.5 = Very good: Accomplishes everything needed with style and economy, reflects a strong understanding of the subject matter, and has no very significant errors. I think
"good!"

4 = Good: Does the work expected, and contains only errors that might be expected of the average careful student at this point in the semester. I think "okay."

3.5 = Needs some work: Ideas may be incomplete or unfocused, organization may be sloppy. May be “off” in tone or style. I think "well, okay, I guess."

3 = Needs a lot of work: May be unclear in spots, or have numerous, embarrassing, or unprofessional errors. I think "well, maybe next time."

2 = Unacceptable: Fails to accomplish some aspect of the assignment, or has a variety of unprofessional errors. I think "maybe he or she had a high fever or something."

1 = Token effort: Wrong assignment or shows very little work. Accomplishes little of what the assignment asks. Reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of the assignment or a deficit of effort or skill. I think "why did I ever get into this line of work?" A paper with a name on it and a sentence, turned in on time.

0 =Didn't turn paper in: I think "hmm, I wonder if he or she has dropped the course?"

**Reading Quizzes**

Often, at the beginning or end of the class period, I will ask one question, answerable by one well-constructed sentence, about something we've read. They will be graded on a three point scale, as follows:

0 You weren't there to take the quiz or didn't put your name on it.

1 You have your name on the paper, and what you have written is indeed a sentence.

2 Your answer represents a good attempt, and shows that you've read the work with some care, but isn't entirely correct.

3 The sentence answers the question and indicates that you've read well and attentively.

The head-notes and author notes are fair game for these questions. I don't intend these to be hard or trick questions, but they will require that you read and remember what you have read. If you have an excused absence on a day when we have a reading quiz, you must bring a memo to me within two class periods explaining your absence and providing what documentation is possible. Then I will ask you another question about that day's reading. If you come in late and don't turn in a signed paper, or you have an unexcused absence and miss a quiz, you will receive a 0.

**New Media / Screencast / Podcast Presentation**

Modern literary analysis for popular audiences often includes more than academic papers, and academic paper writing fails to teach some communications skills that are valuable in the world of teaching, business, and cultural production. Working either alone or in a group of 2-3, you will pick an, and make an informative, enthusiastic and engaging screencast, podcast, or video (with supporting web text) that teaches a work or an issue within a work to a wider non-academic audience while incorporating contextual research and the fruits of close reading, to be released into the wilds of the internet. Make it matter, and show how your topic matters to your specific audience in 2018. You'll turn in the presentation, any scripts you made, and a brief paper from each participant detailing
the process. The process, documentation of research and sources, and individual contributions will constitute 20% of the grade, the final product 80%.

**Term Paper Proposal**

Your term paper proposal will be a brief document (maximum of three pages) explaining the area you plan to work in for your term paper and what you would like to accomplish with it. It will include what works you plan to deal with, and as much explanation about the question you plan to answer, the approach you plan to take, and the themes you plan to engage as you can. You should supply evidence of thorough preliminary research (what searches you’ve conducted, and what strong sources you’ve already discovered).

It will be graded on mechanics and format, completeness, and rhetorical strength (how you prove to me that the topic will be excellent and you will do it well). Proposals without evidence of strong research can not get an A.

**Annotated Bibliography for Term Paper**

After you’ve gotten the go-ahead on your paper topic, you will find a minimum of six great possible sources for your term paper. One should be a biography or historical work, at least two should be written in the last 15 years, and all should be scholarly and relevant. You’ll write an annotated bibliography, using MLA style (8th ed), and good, complete annotations. A detailed prompt, example entry, and grading rubric will be made available.

**Term Paper**

The term paper is a 7-10 page paper. You may go over length if you feel it absolutely necessary, but seven full pages (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12, 1 inch margins, not including the required Works Cited page) are needed to avoid points deduction. In this rather brief paper, you will engage one small, manageable aspect of a work or two on the syllabus, coming up with a thesis and proving it through careful reference to the specifics of the text(s). You must use at least four good, relevant, scholarly (no non-peer-reviewed) outside sources to bolster your argument or to argue against. You will be graded on your analysis, your writing skills, your ability to incorporate quotation and outside evidence, and your conformity to standards of grammar, punctuation, and format.

Longer prompts and grading rubrics for all the major written assignments will be handed out in class well in advance of their due dates.

**Important Dates**

Take Home Exam 1 due, Monday, October 8

Proposal due—Friday, November 2

Podcast / Screencast / New Media project—None accepted after November 16.

Annotated bib due—Monday, November 26

RD Workshop—Wednesday, December 5

FD Due in class and on D2L—Friday, December 7
Final Exam—take home due by Wednesday, December 12 1-3pm.

**Reading Schedule**

An extremely tentative reading schedule follows below. Expect the readings to be tuned for reading speed, time available, and student interest. In addition to the readings listed, there will often be short handouts of less-canonical writers, as well as background readings. The weekly posts on D2L will be the authoritative source for reading and homework assignments.

**Week 1**
Introduction—critical terms, genres, an irresponsibly brief history of Romanticism elsewhere

Washington Irving, “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” “The Adventure of the German Student” (online)

William Cullen Bryant, “Thanatopsis,” “To a Waterfowl,” “The Prairies”

**Week 2**

**Week 3**

**Week 4**
Handouts. Native American issues.

Margaret Fuller--“The Great Lawsuit,” handouts or online reading for, other writings. Proto-feminism and romanticism

**Week 5**
Bronson Alcott and Louisa May Alcott Transcendentalism and education—Handouts

Thoreau: “Resistance to Civil Government,” begin *Walden*

**Week 6**
Continue *Walden*

**Week 7**
Take Home Exam due, **Monday, October 8**, Hawthorne short stories

Hawthorne SS
Hawthorne SS and background on

**Week 8**
Hawthorne SSs,
Douglass’s autobiography, other abolition materials

**Week 9**
Slavery / abolition material

**Week 10**
Melville short fiction and poetry

Melville short fiction and poetry

**Proposal due, Friday, November 2**
Melville short fiction and poetry

**Week 11**
Poe: short stories, poems, and critical essays

**Week 12**
Finish Poe

Whitman: “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,”

Whitman “Song of Myself”:  **Last day for New Media Projects. Friday, November 16**

**Week 13**
Thanksgiving

**Week 14**
Finish Whitman, Other voices TBA, begin Dickinson (Catch up)
Annotated bibliography due,  **Monday, November 26**

Dickinson poems to be announced.

Dickinson TBA

**Week 15**
Civil War materials TBA

**RD Workshop-Wednesday, December 5**

**FD Due in class and on D2L: Friday, December 7th**

**Final Exam due:** Final Exam—take home due by Wednesday, December 12 1-3pm.