AML 4225: Studies in Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Culture
Identity, Citizenship, and 19th-Century American Prose
Section 04G6 (Fall 2011)
MWF, Period 4
McCarty Hall B 2102

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Course Description
In 1820, English writer Sydney Smith published an article in the Edinburgh Review in which he commented on America’s cultural poverty, questioning the viability and legitimacy of American art. “In the four corners of the globe,” he asked, “who reads an American book? Or goes to an American play? Or looks at an American picture or statue?” American literary production during the colonial period and immediate post-colonial period consisted primarily of imitation of British models. It is no wonder, then, that while producers of American literary culture struggled to find a distinctive voice in the nineteenth century, they tended to explore (and construct) the very nature of American identity.

In this class, we will concern ourselves with the interrelated issues of identity and citizenship as addressed by nineteenth-century American literature, focusing on narrative fiction and nonfiction produced during the decades prior to the Civil War by authors from a variety of backgrounds. Specifically, we will interrogate textual constructions of subjectivity as informed by class, race, and gender, while attempting to generate answers to questions such as the following: In an era in which the full benefits of citizenship were enjoyed exclusively by white (and, before the rise of Jacksonian democracy, propertied) males, how were the experiences of the disenfranchised represented? What role do these representations play in the nineteenth-century project of locating and establishing a particularly American character and culture? In what way are these representations influenced by and reflective of the accelerating political, economic, social, institutional, technological, and geographical changes taking place at this time? How might they contribute to a discussion of the debates and tensions that culminated in the Civil War?

Required Materials
Available at Orange and Blue Textbooks, 309 NW 13th St (375-2707).

- Hugh Henry Brackenridge, Modern Chivalry (1815)
- Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts (1827)
- Robert Montgomery Bird, Sheppard Lee, Written by Himself (1836)
- Margaret Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century (1845)
- William Wells Brown, Clotel; or, The President’s Daughter (1853)
- Herman Melville, Benito Cereno (1856)
- Harriet E. Wilson, Our Nig: Sketches in the Life of a Free Black (1859)
- Rebecca Harding Davis, Life in the Iron Mills (1861)
- Bret Harte, The Luck of the Roaring Camp and Other Writings (1868)

Attendance Policy
Your participation is vital, and attendance is mandatory. You are allowed to miss three class sessions without excuse. For each subsequent missed class without a doctor's note I reserve the right to reduce your final course grade one-half of a letter grade. I count absences from the first day you are registered. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to make yourself aware of all class news and content. You are also responsible for turning assignments in on time. If you are not here when I take attendance—usually at the beginning of class, but sometimes at the end—you will be counted absent. If you are late, you will be...
marked absent. If you have attendance challenges, or are often late, please do not sign up for this class. Student athletes and students in band or theater may miss class without penalty for relevant university-sponsored events, but are still required to consult with me and make up all missed work.

**Academic Honesty**
All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php

**Students with Disabilities**
The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/

**Harassment**
UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/

**Complaints Procedure**
Students with complaints about one assignment should first initiate a discussion with the instructor. Students whose complaints have accumulated and are sure their final grade will be lower than desired are to consult Prof. Robert Thompson, Associate English Department. A committee of faculty members will review each student’s work and decide on the final grade. The committee may decide the grade should remain as is, be raised, or be lowered; the decision is final.

**General Class Policies**

*Participation*
Actively participating in class will enhance your learning experience, as well as that of others. I expect you to be interested, engaged, and prepared. At the beginning of most class meetings, I will solicit discussion questions, so always have a few in mind, should I call on you. Mere attendance is not sufficient to receive full participation credit. You will lose your participation credit if I see you napping, doing the crossword, reading the paper, surfing the internet, sending texts messages, etc.

*Civility*
Students come from diverse cultural, economic, and racial backgrounds. I expect you to be courteous to and respectful of others—your fellow students and your instructor—at all times, even when you encounter different/challenging opinions. Diverse student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. I will ask you to leave the class if your behavior is disruptive or offensive in any way, including anything that denigrates others on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or religion. Your dismissal will be considered an absence.

