

## English 346: American Literature 1800-1865

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### Introduction:

The antebellum period in America was rife with contradictions. At the very moment a distinctly American literary tradition was taking shape, the national crisis that would tear the country apart during the Civil War was already insistent. Thomas Jefferson had declared all men to be created equal, yet Native Americans and African Americans were consistently denied the rights that Jefferson, himself a slave-owner, proclaimed to be unalienable. White men without land could finally vote in the election of 1828 that sent Andrew Jackson to the White House, but women throughout the nation remained disenfranchised, and most would not assume the right to hold property or earn an income within the institution of patriarchal marriage until long after the Civil War came to a close. The territorial expansion of the United States, which included Indian removal and the annexation of Texas, was bloody and violent, yet Americans were conditioned to see these imperial practices through the lens of domesticity—additions to America’s “home.” This sword cut both ways, however. For instance, long before he was hailed as “The Great Emancipator,” Abraham Lincoln recommended repatriating persons of African descent to Liberia. He even told a delegation of men of color at the White House that white men “suffer from your presence” in America. Yet by the war’s end he was working in tandem with black leaders like Frederick Douglass, and he found in the letter of the law a way to transcend his personal beliefs and the racial biases that structured them. Suffice it to say, the era wasn’t short of paradoxes.

Rather than neatly resolve these paradoxes or prescribe solutions to intractable social problems, writers of the period took them as their subjects and lent them form in meaningful—and sometimes revolutionary—ways. This is not to suggest that arguments weren’t made for securing women’s rights, ending slavery, honoring Native American sovereignty, or limiting the scope of U.S. imperial practices, etc.; rather, these authors *reframed* these issues and thereby brought to light the often invisible social and cultural forces that shaped Americans’ lives throughout the period.

As you will see in the pages ahead, this course pays especial attention to periodicals in which a great number of the authors we will study published their most important work. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was first serialized in the Free Soil newspaper the *National Era*. Edgar Allan Poe’s gruesome tale “The Cask of Amontillado” first appeared in, of all places, *Godey’s Lady’s Book*. Literary magazines like *Putnam’s Monthly* staunchly promoted American literary nationalism, and cultural movements like Transcendentalism found their expression in periodicals like the *Dial*. The evolution of the literary marketplace was inseparable from the

proliferation of periodicals and the development of networks for their distribution during the period. Much of the research we will do over the course of the semester will be in American periodicals.

### **Required Materials:**

- *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed., Volume B: 1820-1865
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*

Both of the above texts can be purchased at the WVU Bookstore.

The remaining course reading will be available on the following periodicals databases:

- Accessible Archives [Path: <https://lib.wvu.edu> -> Databases A-Z -> Primary Source -> Accessible Archives]
- American Periodicals Series [Path: <https://lib.wvu.edu> -> Databases A-Z -> Primary Source -> APS Online]
- The Making of America-Cornell [URL: <http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/m/moa/>]

You may also find the following resource, available in full-text online via Summon at the University Libraries website, very useful. It contains snapshots of most of the era's magazines, including lists of editors, circulation, readership, and the like. Just search for it via Summon from the University Libraries' webpage:

- Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, vols. I and II

### **Course Objectives:**

- To become familiar with the development of American literary and social history from 1800 to 1865
- To learn how to find, evaluate, lucidly summarize, and respond critically to relevant peer-reviewed scholarly sources
- To acquire primary researching skills in American periodicals
- To develop a thesis about a literary text that is informed by relevant primary and secondary research and support that thesis with evidence from appropriate sources
- To practice the conventions of standard written English and proper documentation style

### **English Major Program Goals:**

Upon completing a B.A. in English, a student should be able to:

1. Interpret texts within diverse literary, cultural, and historical contexts.
2. Demonstrate a general knowledge of the social and structural aspects of the English language.
3. Demonstrate a range of contextually effective writing strategies.

