

American Literature Before 1865

Instructor: Prof. Chen-chen Tseng

Thr 9:10- 12:00

文二 B103

Office Hours: Thr 14:00-16:00 or by appointment

Email address: cctsen0204@gmail.com

Goals:

1. Introduce to students selected writings by canonical authors of American Literature before 1865.
2. Introduce to students major critical studies on American Literature before 1865.
3. Introduce to students recurrent themes of the Colonial American Literature and religious, cultural and political debates leading to American Renaissance.
4. Train students to do research and oral reports on selected works or authors in a small group.
5. Train students to write brief reviews on selected works or a topic related to American Renaissance.

Schedule:

- Sep.21 Introduction: "The American Sublime"
Robert Alter, "America as a Scriptural Culture," the Prelude to *Pen of Iron: American Prose and the King James Bible* (Princeton, 2010)
- Sep.28 **Literature before 1700:**
Critical Writing: Excerpts from Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions : The Wonder of the New World*.
Selected readings from *The Iroquois Creation Story*
Christopher Columbus, "Letter...Regarding the First Voyage" and "Letter...Regarding the fourth voyage"
William Bradford, Selected passages from *Of Plymouth Plantation* regarding John Smith and Pocahontas
John Winthrop, Selected passages from *The Journal of John Winthrop* regarding the case of Anne Hutchinson
Anne Bradstreet, "The Prologue," "The Author to her Book," "A Letter to Her Husband Absent Upon Public Employment" "To My Dear Children"
Mary Rowlandson, Selected Passages from *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*

Recommended Reading: Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* (2009)

- Oct. 5 **Early American Literature 1700-1820:**
Critical Writing: Excerpts from Sacvan Bercovitch. *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*.
Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God"
Edward Taylor, "On a Wasp in the Frigid Air"
Benjamin Franklin, Selected passages from Part Two of *The Autobiography*
J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, "Letter III: What is an American?"
from *Letters from an American Farmer*
Thomas Jefferson, *The Declaration of Independence*
- Oct. 12 **American Literature 1820-1865:**
Critical Writing: Excerpts from Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting 1825-1875*
Washington Irving, "Rip Van Winkle"*** 1 and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"
James Fenimore Cooper, Selected Passages from Chapters II and III of *The Pioneers*
- Oct. 19 Critical Writing: Excerpts from "Introduction" in Lawrence Buell ed., *The American Transcendentalists: Essential Writing*
Ralph Waldo Emerson, Selected Passages from "Nature," "The American Scholar," *** 2 "Self-Reliance," and "The Poet"
(for the most prominent female transcendentalist, read Margaret Fuller;
for the most prominent female novelist resurrected by feminist critics ,
read Catharine Maria Sedgwick and Fanny Fern)
(for the most prominent black author of Emerson's contemporary
writing for the anti-slavery cause, read Frederick Douglass, especially
his *Narrative of the Life* published in 1845; for the female slave
narrative, read Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*
published in 1861.)
- Oct. 26 Critical Writing: Excerpts from David S. Reynolds. *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville*.
Nathaniel Hawthorne, " My Kinsman, Major Monlineux" *** 3
"Young Goodman Brown"*** 4
"Wakefield"
- Nov. 2 Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter**** 6
- Nov. 9 Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter**** 7

- Nov. 16 **Midterm**
- Nov. 30 Edgar Allan Poe, “Raven,” “Annabel Lee,” “The Philosophy of Composition,” “The Tell Tale Heart,” “Ligeia,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,”*** 8 “The Masque of the Red Death,” “The Purloined Letter” *** 9
- Recommended Reading: Kenzaburo ō ōe 大江健三郎, *The Beautiful Annabel Lee Was Chilled and Killed* 《優美的安娜貝爾·李寒徹顫慄早逝去》(2007/2009) 10
- Dec. 7 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (Chapter 1: Economy, Chapter 9: The Pond, and Chapter 17: Spring *** 11), Selected Passages from *Kttadn* and “Walking”
- Recommended reading: a play by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee, *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail* (1972)*** 12
- Dec. 14 Walt Whitman, Selected Poems from *Song of My Self* (1881)*** 13 “Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking”
- Dec. 21 Walt Whitman, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” *** 14 and “When Lilac Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d”***15
- Dec. 28 Herman Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener”***16, “Burito Cereno,” “Billy Budd, Sailor” and selections from *Moby Dick*
- Jan. 4 A 1956 Film adapted from Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, Directed by John Huston
- Jan. 11 **Emily Dickinson, Selected Poems**
- Jan. 18 **Final**

Requirements: 1. regular attendance, 2. writing assignments: lists of 20 vocabulary and 5 selected passages for each canonical author, 3. improvised assignments. 4. taking part in small-group oral presentation.

Grading Policy: attendance 15%, improvised assignments 5%, mid-term 25%, final 25%, writing assignments 15%, oral presentation 15%.

Due Dates: Each writing assignment should be submitted prior to the instruction week.

Oral Presentation: Students are to be divided into **16** groups. Each group should spend 30+ minutes to do oral reports on one selected work marked with “***”. The presentation should cover the general introduction to the work, followed by a more focused critical reading on the work, and finally conclude by commenting on some selected passages of the work. The oral presentation should be delivered preferably in English.

Textbooks: *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 8th edition, Vols A & B
(available at 東華書坊)

References:

On “the American Sublime”:

Harold Bloom, *The Daemon Knows: Literary Greatness and the American Sublime*.
Harvard UP, 2015

On the literary History of America:

Greil Marcus and Werner Sollors eds. *A new Literary History of America*. Cambridge,
Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 2009

On studying American Literature from the global perspective:

Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell eds. *Shades of the Planet: American
Literature and World Literature*. Princeton UP, 2007

On Early American Literature:

The Cambridge Introduction to Early American Literature

On Puritanism and Early American Literature:

Sacvan Bercovitch. *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*. Yale UP, 1977

On American Adam:

R. W. B. Lewis. *The American Adam*. U of Chicago P, 1959

On American Transcendentalism:

Lawrence Buell ed. *The American Transcendentalists: Essential Writings*. Modern
Library, 2006

On the American Renaissance:

F. O. Matthiessen. *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson
and Whitman*. Oxford UP 1946

David S. Reynolds. *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination
in the Age of Emerson and Melville*. Harvard UP, 1989

David Leverenz. *Manhood and the American Renaissance*. Cornell UP, 1989

Walter Benn Michaels and Donald E. Pease eds. *The American Renaissance
Reconsidered*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1989

On each individual author since Washington Irving:

Andrew Delbanco, *Melville: His World and Work*. New York: Vintage Books, 2005

The Cambridge Introduction to Nathaniel Hawthorne

The Cambridge Introduction to Herman Melville

The Cambridge Introduction to Walt Whitman

The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson

The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allen Poe

The Cambridge Companion to Henry David Thoreau