Eng 341: American Renaissance

Spring 2016

Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-10:45 am in Hyland 1303

**Office Hours:**

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11-12,

Wednesdays 1-2,

and by appointment

Dr. Josh Mabie

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Office: Laurentide 3210

**Course Description (from the UW-W course catalogue):**

“An exploration of major works by writers of mid-nineteenth-century America, such as Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Melville, and Dickinson, with consideration of their historical context.”

**Course Description (From the advertisement):**

“Democratic nations . . . will habitually prefer the useful to the beautiful, and they will require that the beautiful should be useful . . . No longer able to soar to what is great, they cultivate what is pretty and elegant, and appearance is more attended to than reality.”

-Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in American*, Volume II, 1840

For quite some time UW-Whitewater’s course catalogue has called the first of its two nineteenth-century American Literature classes “American Renaissance,” presumable after F.O Mattiessen’s 1941 work of the same name*.* A renaissance is literally a “re-birth,” but it is also any “period of exceptional revival of the arts and intellectual culture” (eg. Italian Renaissance, Harlem Renaissance), and Matthiessen claims that the “half-decade of 1850-1855” is unequalled in all of American literary history. It was, he observes, in this remarkably narrow span that Emerson’s *Representative Men*, Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*, Melville’s *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre,* Thoreau’s *Walden*, and Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* first “appeared.”

Matheissen raises three possible questions about this period’s exceptional revival of the arts and intellectual culture: *how* these books came out of American literary history, *why* it happened at this particular moment in American economic, social, political and religious history, and *what* these works were as works of art? Mathiessen focuses the following 655 pages of his book on the last question. We will consider all three, but rather than simply defer to the questions that were asked by a work of literary criticism that was published before many of your grandparents were born, we will ask other questions as well. Is this period exceptional? Does this period mark the birth of American art? Did these books have any effect on nineteenth-century readers, politics, religion, and art. Do they continue to exert pressure on our view of our history, our experience of the natural environment, and our politics (this is a presidential election year after all). We will not limit our investigation of nineteenth-century American literature to the first half of the decade before the Civil War and we will not limit our reading to the five readers that Mathiessen and the catalogue description list.

**Textbooks**

Melville, Herman. *Moby-Dick*. New York: Norton, 2002. (for purchase)

The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Volume B (1820-1865). New York: Norton,

2012. (UWW rental)

**What you can expect to learn in English 341** (**Course Objectives)**

After successfully completing this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge by:

* Delineating the features and aims of American romanticism with reference to classicism, realism, and modernism.
* Identifying significant works of American romanticism.
* Describing the opportunities and challenges that romanticism’s

aesthetic and political commitments presented to late nineteenth century women writers, writers of color, and the poor.

* Analyzing and describing literary style by with reference to diction, syntax, imagery, details, and figurative language.
* Explaining nineteenth century American writers’ positions on the role of ethics, morality, and virtue in literature.

2. Demonstrate that they have acquired and refined writing and research skills by:

* Developing interesting and important questions and arguments
* Finding, evaluating, interpreting, and synthesizing secondary material about literary texts to engage and participate in ongoing scholarly conversations.
* Completing a research paper.

3. Develop ideas about literature’s ability to exert pressure on social and

political problems, both by enforcing the status quo and by stimulating

change.

4. Consider the degree to which literature can or cannot communicate unfamiliar experiences to readers with enough force to move them.

5. Bring knowledge from other disciplines (history, the social and natural sciences, and the arts) to bear upon the study of literature.