*Email*
Class announcements, notices, and assignments may be distributed in this class via email to the class list. In addition, email is the easiest way to reach me outside of class. You are responsible for checking your email regularly.

*Cell Phones*
Turn them off and store them before class begins. NO TEXTING. If I see you sending a text message
during class, you will lose your entire participation credit, making it impossible to earn an “A” for the course.

_Laptops, Etc._

You may bring a laptop, ebook reader, or tablet to class for the purpose of note-taking and reviewing texts related to class discussion. If you plan to use a laptop regularly, you must sit near the front of the classroom. Please do not surf the web, check email, check Facebook, etc. If I see you doing so, you will lose your participation credit, be counted absent, and be forbidden from using such devices in my class for the remainder of the semester.

_Instructor Conferences_

I encourage you to see me during my office hours, especially when you have questions about an assignment, need help with a particular problem, want extra feedback on a draft, or have questions about my comments on your work. Of course, we can also set up an appointment for an alternate meeting time, or correspond via email. Additional writing help is available at the Reading & Writing Center (www.at.ufl.edu/r&w/about.html), while other resources are noted on the University Writing Program’s website (www.writing.ufl.edu).

_Assignments_

_Responses_ (approximately 250 words): You will submit five (out of eight) brief response papers over the course of the semester. For these papers, you may provide a close reading of a short passage from the work at hand, or respond to the work as whole from a particular critical perspective. These papers are not intended as a forum for you to discuss matters of taste; as far as a project of criticism is concerned, whether or not you like the work is largely irrelevant. Avoid plot summary. Although you may eschew elaborate introductions and conclusions, your responses should still conform to the standards of good writing practice. These responses may generate ideas for the longer writing assignments. Also, they may serve as the basis for the panel presentation. Each response is due on the final day of scheduled discussion of a particular text.

_Papers:_ For this assignment, you have three options, each of which will involve analyses of the texts and themes of the course.

- You may write three **short papers** (1500-2100 words each), each of which should focus rather narrowly on some aspect of one of the texts, emphasizing close readings of particular passages. Due dates: 9/30, 11/7, and 12/7.
- Alternately, you may write one **short paper** and one **medium paper** (3000-4200 words) in which you develop a longer argument (perhaps comparing two or more of the texts). Due dates: 9/26 or 10/31 for short paper, 12/7 for medium paper.
- Finally, you may write a single **term paper** entailing close reading, course themes, and significant use of outside research (4500-6300 words). Students who choose this option must also submit a single-page abstract outlining their project at least three weeks prior to the last day of class. Due date: 12/7.

_Panel Presentation:_ Everyone will participate in one of eight panels focused on one of the assigned texts, with each panel consisting of four to five members. (I will circulate a sign-up sheet during the second week of classes.) At the start of each panel (which will coincide with the final day of discussion for one of the texts), each panelist will take three to five minutes to read a short paper. Then, the panelists will respond to each other’s papers. Finally, the panel will take questions from the rest of the class, so that the issues and ideas raised during the presentation will drive discussion for the remainder of the period. Students not presenting should arrive prepared to listen and engage with the panelists. (Note: your presentation may be an expanded version of one of your response papers.)
All written assignments, including essays and reading responses, should adhere to MLA formatting conventions; be double spaced; typed in a professional, 12-point font (Times New Roman, Garamond, Helvetica); on letter-sized paper; with 1" margins. Multiple-page assignments must be stapled. Paper-clipped or loose papers will not be accepted. Include a word count for all assignments.

All assignments are due at the beginning of the class indicated on the schedule. It is crucial for you to abide by required deadlines. Late assignments will not be accepted unless you have made arrangements with me prior to the scheduled due date. If you will not be in class on the day an assignment is due, you must email the assignment to me as a .doc or .rtf file by the beginning of class in order to avoid a late penalty. I will not grade the electronic version, however; you still must provide a hard copy the next time you attend class.

