

**ENGL 3410—American
Literature: Romanticism and Transcendentalism—Fall zzzz
Tues and Thurs: 3:00 pm - 4:30 pm**

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Office hours: T/R 12:15 p.m – 1:45 p.m

Catalog Description: (3 Units) Literature of the United States between 1784 and 1865. Emphasis on romanticism and transcendentalism, and their representative writers. Prerequisites: ENGL 3150.

Course Description: This course will focus on the American literary movements of Romanticism and Transcendentalism between 1784 and 1865. In this course, we will be examining how Romanticism acted as a revolt against aristocratic social and political norms during the Age of Enlightenment and how it evokes the historical past, heroic isolation, terror and awe, sentimentality, and emphasizes the sublime and picturesque qualities of nature. For Americans, Romanticism appealed to the revolutionary spirit that valued freedom of expression and attempted to liberate individuals from strict rationalism, empiricism, as well as religious traditions of Calvinism. As an offshoot of Romanticism, Transcendentalism, found in the works of Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau, focused on the belief in a spiritual state that transcends the physical realm and surfaces only through intuition as opposed to religious dogma. Similar to colonial writers before them, the first writers in antebellum America followed British models. Charles Brockden Brown, for example, wrote sentimental and gothic novels that were highly influenced by Godwin's notions of political justice and Wollstonecraftian feminism. Through writings, discussions, and presentations, we will also be exploring the ways early American writers departed from British influences as seen through their attention to a unique American setting and post Revolutionary War themes. These American themes included issues of exploration, democracy, individualism, slavery, Native Americans, and national identity amongst many others. Additionally, this course explores how specific authors, as US citizens, defined Americanness and what implications this has on our own identities. Considering these two literary movements and their historical context, this course will also provide students with a glance at literary theories inferred from Romantic and Transcendental texts. Some of these include Feminism, Post colonialism, Deconstruction, New historicism, and Marxism.

Goals : In this class, you will

1. explore various American authors' contributions to the discourse of the Romantic and Transcendental literary movements during the late eighteenth up to the mid nineteenth century.
2. understand theoretical trends and primary elements in the study of the American Romantic and Transcendental literary movements.
3. establish the historical, social, economic, and cultural links between the assigned authors' works and America during the late eighteenth up to the mid nineteenth century.

4. develop skills in research, writing, analysis, and class presentations
5. work in groups to discuss significant elements of Romanticism and Transcendentalism, to develop skills in leading class discussion, and to generate informed opinions about the primary texts and secondary sources.
6. establish connections from course content, discussions, and activities to personal identities and sociological constructs of Americanness.

Objectives: In this class, you will

1. engage in weekly discussion and write weekly posts on blackboard of at least 250 words
2. write an in-class midterm and final that will be essay based.
3. write a short essay of 3-4 pages and research essay of 7-10 pages
4. work in a group of 3 where you will research information on one assigned reading along with write a 2.5 page essay about your individual contribution and research process.

Required Texts:

- 1) Brown, Charles Brockden. *Edgar Huntly or Memoirs of a Sleepwalker with Related Texts*. Hackett Pub Co (September 30, 2006) **ISBN-10:** 0872208532
- 2) Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Self Reliance and Other Essays*. Dover Publications, Unabridged (October 31, 1993) **ISBN-10:** 0486277909
- 3) Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter*. Tribeca Books (December 2, 2010) **ISBN-10:** 1936594277
- 4) Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *Selected Tales and Sketches* (The Best Short Stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne). Digireads.com (January 1, 2007) **ISBN-10:** 1420928511
- 5) Melville, Herman. *Typee: a Peep at Polynesian Life, During a Four Months' Residence in a Valley of the Marquesas*. Nabu Press (September 8, 2010) **ISBN-10:** 117172652X
- 6) Melville, Herman. *Bartleby and Benito Cereno*. Dover Publications; Unabridged edition (July 1, 1990) **ISBN-10:** 0486264734
- 7) Poe, Edgar Allan. *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket, and Related Tales*. CreateSpace (January 18, 2010) **ISBN-10:** 1450512895
- 8) Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*. CreateSpace (September 16, 2010) **ISBN-10:** 1453826742
- 9) Whitman, Walt. *Leaves of Grass* **online at** <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1322/1322-h/1322-h.htm> **or** Simon & Brown (October 31, 2010) **ISBN-10:** 1936041375

Secondary Sources or Recommended Reading:

While you are not required to read the following articles, you may want to invest time into each as I will be discussing them in class. The following can be found on Academic Search Elite through the csustan website.

- 1) “Young Goodman Brown and the Psychology of Projection”
- 2) “‘A’ for Atlantic: The Colonizing Force of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*”
- 3) “‘I saw everything but could comprehend nothing’: Melville's *Typee*, Travel Narrative, and Colonial Discourse”
- 4) “Written in Stone: Slavery and Authority in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*”
- 5) “Alien nation: Edgar Huntly's *Savage Awakening*”
- 6) “Emersonian Strategies: Negative liberty, Self-reliance, and Democratic Individuality”

- 7) "The Specter of Wall Street: 'Bartleby, The Scrivener' and the Language of Commodities"
- 8) "Giving the Game Away: Thoreau's Intellectual Imperialism and the Marketing of Walden Pond"
- 9) "Myself: Walt Whitman's Political, Theological Creature"

Grading:

A = 900 – 1000

B = 899 – 800

C = 799 – 700

D = 699 – 600

F = 599 – 0

Assignments:

Research essay: (350 points) In 7-10 pages, you will write a research paper by analyzing one or more of the primary texts and developing a thesis relating to the themes or issues of American Romanticism and/or Transcendentalism. In addition to formulating an arguable thesis, you MUST explore secondary sources for

support along with textual evidence. When generating a thesis, consider other authors' opinions and try to explore a significant issue that may have been bypassed. Finally, you will want to examine what literary theories and social issues (relevant to the historical era) the primary text(s) implies. By imply, I mean that as scholars/students we should be wary of trying to make a work fit into a literary theory. In fact, it should be the other way around. What does the text say about a specific literary theory?

Group Presentation: (100 points). On at least one occasion, one group of 3 students (depending on class size) will research, develop, and give a presentation on a significant issue relevant to the primary text for the current week. This will be no longer than 30 minutes but no shorter than 20. It MUST consider the Romantic and Transcendental literary movements and the work's historical context. This presentation also will include the author's bibliography and information on his/her life, discuss central themes and significant passages that relate to its literary movement, and discuss at least two secondary sources relevant to the primary work. You will also need to initiate class discussion or a class activity about the content of your presentation or the work itself. Additionally, there should be some visual element (poster, powerpoint etc.) that relates and adds to the presentation. Finally, you will compose an essay (2.5 pages per student) discussing your individual contribution/material and process of developing the presentation.

Short Essay: (250 points) In 3-4 pages, you will write a short essay by analyzing one or more of the primary texts and developing a thesis relating to the themes and historical issues of American Romanticism and/or Transcendentalism. You should consider this short paper as a spring board for your research essay by considering issues, themes, ideas you may want to explore in the larger paper. Furthermore, this short essay should have an arguable thesis that is supported by textual evidence and at least TWO secondary sources. For this smaller paper, I recommend examining a small passage from the primary text that encapsulates the larger themes at play.

Midterm: (100 points) Students will write an in-class argumentative essay based off of at least three works they read and discussed in class. On the day of the exam, I will give you an option of four prompts in which you must choose ONE to write about. The essay must include the basic components of formal writing: introduction, thesis, body paragraphs consisting of support, and a brief conclusion. Students should have knowledge about characters, quotes, passages, and central concepts from the readings and lectures. Using this, students will compose an essay that demonstrates how the texts interconnect to make a significant point or claim.