**Course Outcomes**

English 342 contributes to the following LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes:

You will gain:

★*Knowledge of Human Cultures*

Engage with big questions, both contemporary and enduring

★*Intellectual and Practical Skills, including*

Inquiry and analysis

Critical and creative thinking

Written and oral communication

Teamwork and problem solving

★*Personal and Social Responsibility*

Civic Knowledge and engagement – local and global

Intercultural Knowledge and competence

Ethical reasoning and action

Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

★*Integrative and Applied Learning*

Across general and specialized studies

**Course Requirements**

1. Exercises (Post these to D2L)

Write a thesis

Summarize a scholarly article of your choice (4 sentences)

Write a claim that engages a scholarly article’s thesis

Describe a primary source

Write a claim that engages a primary source

2. Annotated bibliography (6 secondary sources – 4 sentence annotations)

3. Bibliographic essay (4 related secondary sources 3 pages)

4. Final paper (8 Pages)

5. Mid-Term

6. Final Exam

7. Conversation Starter

Each student will present a one- or two-sentence, arguable thesis about one day’s reading. Like all good theses, these argumentative statements should be clear, debatable, and appropriately focused. Please email your conversation starter to me (mabiej@uww.edu) by 9:00 am on the day that it is due.

8. Quizzes

You will have opportunities to engage with the reading in short answer written form over the course of the semester. I give these quizzes to encourage you to keep up with the reading, to give you an opportunity to voice your responses to the course material, and to spur discussion. Given these objectives, I am not interested in quizzing you over the minutia of the reading or in tricking you. I am interested in giving you an opportunity to demonstrate your engagement with the major themes, questions, and concepts of the course and the texts. The quizzes are unscheduled and cannot be made up if they are missed.

1. Class participation and Attendance

This course cannot succeed without vigorous student participation. Please come to class having carefully read the assignment and be prepared to voice your thoughts. Please also come to class on time, stay the whole time, be attentive, and participate thoughtfully.

I will assess your participation according to the following criteria:

A Did not miss class, completed the reading and brought original ideas or arguments about it to class, made thoughtful verbal contributions to the discussion most days, provided especially thorough feedback during peer review sessions.

B Missed only one or two classes, completed the reading and was ready to talk about it, made contributions to discussion once or twice a week, provided helpful feedback during peer review sessions.

C Came to class regularly, completed the reading, but hadn’t really thought about it, spoke in class only when called upon, completed peer review.

D Missed more than 3 classes, listened to iPod, surfed the internet, texted friends, provided meager peer review feedback.

F Absent for long stretches of time, disengaged or disruptive during class, unwilling or unable to engage when called upon.

Grading

Your final grade will be figured according to the following percentages:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | **Percentage of Grade** |
| Exercises (Posted to D2L)  Write a thesis  Summarize a scholarly article (4 sentences)  Write a claim that engages a scholarly article’s thesis  Describe a primary source (4 sentences)  Write a claim that engages a primary source | 10 |
| Annotated bibliography (6 secondary sources – 4 sentence annotations) | 10 |
| Bibliographic essay (4 related secondary sources 3 pages) | 15 |
| Researched Essay (8 pages) | 25 |
| Mid-Term Exam | 15 |
| Final Exam | 15 |
| Quizzes, Conversation Starter, Participation, and Attendance | 10 |

Grading Scale

94-100 A

90-93 A-

88-89 B+

84-87 B

80-83 B-

78+79 C+

74-77 C

70-73 C-

60-69 D

0-59 F

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

It is your responsibility to accurately present work that you turn in and to properly cite sources that you use.

Chapter fourteen of the UW system student handbook describes academic misconduct and its consequences.

Please feel free to consult me with any questions you have about citing sources and feel free to make use of resources on campus to help you avoid plagiarism. The time to have this conversation is before you turn in your final draft for a grade. If you have significant concerns, you might also consider participating in one of the Academic Support Center's plagiarism workshops (see <http://www.uww.edu/acadsupport/tutorial/plagiarism_workshop_registration.html> for more information).

The best way to avoid getting caught up in a messy and unpleasant academic misconduct imbroglio is to do your own work and to save all of the notes and drafts that you used to create your paper. If you compose on a computer, it is always a good idea to save multiple versions of your paper when you make substantial revisions. You can also email drafts to yourself.

Deadlines

In addition to turning your papers in during class on paper (or vellum, parchment, or papyrus I suppose), I would like all students to upload an electronic copy to the appropriate dropbox on D2L. I will accept late papers, but they will lose 10% per day that they are late. All late papers must be turned in on D2L. I will grade late papers, but I will not provide written comments on them.