Four aspects of Goal 1 are especially important. A student should be able to:

- Identify genre conventions and analyze their effects
- Identify and analyze effects of complexity or ambiguity
- Locate texts in social, economic, political, and literary history
- Connect a text to other literary or cultural texts

Not all English courses will address all three goals; some will focus particularly on one goal. However, the English major curriculum as a whole will provide multiple opportunities to address all of the goals.

### **Assignments:**

#### Overview:

Each student enrolled in this course will write and revise four short papers or “Research Reports” as well as produce a 10-15-page Final Research Essay. All five of these documents will comprise the final portfolio. The four Research Reports are subdivided into two categories: Primary and Secondary. Over the course of the semester you will write two Research Reports that outline the results of your primary research in American periodicals, and two more Research Reports that require you to summarize and respond to scholarly essays in peer-reviewed publications, one essay per Report. The goal of the former is to progress from a broad interest in a general topic to a more refined working thesis or arguable assertion that, if pursued, could serve as the foundation of your final essay. You should chronicle the process you followed in your periodicals research, identify and describe the sources you consulted, and punctuate your report with a defensible claim that could promote further research on this topic. The other two Research Reports are “*précis* and response” papers that require you to find, select, read, lucidly summarize, and critically respond to a peer-reviewed scholarly essay on a topic related to the course reading. I leave it up to you to decide the order in which you want to tackle these four short papers, just so long as by the semester’s end you have submitted and revised two of each kind of Research Report. You are more than welcome—encouraged, even—to draw heavily from one or more of your Research Reports when completing your Final Research Essay. Details about and suggestions for completing each of these assignments are outlined below.

#### Primary Research Reports:

The best way to describe this assignment is with an example from the course reading: Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Cask of Amontillado,” a gothic tale about a man who walls up his frienemy in an underground tomb after getting him drunk and luring him to the spot with the promise of a cask of fine wine. As noted in the course calendar below, and as we will discuss when we get to this tale, “The Cask of Amontillado” first appeared in *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, a magazine better known for its fashion plates and domestic advice columns than for sensational tales like this. After our discussion of this story you may wonder what a narrative about a man murdering another man over an unstated insult is doing in a magazine like *Godey’s*, which hewed rather closely to accepted conventions for addressing its imagined audience of “proper” women. This could lead to a number of different researching strategies when you visit the American Periodicals Series database, which includes full-text issues of *Godey’s*. You might, for instance,

want to look at all the other articles in the November 1846 issue that featured Poe's story to see if there's a theme to which the tale contributes. Or you may want to look across issues for other stories by male writers to see if there's a pattern. You can even keyword search across issues to see what Poe's story shares in common with other items published in the magazine. Obviously, these different approaches will yield different sets of results, which you should characterize and provide important details about in your Research Report. Where the rubber meets the road, however, is in the paper's conclusion when you should return to the story that initiated your search and make a working thesis or arguable assertion about it—one that, if pursued, could turn into a much longer essay. You may conclude, for instance, that Poe's story appears in *Godey's* as an exemplar of the sorts of things men do that women, through their deportment, were expected to offset (read: the 1846 version of the double standard). Or you may conclude that the inclusion of Poe's tale in *Godey's* shows that the magazine's editor, Sarah Josepha Hale, one of the most influential women in the antebellum magazine industry, was challenging the gender norms to which *Godey's* traditionally paid lip-service. You might even suggest that *Godey's* female readers lived vicariously through the story's protagonist, who successfully eliminates at least one arrogant and abusive patriarchal figure from his life with complete impunity. Whatever you conclude, you should state your conclusion as a claim about the text and its interpretation and finish off your Report with a succinct paragraph that could serve as the thesis of a longer paper on this subject. The resulting Research Report should be in the 4-6-page range, or 1000-1500 words. **Special note: you must write on a subject that pertains to any one of the texts or authors we have read since the last Research Report was due.** In other words, you can do primary research on Washington Irving and the *Analectic Magazine* for Research Report One, but not for Research Reports Two-Four. Tentative grades and suggestions for revision will be provided for each Research Report.

