

Dozent: Jay Dougherty

Early American Literature and Culture (1820-1820)

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Referring to someone today as "puritan" is not exactly to pay him or her a compliment. Indeed, the accepted definition of the adjective—"being very strict in morals and religion"—is itself based upon the mistaken notion that Puritans talked about nothing but morality and damnation.

With such misconceptions or partial conceptions of early American life and literature, most are at a loss to explain what relationships, if any, exist between the ideologies of the first Americans and those of such famous, comparatively liberal successors as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, and, later, the American Transcendentalists and Romantics.

In this course we will begin by examining essential Puritan doctrines, paying special attention to those elements or tendencies which recur in later periods and come therefore to be seen as peculiarly American. The so-called Protestant work ethic; the American dream, from rags to riches through hard work and honest dealings; the expansionist fervor of the 19th century, fueled by the doctrine of Manifest Destiny; the values of individualism and non-conformity—all these themes have their roots in Puritanism. Thus, in addition to broadening our understanding of early American life, we'll provide a useful context for our readings in the second half of the semester--of the writers of the so-called Age of Reason, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, and Thomas Paine--and for your continued study of American literature and culture.

Authors:

John Winthrop, *A Model of Christian Charity*
 William Bradford, from *Of Plymouth Plantation*
 Anne Bradstreet, selected poems
 Mary Rowlandson, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Marry Rowlandson*
 Edward Taylor, from *God's Determinations*
 Cotton Mather, from *The Wonders of the Invisible World*
 Sarah Kemble Knight, *The Private Journal of a Journey from Boston to New York*
 Jonathan Edwards, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*
 Benjamin Franklin, from *The Autobiography; The Way to Wealth*
 St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, from *Letters from an American Farmer*
 Thomas Paine, from *Common Sense*
 Thomas Jefferson, from *The Autobiography; from Notes on the State of Virginia; The Declaration of Independence*

Materials will be available for photocopying at the beginning of the semester. Please see Frau Buchholz.

Critics of the period were calling for a great literature which would match the emerging political magnitude of the nation--and a literature that reflected a unique *American* identity, not a second-hand English one. Emerson brazenly called for a poet who would write of the United States as it was, not as it might have been. Whitman would later say that Emerson's promptings had brought his simmering individuality to a boil. Melville argued that Americans must carry "republican progressiveness" into literature as well as into life. The young, restless nation was struggling with one of its first identity crises, and the literature that resulted reflects both the period's ideological fermentations and the elusive qualities that people of that time and our own sense as *American*.

Defining these qualities was and is not easy. Many of the most prominent artists and writers relied in various ways--not least of which concerns *form*--upon English or European models. But thematic preoccupations with subjects like individuality and conformity, man's role in and relationship to nature and religion, and America's Puritan past vs. its profligate future concerned many thinkers and thus shaped images of America and Americans that still persist.

In this course we'll explore these themes primarily through the ever-relevant writings of the period's most famous authors, and, through a glance back at Puritanism and the Age of Reason, we'll learn how such movements as Transcendentalism were reactions to events and beliefs of the past. We'll also delve into the worlds of the artist (mainly to look at the work of the Hudson River school of painters) and the "common man" via the expanding periodical market. It's an exciting period, full of paradox: optimism and angst, idealism and ideological blindness, manifested, for example, in the near-genocide of the American Indian and in the enslavement of blacks. It is a *critical* period in all senses of the word. "Re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book," Whitman urged his readers, "and dismiss whatever insults your own soul."

Authors:

Washington Irving, "Rip Van Winkle"
 James Fenimore Cooper, "Notions of the Americans"
 William Cullen Bryant, "Thanatopsis," "To a Waterfowl," "The Prairies"
 Ralph Waldo Emerson, from *Nature*; "The Divinity School Address," "Self-Reliance," "The American Scholar," "Experience"
 Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"
 E.A. Poe, "Fall of the House of Usher"
 Abraham Lincoln, "Gettysburg Address"
 Harriet Beecher Stowe, from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
 Frederick Douglass, from *My Bondage and my Freedom*
 G.B. Harris, "Parson John Bullen's Lizards"
 T.B. Thorpe, "Big Bear of Arkansas"
 Henry David Thoreau, from *Walden*, "Civil Disobedience"
 Walt Whitman, from *Song of Myself*
 Herman Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener"
 Emily Dickinson, selected poems

