

HL2028 / Fridays, 14:30 – 17:30 / HSS TR+5
Nineteenth-Century American Literature
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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* (Dover - 0486284999)

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Modern Library Classics - 0375756930)

Texts marked with * are in the Course Reader, available for purchase from HSS Print Room

Texts marked with † will be posted on the course website

Discussion Questions

Each Monday, two discussion questions about the week's text(s) will be posted on ntulearn. Please post your answers no later than 12 noon on Thursday (the day before class). I will be asking you about your answers during class discussions, so bring a (digital or physical) copy of them to class. The quality of these answers will largely determine your participation grade.

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.

Assessment

Participation (including preparation of discussion questions for each class) 10%

Digital Collation Exercise 15%

Term Paper 25%

Final Exam 50

Plagiarism

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

Schedule

1. 13th January

Thomas Jefferson, "Declaration of Independence"*

2. 20st January

Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar" *

Elias Boudinot, "An Address to the Whites"*

3. 27th January

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*

4. 3rd February

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

5. 10th February

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

"William Wilson,"* "The Man in the Crowd,"*

6. 17th February

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

7. 24th February

Stephen Foster, selected songs*

Recess -----

8. 10th March

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

9. 17th March

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

10. 23rd March

James Herne, *Margaret Fleming* †

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" *

11. 30th March

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

12. 6th April

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

Charles Chesnutt, "The Goophered Grapevine" †

Term paper due 13th April

13. 14th April ——— no class (Good Friday)