Special Needs

The university in general and I in particular are committed to providing, on a flexible and individual basis, reasonable accommodation to students who have documented disability conditions (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, or systemic) that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. If you have a disability that requires accommodation, please contact both the Center for Students with Disabilities and me to discuss your individual needs. The Center for Students with Disabilities is located on the first floor of Andersen Library in room 2002. You can also call them at 262-472-4711(Main Phone/Relay) or 262-472-1109 (TTY), and you can find the Center on the web at <http://www.uww.edu/csd/>

**Course Calendar**

**Week 1**

Tu 1/19 Welcome and Introductions

Th 1/21 Sedgewick, *Hope Leslie* (1827)pp.1-59

**Week 2**

Tu 1/26 Sedgewick, *Hope Leslie* pp. 60-177

Post to D2L

Exercise 1 – Write a Thesis

Th 1/28 Emerson, “The American Scholar” and “Self Reliance” (*NA*)

**Week 3**

Tu 2/2 Bryant, “Thanatopsis” “Sonnet – To An American Painter Departing For Europe” “To a Waterfowl” “The Prairies” (*NA*)

Post to D2L

Exercise 2 – Summarize a scholarly article

Th 2/4 Sedgewick, *Hope Leslie* pp. 181-316

**Week 4**

Tu 2/9 Sedgewick, *Hope Leslie pp.* 317-371

Th 2/11 Emerson, “The Divinity School Address” and “Nature” (*NA*)

**Week 5**

Tu 2/16 Fuller, “The Great Lawsuit” (*NA*) and from *Summer On the Lakes* (D2L PDF)

Post to D2L

Exercise 3 - Write a claim that engages a scholarly article’s thesis

Th 2/18 Thoreau, *Walden*, Economy(*NA*)

**Week 6**

Tu 2/23 Thoreau, *Walden*, Where I lived and What I Lived For (*NA*)

Th 2/25 Thoreau, *Walden*, Reading and Sounds (*NA*)

Post to D2L

Exercise 4 - Describe a primary source (4 sentences)

**Week 7**

Tu 3/1 Thoreau, *Walden*, Solitude, Visitors, The Bean Field, The Village, The Ponds, Baker

Farm (*NA*)

Post to D2L

Exercise 5 - Write a claim that engages a primary source

Th 3/3 Thoreau, *Walden*, Higher Laws, Brute Neighbors, House Warming, Former

Inhabitants; and Winter Visitors (*NA*)

**Week 8**

Tu 3/8 Thoreau, *Walden*, Winter Animals, The Pond in Winter, Spring, and Conclusion (*NA*)

Due Today

Annotated Bibliography

Th 3/10 Mid-Term Exam

**Week 9**

Tu 3/15 Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* Preface –Chapter 7 (*NA*)

Th 3/17 Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* Chapter 8 - Appendix(*NA*)

**March 21 to March 25: Spring Break**

**Week 10**

Tu 3/29 Poe, “The Fall of the House of Usher” (*NA*)

“Sonnet – To Science” (*NA*)

Th 3/31 Hawthorne, “The Birth-Mark” and “Rapaccini’s Daughter”

Melville, “Hawthorne’s Mosses”

Due Today:

Bibliographic Essay

**Week 11**

Tu 4/5 Melville*, Moby Dick* Etymology, Extracts, Chapters 1-16

Th 4/7 Melville*, Moby Dick***,** Chapters 17-35

**Week 12**

Tu4/12 Melville*, Moby Dick,* Chapters 36-51

Th 4/14 Melville*, Moby Dick* Chapters 52-73

**Week 13**

Tu 4/19 Melville*, Moby Dick*, Chapters 74-93

Th4/21 Melville*, Moby Dick* Chapters 94-114

**Week 14**

Tu 4/26 Melville*, Moby Dick*, Chapters 115-Epilogue

Th 4/28 Whitman “Song of Myself” (*NA*), “Passage to India” “Pioneers! O Pioneers!”

**Week**

Tu 5/3 Dickinson, Poems TBA

Due Today

Researched Essay

Th 5/5 Davis, Life in the Iron Mills (*NA*)

Final Exam: