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Friday 1:30-2:30 and by appointment

1. ". . . {I}t is better to fail in originality, than to succeed in imitation. . . . [N]o American writer should write like an Englishman, or a Frenchman; let him write like a man. For then he will be sure to write like an American. . . . While we are rapidly preparing for that political supremacy among the nations, which prophetically awaits us at the close of the present century; in a literary point of view, we are deplorably unprepared for it [W]e should duly recognize the meritorious writers that are our own;--those writers, who breathe that unshackled, democratic spirit of Christianity in all things, which now takes the practical lead in this world, though at the same time led by ourselves--us Americans" (Herman Melville, review of Hawthorne's Mosses from an Old Manse, *New York Literary World*, August 17 and 24, 1850).
2. "For many years of her life, the author avoided all reading upon or allusion (*sic.*) to the subject of slavery, considering it as too painful to be inquired into, and one which advancing light and civilization would certainly live down. But, since the legislative act of 1850 [i.e., the Fugitive Slave Law] when she heard, with perfect surprise and consternation, Christian and humane people actually recommending the remanding escaped fugitives into slavery, as a duty binding on good citizens,--when she heard, on all hands, from kind, compassionate and estimable people, in the free states of the North, deliberations and discussions as to what Christian duty could be on this head,--she could only think, These men and Christians cannot know what slavery is; if they did, such a question could never be open for discussion. And from this arose a desire to exhibit it in a *living dramatic reality*. She has endeavored to show it fairly, in its best and its worst phases. In its *best* aspect, she has, perhaps, been successful; but, oh! who shall say what yet remains untold in that valley and shadow of death, that lies the other side?" (Harriet Beecher Stowe, "Concluding Remarks," Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852)).
3. "A work of writing comes to its particular form of existence in interaction with the network of relations that surround it: in any instance, writing orients itself in or against some understanding of what writing is, does, and is good for that is culturally composed and derived" (Richard Brodhead, Cultures of Letters [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993], p. 8).

TEXTS

THE HEATH ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE, Vol. B, 5th Edition [H]; Herman Melville, MOBY-DICK; Harriet E. Jacobs, INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF A SLAVE GIRL; Elizabeth Stoddard, THE MORGESONS.

The semester schedule below uses several abbreviations. Here's the key to them.

Assigned texts:

H = Heath Anthology of American Literature.

ERes = Electronic Reserve

Written assignments:

P = Prep. paper.

Qs = Study questions.

More complete information about Ps and Qs and other matters follows in schedule for the semester, or afterwards.

There is a reserve shelf in Mudd Library for this course with books you might find interesting and/or useful.

All of the reading listed below is mandatory unless otherwise indicated by the abbreviation "rec." for recommended. Headnotes in the Heath Anthology which introduce authors whose works we read will be required reading, to have been read for the class on which we begin discussion of the relevant work.

Generally the week's classes will include one lecture, which will accommodate class participation, and two discussions. I may ask students to initiate selected discussions.

SCHEDULE

- Feb. 7 First Class
- Feb. 9 What was literature in the antebellum U.S? Read Paul Lauter, "Introduction" to the Early Nineteenth Century Section [H, pp. 1389-1419]
- Feb. 11 **Qs** We'll pursue the question of what literature was in the antebellum U. S. by reading some examples of the era's writing: Quinney's "Speech" (H, 1468-71), Sigourney's "Indian Names" (H, 1472-3), Bryant's "The Prairies" (H, 2893-6), Poe's "To Helen" (H, 2130-31). Rec: Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition" (H, 2521-29)

Useful background on critical/historical approaches to this period on reserve includes essays in the CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF AMERICAN LIT., VOL II by Michael Bell ("Beginnings of Professionalism" and "Women's Fiction and the Literary Marketplace in the 1850s") and Jonathan Arac ("Establishing National Narrative").