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Texts and Contexts: Contemporary American Writing by Women

The last few decades have seen the most rapid re-assessment of women's roles and attitudes ever. The reasons for this are complex, economic as well as philosophical and moral. World War II saw a great influx of women workers into the American economy, and by 1960, twice as many women were at work as in 1940, and forty percent of all women over sixteen held a job. Thus, to cite just one example of the social impact of this economic fact, the issue of wages for women's work became critical, the common-sense concept of equal pay for equal work casting light upon the inequality of previous systems. Also, since 1940, the legal status of women has risen tremendously. With the introduction of a "no-fault" divorce law in California in the 1970s, for instance, the most dramatic reversal of Victorian legal standards occurred: now either partner can terminate a marriage for no reason whatsoever. Women, too, are graduating from college in ever greater proportions. And with the development in the 60s of the birth control pill and the IUD, a new morality became imaginable, one no longer grounded in the threat of pregnancy, while for married women a new control over family size was now feasible.

Contemporary American writing by women runs, logically enough, then, along a plane that reaches from self-definition to social criticism. And in this course, we will study these varying responses of women to their personal and social status.

Themes discussed will include contemporary women's lives, contemporary images of women (through popular media), and social conditioning. Material for the course will consist primarily of representative women authors, although visual and popular media will be considered when helpful.

Requirements: one paper, oral presentation.

Authors:

Betty Friedan, from *The Feminine Mystique*
Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken"
"Culture and Anarchy"
Selected poems

Tillie Olsen, "Tell Me a Riddle"

Gwendolyn Brooks, Selected poems

Doris Lessing, "To Room 19"

Carson McCullers, "Wonderkind"

Denise Levertov, poems

Sylvia Plath, poems

Anne Sexton, poems

Joyce Carol Oates, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been"

Lorraine Hansberry, "In Defense of the Equality of Men"

Leslie Marmon Silko, "Lullaby"

Alice Walker, "Everyday Use"

The U.S. Between the Wars: Literature and Culture

For many people in the U.S., the first World War led to a general disillusionment with concepts and values embedded in Christianity and other ethical systems of the western world, which had not served to save mankind from the moral catastrophe inherent in the war. Thus, after the war, many sensitive writers began to look for a new system of values that would replace traditionally accepted beliefs. Having endured the great calamity of World War I, many writers found that they could not "return" to the quiet countryside of America, could no longer accept those values that had previously dominated all of America.

The writers of this period constitute what has been loosely referred to as "modernism" in America. Defining "modernism" is no easy task, but if many contemporary writers can be termed "post-modern," it is at least in part because of certain ideological ties to their predecessors: disillusioned with old standards, they constantly attempt, as William Carlos Williams would say, to "make it new."

In this course, we will examine the philosophical temperament in the U.S. of this period through several important writers' attempts at "making it new," a re-creating a world.

Requirements: one paper, oral presentation.

Authors:

Edwin Arlington Robinson, selected poems

Robert Frost, selected poems

Wallace Stevens, selected poems

E.E. Cummings, selected poems

William Carlos Williams, selected poems

Gertrude Stein, "The Gentle Lena," "Picasso," "Ada"

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*

Langston Hughes, selected poems

Eudora Welty, "Why I Live at the P.O."

William Faulkner, "Barn Burning"

THE SOCIOLOGY OF BLACK AMERICAN LITERATURE

Dozent: Jay Dougherty

Works by and about blacks in the U.S. have always reflected the poor conditions against which they have struggled: slavery, repression, condescension, and discrimination. In this course, we will examine and discuss literature and other media (including political tracts, recordings, and films) as reflections of the times in which they were created, and we will note the changing responses of both blacks and whites to the social and spiritual conditions of black people in America.