Final: (100 points) Students will compose an in-class argumentative essay based off of the works they read and discussed in class. This exam is comprehensive and must include an analysis of at least two works prior to the midterm and three texts after. On the day of the exam, I will give you an option of four prompts in which you must choose ONE to write about. The essay must include the basic components of formal writing: introduction, thesis, body paragraphs consisting of support, and a brief conclusion. Students should have knowledge about characters, quotes, passages, and central concepts from the readings and lectures. Using this, students will compose an essay that demonstrates how the texts interconnect to make a significant point or claim. This essay will test students' ability to formulate a thesis and defend their position in a well-written essay combining their cumulative knowledge from the course.

Participation: (50 points) We will be discussing your readings, assignments, and writing concerns; therefore, regular attendance and active participation are required in order for you to grow as writers and scholars.

*You should also consider taking notes of lectures, group presentations, and key concerns during class discussion, as this will help you with the midterm and final.

Blackboard: (50 points) For at least six primary texts, you are to write a 250 word response to the weekly reading that investigates a topic, theme, passage, or some other relative issue pertaining to the reading. You may also discuss the current reading in relation to previous ones, discuss a secondary source, or discuss historical

issues that connect back to the primary source. Also, for six primary texts, you will respond in at least 250 words to one of your classmate's posts by expanding on his/her response or offering counter claims with evidence from the text. By doing so, my hope is that we will create a thread of intriguing ideas with multiple perspectives that relate to central concerns of the novels (possibly for paper topics).

Attendance: Every student is entitled to three absences without penalty; however, more than three absences will result in a grade reduction of 5%. It is also imperative that you are here on time. Three tardies will be treated as one absence.

Late Work: This course is essential for gaining knowledge of American Romantic and Transcendental literature and improving one's analytic, research, argumentative, and writing skills. I expect you to treat your work in this class as you would for a career. In other words, I

will not accept late work. On occasion, I will make exceptions, provided the student has valid reasons. For this late work, a reduction in one letter grade will be implemented.

Written Work: All work is to be typed unless otherwise noted. Your work should follow the MLA guideline, which includes title page information (name, course number and name, semester and year, and the name of the instructor on the top left hand corner followed by a centered title relating to the content of your essay), 12-point Times New Roman font, one-inch margins, double spaced paragraphs, a header (last name followed by page number), proper citation, and a Works Cited page.

Contacting the Instructor: the best way to get a hold of me is through email. I check it regularly and will try my best to respond to your concerns as soon as possible.

Classroom Rules Include:

1. All cell phones off. No one likes the ringing of cell phones. It's distracting and unprofessional. If you need to make a call, please do so outside of class.
2. Food and drinks are acceptable, but keep food to a minimum because it can be distracting. During the break is the most appropriate time to eat.
3. Classroom behavior: Everyone should act like adults. Respect each other's opinions even if you disagree. By listening to others, we learn and develop tolerance, cultural understanding, and a broader worldview. Participating in a positive manner is also required in order to stimulate discussion and academic growth. See the English Department's policy at <http://www.csustan.edu/english/dept/> under "disruptive behavior".

Academic Dishonesty: Per the CSUS English department website: "Students, in submitting work, certify that the work is their own original work except that all information garnered from others whether quoted, summarized, or paraphrased has been appropriately cited. Dishonesty by failing to acknowledge the work of others constitutes plagiarism and is a serious offense. Normally, the penalty for plagiarism is failure in the course. More serious penalties may also be invoked".

*in cases of plagiarism instructors should also submit the Student Discipline: Academic Dishonesty Incident report Form to the Coordinator of Student Discipline for tracking or for disciplinary investigation.

*Title 5, California Code of Regulations, section 41301 notes that student may be expelled, suspended, placed on probation, or given a lesser sanction for one or more of the following causes which must be campus related: 1. Cheating or plagiarism in connection with an academic program at a campus..." (see Appendix F of the current CSU, Stanislaus catalog)."

Course Calendar

- 1) Homework and important notifications are in **bold**
- 2) "group activity" pertains to the activity that members of the "Group Presentation" created.
- 3) Recommended readings are numbered according to syllabus.