#### Secondary Research Reports (a.k.a. "Précis and Response" Papers):

During the semester you will also complete two Research Reports that require secondary research, which are really "précis and response" papers of approximately 1000-1500 words apiece. To complete these papers you must use the MLA bibliography in conjunction with online resources like JSTOR, Project MUSE, and/or EBSCOHost to find, read, summarize, and analyze a single work of substantial, peer-reviewed scholarship **on a topic pertaining to any one of the texts we will have covered since the previous Research Report was due.** Nota bene: each of these two Research Reports must summarize and respond critically to **a substantial work of literary criticism**, meaning an article in a peer-reviewed academic journal or an essay in a published collection, not a biographical sketch, encyclopedia entry, or the like. The subject of the essay you choose is up to you (read: it doesn't have to be about periodicals, but it does have to pertain to the course reading). Your paper should begin with a lucid characterization and summary of the argument made by the scholar or scholars whose work you found. This précis must then be followed by a critical response from you that engages with and responds to the author of the secondary source. Remember, you're working toward constructing an argument of your own, so trashing the scholar for his or her writing style isn't going to get you very far. Consider instead how you might respond as a scholar of equal caliber by asking and answering critical questions like: How has this scholar's argument influenced your reading of the text? What has he or she overlooked, in your opinion? Etc. The goal in the response is to *demonstrate* how the scholarly source influences your interpretation of the primary text that we read for class. Finally, you must provide a bibliographic citation of the article you found in either MLA or

Chicago format. Tentative grades and suggestions for revision and/or further inquiry will be provided in response to each paper.

### Final Research Essay:

By the time you get to this assignment you will have spent the entire semester honing your primary and secondary researching skills, making arguable assertions with appropriate rigor and scope, and responding critically to literary scholars. The Final Research Essay is the place to put all these skills together. The end result will be an original 10-15-page essay on an author, text, subject, or theme relevant to the course reading that is supported with material drawn from appropriate primary and secondary sources. It should be your crowning achievement in this course. You are strongly encouraged but by no means required to draw from one or more of your Research Reports when putting together this essay. That's what building an archive is for: so you can use it! This may mean developing one of your most successful Research Reports into a full-blown formal essay. Or it may mean building an entirely new essay from scratch. In other words, if you decide as the semester is coming to a close that you want to take your Final Research Essay in a different direction from your Research Reports, that's perfectly fine. You are also strongly encouraged to meet with me and discuss your paper earlier rather than later. **No fewer than five secondary sources are required.**

### Portfolio Contents and Grading:

Final grades will be primarily determined by portfolio. The portfolio you hand in at the end of the semester will contain **revised** copies of the four Research Reports and the final draft of the Final Research Essay. What matters most, in the end, is the quality of the work contained in the portfolio. In other words, if you received a tentative grade of 75% on one of your Research Reports, but you then clearly revised and improved upon the content and delivery of this essay in your portfolio, then your portfolio grade will reflect the improvement. **Note: you are strongly advised to make revisions to your Research Reports as the semester progresses.** It is much easier to make minor changes along the way than wait until the last minute to make major changes at that time.

### Participation:

You are expected and required to keep up with the reading and come to class prepared to discuss the reading due for each class meeting. Be sure to give yourself enough time to wade through the material before coming to class. Inasmuch as class discussion is concerned, venturesome claims and critical observations about the course texts are always welcome, but participation may also include asking questions about the form, content, or significance of what you've read on any given day. If you found a passage confusing or a narrative technique obfuscating, undoubtedly others will have shared your experience and will appreciate any questions you ask about them.

### **Grading System:**

Final Portfolio:	80%
Participation:	20%

All assignments will be graded on a 100-point scale with grade ranges as follows:

+	100-98	+	89-88	+	79-78	+	69-68		
A	97-92	B	87-82	C	77-72	D	67-62	F	59-0
-	91-90	-	81-80	-	71-70	-	61-60		

Evaluation Criteria for Portfolio:

**A (90-100):** Each of the documents contained in the portfolio demonstrates perceptive and thoughtful responses to the assignments. They are well organized with excellent development of ideas, and they reflect the writer’s command of appropriate rhetorical strategies. The prose is vigorous and fresh, and the writer is clearly in control of the standard conventions of academic writing.