Authors: Phyllis Wheatley, selected poems; Frederick Douglas, from *Life of Frederick Douglas*; W.E.B. Du Bois, from *The Autobiography*; Booker T. Washington, from *Up From Slavery*; Langston Hughes, selected poems; Richard Wright, *Native Son*; Gwendolyn Brooks, selected poems; Zora Neal Hurston, from *Dust Tracks on a Road*; Amiri Baraka, selected poems; Charles Fuller, *A Soldier's Play*; Martin Luther King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail"; Malcolm X, from *The Autobiography*; Wanda Coleman, selected poems.

Films: *Native Son* and *A Soldier's Story*

SOCIOLOGY OF BLACK AMERICAN LITERATURE

SYLLABUS

Report topics are either to be chosen from the list provided or suggested by individuals. Topic titles can then be inserted into the spaces provided.

Additional reading material may be handed out from week to week.

April 5: Course introduction; assignment of oral presentations; brief overview of Black-White relations as seen through current media coverage; discussion; writing sample.

HOMEWORK: Copy course materials: selections from *Black Writers of America* (Barksdale & Kinnamon); Bigsby & Thompson, "The black experience"; packet of "Significant Documents in Afro-American History"; and the *Newsweek* feature entitled "Black and White in America."

HOMEWORK: Read "The black experience" and Part 1 of B&K, "The Eighteenth-Century Beginnings."

Read also Olaudah Equiano, "The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African"; Phyllis Wheatley, poems.

April 12: Discussion of "The black experience" and other texts; discussion of Olaudah Equiano and Phillis Wheatley.

REPORT:

HOMEWORK: Read "The Struggle Against Slavery and Racism: 1800-1860" and Frederick Douglas, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, an American Slave*.

April 19: Discussion of Frederick Douglas.

REPORT:

HOMEWORK: Read section entitled "Folk Literature."

April 26: Discussion of Black Folk Literature and texts; listen to recordings of traditional black folk songs (if available).

REPORT:

HOMEWORK: Read "The Black Man in the Civil War: 1861-1865." Read "Two Black Soldiers Comment" and the packet of "Significant Documents in Afro-American History."

May 3: Discussion of readings, soldiers' comments.

REPORT:

HOMEWORK: Read "Reconstruction and Reaction: 1965-1915" and W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, *Resolution at Harpers Ferry, 1906*, *A Litany of Atlanta*, *The Immediate Program of the American Negro (1915)*, *In Black*, and *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois*.

May 10: Discussion of Du Bois and Reconstruction.

REPORT:

HOMEWORK: Read Booker T. Washington, excerpt from *Up From Slavery*.

May 17: Discussion of Booker T. Washington.

REPORT:

HOMEWORK: Read "Race and Politics," Robert Brown Elliott's "Speech on the Civil Rights Bill."

Read Tales, Prison Songs, Bad Man Songs, The Blues, and Work Songs under "Folk Literature" section.

May 24: Discussion of Elliott and Folk Songs.

REPORT:

HOMEWORK: Read "Renaissance and Radicalism: 1915-1945." Read Langston Hughes, all poems, selection from *The Big Sea*, and *Dear Dr. Butts*.

Read some of the poems of Countee Cullen.

May 31: Discussion of Harlem Renaissance, Langston Hughes, and Countee Cullen.

REPORT:

HOMEWORK: Read Richard Wright, *Native Son*.

June 7: Discussion of *Native Son*. Possibility of seeing recent movie version, in English.

REPORT:

HOMEWORK: Read "The Present Generation: Since 1945" and Gwendolyn Brooks' poems. Read selections from James Baldwin, especially *Sonny's Blues*, and Amiri Baraka, especially *The Last Days of the American Empire*.

June 14: Discussion of Brooks, Baldwin, Baraka, the new Black

Aesthetic.

REPORT:

HOMEWORK: Read Charles Fuller, *A Soldier's Play*.

June 21: Discussion of Fuller. Possibility of seeing recent movie version of *Soldier's Play*, in English.

REPORT:

HOMEWORK: Read Martin Luther King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail" and "I Have a Dream." Read Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.

June 28: Discussion of Fuller, King, and Malcolm X.

REPORT:

HOMEWORK: Read selections of current black writers to be passed out in class.

July 5: Discussion of current black writers.

REPORT: