

HL2028
Nineteenth-Century American Literature
Professor Christopher Trigg
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Thursdays 2:30-5:30
TR+77

Description

America is a nation founded on two documents: the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Over the course of the nineteenth century, people's interpretation of these two texts altered, as new understandings of what it meant to be American emerged. After the Civil War, for instance, the Constitution was redrafted to extend citizenship and voting rights to newly emancipated black slaves.

In this class, we'll examine how literature played an active role in this process of redrafting and reinterpreting the meaning of America. We'll see how Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the best-selling novel of the nineteenth century, revised many Americans' opinions about slavery. We'll also discover how theatrical adaptations of the book, in which the slave characters were played by "blacked-up" white actors, reinforced the racist stereotypes that Stowe had set out to challenge. More broadly, we'll see how the development of different literary modes of expression, including Transcendentalism, American Gothic, and Realism, reflected changes in the way Americans thought about themselves and their society. The class will also introduce students to digital resources that can enhance their study of literature. Using online collation software, we'll examine Henry James's fascinating revision of his novella *Daisy Miller*.

Required Texts

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (Dover - 0486280489)
Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself* (Dover - 0486414108)
Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Dover - 0486284999)
Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Modern Library Classics - 0375756930)
Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* (Dover - 0486264653)

All other texts (those marked with a *) to be posted online.

Assessment

Participation (including preparation of discussion questions for each class) 10%
Presentation (including participation in popular culture workshop) 10%
Digital Collation Exercise 10%
Term Paper 20%
Final Exam 50%

Late Penalties

Late work submitted without an approved extension will be penalized one half-mark per day late – an A paper submitted one day late would drop to an A-, etc.

Plagiarism

Please see the Division of English's statement on plagiarism [here](#).

Schedule

1. 14th January

Thomas Jefferson, "Declaration of Independence"*

Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar"*

2. 21st January

Ralph Waldo Emerson, from *Nature**

Henry David Thoreau, "Walking"*

3. 28th January

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*

4. 4th February

Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," "Poem of Many in One"*

5. 11th February

Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher,"* "The Cask of Amontillado,"*

"William Wilson,"* "The Man in the Crowd,"* "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"*

6. 18th February

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

7. 25th February

Stephen Foster, selected songs*——— **in-class workshop on popular culture**

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8. 11th March

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

9. 18th March

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

10. 24th March

James Herne, *Margaret Fleming**

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"*

11. 31st March

Henry James, *Daisy Miller** —— **in-class collation exercise**

12. 7th April

Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*

13. 15th April —— **term paper due**

Sarah Orne Jewett, from *The Country of the Pointed Firs**

Charles Chesnutt, "The Goophered Grapevine"*