**B (80-89):** Each of the documents contained in the portfolio fulfills the assignment and shows evidence of clear thought and good planning. Each essay is well organized with good supporting details. The writing is fluent, and there are only minor errors in the mechanics that do not interfere with reading.

**C (70-79):** Each of the documents contained in the portfolio fulfills the assignment. The writing of each essay is adequately developed, clear, and coherent with relatively few errors in usage and mechanics, but the writer fails to demonstrate any particular strength which would distinguish above-average work.

**D (60-69):** Each of the documents contained in the portfolio fulfills its respective assignment but exhibits major problems in writing. Each essay may have difficulty with the presentation of ideas (e.g., lack of a clear thesis, weak organization, poor development of ideas, or inappropriate diction, poor spelling) or be marred by enough errors in the mechanics of writing to seriously distract the reader.

**F (59 or below):** Each of the documents contained in the portfolio is so poorly presented that it fails to fulfill the assignment. Each essay fails to present basic ideas, either because of poor organization and lack of clarity or because the writing reflects a lack of control over the basic conventions of standard academic usage.

**0:** Any one of the documents contained in the portfolio represents dishonest work by the student, principally the use of ideas or writing that are clearly not one’s own work. Refer to the West Virginia University Undergraduate Catalog for the University policy on Academic Dishonesty.

**Attendance Policy:**

Because participation counts for 20% of your grade you have to show up and contribute. After all, you can’t participate in the discussion if you aren’t here. Also bear in mind that some days (e.g., workshop days) count more than other days since your classmates will depend on you more to help them fulfill their assignments. You can miss up to five non-workshop, non-assignment-due dates without penalty. Choose your five days judiciously. Subsequent absences will drop your attendance and participation grade one letter grade per day. A failing grade for the course

will be recorded for any student with ten or more absences. **If you are more than five minutes late for class, you will be counted absent.**

### **Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is the (mis)representation of someone else's work as your own. It may be direct (e.g., not documenting a quoted source) or indirect (paraphrasing ideas, thoughts, etc. without due credit). In either case, neglecting to acknowledge sources for outside material is a serious offence and may result in failure for the assignment and possibly the course. Please see me if you are not sure about how to use or acknowledge certain materials.

### **Academic Integrity Statement:**

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the Student Conduct Code at <http://studentlife.wvu.edu/studentconductcode.html>. Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me *before* the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

### **Inclusivity Statement:**

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>.

### **Additional Resources:**

The WVU Writing Center is committed to helping students become better writers. For more information about the Writing Center, including its hours, how to make appointments, and additional resources, visit their webpage at <http://english.wvu.edu/centers-projects/writing-center>. You can also follow them on Twitter @wvwritingcenter

The Downtown Library also hosts a term paper clinic throughout the semester. Scheduling details TBA.

## Contact Information:

If you have questions about the course or concerns you would like to share privately with me, please contact me via email at Michael.Germana@mail.wvu.edu. **But please do not write to ask me for lecture notes or to request a summary of what you missed on any given day.** If you miss class and need class notes, ask one of your classmates.

You are also invited—but not required—to follow me on Twitter at @michael\_germana. **When I tweet about or retweet something relevant to this course, I will use the hashtag #ENGL346W. You can and should do likewise if you would like to share something with the class.** A promise: if you follow me, I won't follow you back or even look at your account—your privacy is sacred to me. The only tweets of yours I will see will be those that feature the designated hashtag. You may also message me through Twitter at your convenience.