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LECTURE/ESSAY

Feb. 14 Emerson, "The American Scholar" [H]
 Feb. 16 Emerson, "Self-Reliance" [H]
 Feb. 18 P Emerson, "Experience" [H; read this essay twice]

Feb. 21 Thoreau, "Walking" [H]
 Feb. 23 P Thoreau, conclude "Walking," begin "Resistance to Civil Government" [H]
 Feb. 25 Thoreau, conclude "Resistance to Civil Government"

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 NARRATIVE OF MANY GENRES

Feb. 28 Qs Melville, Moby-Dick (separate text) Read at least through ch. 47 ("The Mat-Maker")
 March 2 " " " "
 March 4 P " " " " You should have completed Moby-Dick by this point.
 Mar. 7 " " " "
 Mar. 9 " " " "
 Mar. 11 " " " "

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 SLAVE NARRATIVES

Mar.14 Harriet Jacobs, Incidents In The Life Of A Slave Girl (separate text)
 Mar.16 Qs Same as above
 Mar. 18 " " " "

FIRST PAPER DUE

Mar.21 Frederick Douglass, Narrative Of The Life Of.... [H]
 Mar.23 Qs " " " "
 Mar. 25 " " " "

*****SPRING BREAK*****

MAGAZINES, ANTEBELLUM CULTURE, READING ANTEBELLUM WRITING

April 4 "What was Literature?" revisited. Magazines. Read Ronald J. Zboray, "Antebellum Reading and the Ironies of Technological Innovation," Chapter 3 of Richard Brodhead, The School of Hawthorne, and Bercovitch, "Magazines," all on ERes.
 April 6 Magazines: the real thing. This hands-on session will be held on MUDD 443. We'll work with materials from Special Collections, which is housed there, and with Special Collections librarian Ed Vermue. We'll be introduced to Oberlin's holdings in antebellum magazines and books and get

some time with them. One aspect of our work over the next two weeks will be to consider the "popular" appeal of much antebellum writing. This gets obscured if we concentrate too exclusively on "classics," on works of writing as though they existed between a book's covers only, or on current ways of reading. I'll therefore ask you to look carefully through one antebellum magazine, working in pairs or groups of three or four, and taking note of what's there, what impression the magazine's look and contents give of the era, and how this project affects your understanding of antebellum literature.

You'll report on this work over the next weeks.

Apr. 8 No class: use this time to read antebellum magazines.

Apr. 11 2-3 Reports on antebellum magazines and newspapers

HISTORICAL NOVEL

Apr. 13 Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter [H; be sure to read "The Custom House"; it's part of The Scarlet Letter)

Apr. 15 P The Scarlet Letter

Apr. 18 " " " "

SECOND PAPER DUE

April 20 Reports on Magazines

FIRST-PERSON NOVEL

Apr. 22 Elizabeth Stoddard, The Morgesons (separate text)

Apr. 25 P The Morgesons

Apr. 27 " " " "

April 29 Reports on Magazines

EXPANSIVE EGO/MODERN EPIC

May 2 Walt Whitman, from "Leaves of Grass," 1855 edition:
"Preface" and "Song of Myself" [H]

May 4 P Same as above

May 6 " " " "

CONCENTRATED EGO/LYRIC

May 9 Poetry by Emily Dickinson (selections from HEATH + hand-out)

May 11 Qs Same as above

May 13 " " " "

Date and time scheduled for final exam: THIRD PAPER DUE

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

You are expected to have finished reading each work and to think about it by the date on which consideration of it will begin; you should also review works for subsequent classes. You will also be asked to write two out of a possible three papers (see below), prepare written questions (**Qs**) or prep. papers (**Ps**) for discussions, explore an antebellum magazine and report briefly on your findings in pairs or in groups of up to four, and take active part in class discussion. Your regular presence and genuine participation in discussion will be important factors in your contribution to the class and in what you get out of it. Though I may not always take attendance, I will be aware of presence and absences. Unexcused absences will be taken into account when I calculate your final grade for the course.

Qs. These **reading questions** are indicated on the syllabus as **Q**. Composing questions gives you an opportunity to formulate your thoughts and queries about the reading. The questions will also spark class discussion. Each question should begin by quoting something from the reading which evokes or shapes the question. Each question should be well thought out and clearly stated. The questions you pose should be questions about the reading (but not questions of fact) which you want to have addressed in class discussion. **Qs should be posted on Blackboard by 7:30 p.m. of the day before the class for which they're due.**

