

English 354-01 – *Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson*

Spring 2005 TuTh 1:30-2:45 SCTR A154

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This course is a comparative study of America's two most important 19th-century poets: Walt Whitman, the public, exuberant, democratic being who celebrated himself, and Emily Dickinson, the private, thoughtful soul who selected her own society. Using a variety of critical approaches, we will examine some of the key contexts in and against which each poet wrote — e.g. the Enlightenment, Romanticism, Transcendentalism, Puritanism — and consider their poems on such topics as love, sex, nature, death, God, poetry, and the powers of human bodies and minds. We will also consider their reactions to the Civil War and other major American social and historical trends: democracy, slavery and abolition, commerce, the influx of immigrants and other demographic changes, developments in visual art, the ascendancy of science, the decline of Calvinism, and others. Texts will include poetry, prose, and correspondence. 3H.

Required Texts (available in the Oberlin Bookstore):

Dickinson, Emily. *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*. R. W. Franklin, ed. Cambridge: Harvard UP: 1998.  
Whitman, Walt. *Poetry and Prose*. Justin Kaplan, ed. New York: Library of America College Edition, 1996.

*NB: Other required readings will be distributed in class.*

Grading:

40%: 10% each for 4 required short papers (3-5 pages). 2 due before spring break, 2 after.

30%: Research Project (8 - 12 pages).

20%: Participation: attendance & informed discussion in class and online (Blackboard).

10%: 20-minute in-class presentation on an assigned text.

Please note that to participate in this class, you must understand and adhere to Oberlin's Honor Code. See [www.oberlin.edu/students/student\\_pages/honor\\_code.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html). Note also that attendance is mandatory; unexcused absences lower your grade. If you miss class, it is your responsibility 1) to turn your work in on time anyway and 2) learn the material you've missed — including class discussion — before the next class. Late assignments are reduced one full letter grade per day.

*Schedule*

2/8	Tuesday.	Introduction.	19th-century poetry. Contexts for WW & ED.
2/10	Thursday.	Whitman.	Preface to 1855 edition of <i>Leaves of Grass</i> (5-26) Chronology (1371-1375).
2/15	Tuesday.	Dickinson.	<i>Letters</i> . Selections on ERES. Poems to be assigned.
2/17	Thursday.	Dickinson.	Dickinson's poetic styles: rhythm, meter, syntax, vocabulary. Poems to be assigned.
2/22	Tuesday.	Whitman.	1855 <i>Leaves of Grass</i> . <i>Emerson Correspondence</i> (1350-1361)
2/24	Thursday.	Whitman.	1855 <i>LG</i> . (27-145) <i>The Eighteenth Presidency!</i> (1331-1349)
3/1	Tuesday.	Dickinson.	God, Faith, Religion: 373, 544, 581, 615, 1173, 1577, 1752...
3/3	Thursday.	Dickinson.	Art & Writing: 436, 446, 466, 627, 788, 867, 955, 1268, 1476...
3/8	Tuesday.	Whitman.	1891-2 <i>LG</i> . ( <i>Children of Adam</i> ; <i>Calamus</i> 248-87)
3/10	Thursday.	Whitman.	1891-2 <i>LG</i> . ( <i>Salut au Monde</i> ; <i>Crossing Brooklyn Ferry</i> 287-313. <i>Song of the Broad-Axe</i> 331-341.

3/15	Tuesday.	Dickinson.	Death: 124, 344, 479, 591, 605, 1092, 1100, 1154, 1588
3/17	Thursday.	Dickinson.	Love, sexuality: 194, 200, 205, 269, 656, 1172, 1742, 1743
3/22	Tuesday.	Dickinson.	Definition Poems, proverbs, aphorisms. Poems to be assigned.
3/24	Thursday.	Whitman.	Live Oak, With Moss (on BlackBoard). 1891-2 LG. ( <i>Birds of Passage; Sea Drift; By the Roadside.</i> (369-415)

**Spring Break.**

4/5	Tuesday.	Whitman.	1891-2 LG. <i>Drum Taps; Memories of Lincoln.</i> 416-468.
4/7	Thursday.	Whitman.	1891-2 LG. <i>The Sleepers; To Think of Time; Whispers of Heavenly Death.</i> 551-568.
4/12	Tuesday.	Dickinson.	Others: 227, 255, 274, 292, 458, 554, 571, 675, 855, 967,
4/14	Thursday.	Dickinson.	Art, image: 174, 348, 448, 533, 603, 669, 772, 778, 895, 962.
4/19	Tuesday.	Whitman.	<i>Backward Glance O'er Travelled Roads.</i> (656-672) Begin <i>Specimen Days.</i> (713-949)
4/21	Thursday.	Whitman.	<i>Specimen Days</i> , continued.
4/26	Tuesday.	Dickinson.	Nature: 122, 207, 291, 297, 327, 803, 1413, 1596, 1656, 1668
4/28	Thursday.	Dickinson.	Visit to Allen Memorial Art Museum. Poems to be assigned.
5/3	Tuesday.	Whitman.	<i>Democratic Vistas.</i> 953-1018.
5/5	Thursday.	Whitman.	<i>November Boughs.</i> 1159-1272.
5/10	Tuesday.	Dickinson.	Solitude, loneliness, pain: 339, 372, 570, 760, 833, 903, 1119
5/12	Thursday.	Dickinson.	Mind: 304, 312, 563, 584, 598, 784, 867, 1112, 1234, 1401
5/19	Thursday.		Final paper due.