You are responsible for retaining all returned, graded work until the semester is over. Should the need arise for a re-submission of papers or a review of graded papers, it is your responsibility to have and make this material available.

**Grade Distribution**

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<td>Responses:</td>
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**Grading Scale**

Final course grade (based on % of total points): A: 93-100; A-: 90-92; B+: 88-89; B: 83-87; B-: 80-82; C+: 78-79; C: 73-77; C-: 70-72; D+: 68-69; D: 63-67; D-: 60-62; E: 59 and below.

Here is the meaning behind the grades I assign to your papers (you should use these statements to determine how you might work toward a higher grade):

**A** You did what the assignment asked for at a high quality level, and your work shows originality and creativity. Work in this range shows all the qualities listed below for a B, but it also demonstrates that you took extra steps to be original or creative in developing content, solving a problem, or developing a style. Since careful editing and proofreading are essential in writing, papers in the A range must be free of typos and grammatical or mechanical errors (papers with more than one or two errors cannot receive an A).

**B** You did what the assignment asked of you at a high quality level. Work in this range needs revision; however, it is complete in content, is organized well, and shows special attention to style.

**C** You did what the assignment asked of you. Work in this range needs significant revision, but it is complete in content and the organization is logical. The style is straightforward but unremarkable.

**D** You did what the assignment asked of you at a poor quality level. Work in this range needs significant revision. The content is often incomplete and the organization is hard to discern. Attention to style is often nonexistent or chaotic.

**E** An E is usually reserved for people who don’t do the work or don’t come to class. If your work is shoddy and shows little understanding of the needs of the assignment, or if you have committed plagiarism, however, you will receive a failing grade.

*This syllabus is subject to change at any time.*
Course Schedule

Week 1
Monday (8/22): Syllabus and overview
Wednesday (8/24): Backgrounds
Friday (8/26): Brackenridge, 1-50

Week 2
Monday (8/29): Brackenridge, 51-101
Wednesday (8/31): Brackenridge, 102-176
Friday (9/2): Brackenridge, 177-229

Week 3
Monday (9/5): no class
Wednesday (9/7): Brackenridge, 230-326
Friday (9/9): Brackenridge, 327-411

Week 4
Monday (9/12): Brackenridge, 412-470
Wednesday (9/14): Brackenridge, 471-535; response 1/panel 1

Week 5

Week 6
Wednesday (9/28): Bird, 1-55
Friday (9/30): Bird, 56-98; paper 1

Week 7
Monday (10/3): Bird, 99-195
Wednesday (10/5): Bird, 197-250
Friday (10/7): Bird, 251-299

Week 8
Monday (10/10): Bird, 299-375
Wednesday (10/12): Bird, 377-425; response 3/panel 3
Friday (10/14): Fuller, 1-49

Week 9
Monday (10/17): Fuller, 49-105

Week 10
Monday (10/24): Wells Brown, IV-X
Wednesday (10/26): Wells Brown, XI-XIX
Friday (10/28): Wells Brown, XX-XXIX

Week 11
Monday (10/31): Wells Brown, Appendices A-C; response 5/panel 5
Wednesday (11/2): Melville, Benito Cereno
Friday (11/4): no class

Week 12
Monday (11/7): Melville, Benito Cereno; paper 2
Wednesday (11/9): Melville, Benito Cereno; response 6/panel 6
Friday (11/11): no class

Week 13
Monday (11/14): Wilson, Our Nig; term-paper abstract
Wednesday (11/16): Wilson, Our Nig
Friday (11/18): Wilson, Our Nig

Week 14
Monday (11/21): Wilson, Our Nig; response 7/panel 7
Wednesday (11/23): TBA
Friday (11/25): no class

Week 15
Monday (11/28): Davis, Iron Mills
Wednesday (11/30): Davis, Iron Mills
Friday (12/2): Davis, TBA; response 8/panel 8

Week 16
Monday (12/5): Harte, TBA
Wednesday (12/7): Conclusion; paper 3