Ps, or "prep. papers." These longer assignments give you the opportunity for sustained exploration of an idea, concept, or question. Prep. papers are intended to stimulate your thinking and lay the groundwork for class discussion. In a **P** you should take up an aspect of the reading that interests/excites/puzzles/frustrates/challenges you. At the beginning of all prep. papers you should specify the aspect of the reading you'll be addressing. You should use the body of the paper to discuss this aspect in a focused manner, citing and analyzing passages, events, images, and other specific aspects of the text. All Ps should be at least one word-processed page and no more than 1 1/2; if your handwriting is legible, the hand-written equivalent will be fine. **Prep. papers should be posted on Blackboard by 7:30 p.m. of the day before the class for which they're due, or put under my office door by the same time.**

PAPERS

You'll be writing at least two papers, chosen from a possible three. Each will be 8-10 pages in length. Because College regulations require me to notify you and your adviser about the level of your performance at mid-semester, I'll want one paper from you before Spring Break. Therefore you will be required to write the first paper; you'll have a choice about writing either the second or the third, and if you'd like to write three papers rather than two, you may do that, too.

Subjects, and suggestions for topics follow. Suggested topics are intended to get you thinking. You may develop your own topic, of course!

First paper. Suggested Topics: Lay out an approach you want to take as a reader to one of the texts read so far, explaining why you've selected the approach you take and what it yields for the text you've chosen. You may select any text read through Jacobs' Incidents. Or explore how a text you select from among the same readings guides and challenges readers to experience specific cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and/or political processes. Your paper should, of course, explain what you take those processes to be.

If you want to write about something in the Heath Anthology we have not discussed in class, come talk to me about the topic before you begin work on it.

Second paper. Texts you may write on: Douglass' Narrative, Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter, or magazine materials, including magazine fiction by Melville or Harding Davis in the Heath but not read for class. Suggested topics:

1) Ways in which race, gender, and/or sexuality are represented in one of these works. 2) The rhetorical means by which these works appeal to readers, seeking to stir up their thinking or feelings, and/or to activate them; 3) extending your work on an antebellum magazine. You could do by exploring authorship, literature, readerships, and/or the antebellum literary marketplace, or in some other way. You'll want to talk with me about this one.

Third paper. Texts: The Morgesons, Leaves of Grass, poetry of Dickinson. Suggested topic: constructions of a self/a not-fully-coherent self (in the context of, in relation to, in opposition to a collectivity of some sort which you'll need to specify) in one of these works. For this paper, too, you may work on a topic related to our magazine unit: do come see me if you decide on that.

I will also ask you to write a paragraph to be appended to each paper in which you identify the question(s) you want to pursue and why they matter (what's at stake in these questions) as well as the approach you take in your paper and why you take it.

Papers should be in typescript, double-spaced. They should be titled; please number the pages. Format for quotations should follow the

guidelines of the MLA Handbook or another reliable guide. You may use secondary sources if you wish, though you are not required to do so. You must indicate your sources through proper foot- or endnotes and accompany your paper with a bibliography if you use secondary materials. Please proof-read papers for spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc. and stick to the required length.

Late papers without extensions will be penalized. I will deduct one grade (e.g. lower a paper from, say, a B+ to a B) for each day of lateness unless you have a valid excuse, such as an illness or a family emergency, which you discuss with me at least 24 hours in advance unless the situation materializes more suddenly. Since you're being given the semester's schedule at the semester's beginning and can plan ahead, work pressure from other courses does not constitute valid grounds for lateness.

You cannot pass the course unless you have done the reading, turned in both papers, fulfilled all other written requirements, engaged in a magazine/newspaper project (including the class presentation on it) and generally taken part in the class.

Evaluation

Papers and other writing will count for approx. 65% of your final grade; class participation--your engagement in class discussion, your preparedness, your magazine project--will count approx. 35%.

Please feel free to check in with me if you want feedback on your classwork, if you want to discuss paper topics in advance or your written work after I've evaluated it, or if you have other questions, concerns or interests. My office hours are listed above.

A final observation: please be sure you are familiar with Oberlin College's Honor System. The purpose of the system is to maintain a high standard of integrity in all academic work at Oberlin College. Its basic assumption is "that all academic work submitted is the sole and original product of the individual student. The System respects the students' ability to maintain this standard and encourages the further development of this ability" (from Oberlin College Course Catalogue, 1996-97, p. 14). The Honor System's terms and implementation are detailed at <http://www.oberlin.edu/students/links-life/rules-regs.html#honor>