## Course Calendar:

### August:

- 17 M Introduction/s
- 19 W Washington Irving, “Rip Van Winkle” (pp. 29-41)
- 21 F Washington Irving, “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (pp. 41-62)
- 24 M William Apess, “An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man” (pp. 154-159) + Elias Boudinot, “From the *Cherokee Phoenix*: To the Public” (pp. 358-360) + Lydia Howard Huntley Sigourney, “Indian Names” (pp. 112-113) and “Our Aborigines” (pp. 116-117)
- 26 W **Information Literacy Session—class meets in Room 136 of the Downtown Library**
- 28 F Lydia Maria Child, Letter XXXVI from *Letters from New York* [Barnum’s American Museum] (pp. 204-210)
- 31 M Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*: “Introduction” (pp. 214-215), “Chapter I. Nature” (pp. 215-217), and “Chapter IV. Language” (pp. 222-227) + Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “A Psalm of Life” (pp. 598-599)

### September:

- 2 W Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Artist of the Beautiful” *United States Magazine, and Democratic Review*, June 1844, pp. 605-617 (American Periodicals Series)
- 4 F **Research Report One Due** [possible primary research subjects include the *Analectic Magazine*, which Washington Irving edited during the War of 1812 (American Periodicals Series), the *Cherokee Phoenix* (page images from 1828-1834 available via Georgia Historic Newspapers online), the Transcendentalist magazine *The Dial* (American Periodicals Series), and the *United States Magazine, and Democratic Review*, in which Hawthorne published “The Artist of the Beautiful” (American Periodicals Series).]
- 7 M **Labor Day—class does not meet**
- 9 W Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables* – Preface-Chapter III
- 11 F Hawthorne, *House* continued – Chapter IV-Chapter VIII
- 14 M Hawthorne, *House* continued – Chapter IX-Chapter XIII

- 16 W Hawthorne, *House* continued – Chapter XIV-Chapter XVII  
 18 F Hawthorne, *House* continued – Chapter XVIII-end  
 21 M Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself” Chants 1-26 (pp. 1330-1350)  
 23 W Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself” Chants 27-52 (pp. 1350-1374)  
 25 F Edgar Allen Poe, “The Cask of Amontillado” (pp. 714-719)  
 28 M Herman Melville, “Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street” (pp. 1483-1509)  
 30 W **Research Report Two Due** [possible primary research subjects include *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, in which Poe’s “The Cask of Amontillado” appeared in November of 1846 (American Periodicals Series), *Putnum’s Monthly*, a staunch promoter of American literary nationalism that published Melville’s “Bartleby” in the November and December 1853 issues (American Periodicals Series or Making of America-Cornell), and the *United States Democratic Review* in which Whitman anonymously (barely!) reviewed the 1855 edition of his own *Leaves of Grass* (American Periodicals Series).]

October:

- 2 F Herman Melville, “Benito Cereno” (pp. 1526-1558)  
 5 M Melville, “Benito Cereno” continued (pp. 1559-1582)  
 7 W “Slavery, Race, and the Making of American Literature” (pp. 787-804; includes excerpts from Thomas Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia* and *David Walker’s Appeal in Four Articles* as well as texts by William Lloyd Garrison, Angelina E. Grimké, Sojourner Truth, and Martin R. Delany)  
 9 F Lydia Maria Child, “Slavery’s Pleasant Homes” (American Periodicals Series)  
 12 M **Fall Break—class does not meet**  
 14 W Harriet Beecher Stowe, from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly* (pp. 807-857)  
 16 F Stowe, *Uncle* continued (pp. 858-904)  
 19 M William Wells Brown, from *The Narrative of the Life and Escape of William Wells Brown* (pp. 944-948) + Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” (pp. 1251-1254)  
 21 W **Research Report Three Due** [possible primary research subjects include *Freedom’s Journal*, the first American newspaper owned and run by African Americans (Accessible Archives), the *Anglo-African Magazine*, which serialized parts of Martin R. Delany’s novel *Blake* and includes an account of John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry, “The Outbreak in Virginia,” and a description of Brown’s execution (full-text available via Summon), the *Liberty Bell*, which is the antislavery gift book published annually by the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society where Child’s “Slavery’s Pleasant Homes” appeared in 1843 (American Periodicals Series), and the Free Soil newspaper, the *National Era*, in which Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was first serialized (American Periodicals Series).]  
 23 F Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself* Preface-Chapter IX (pp. 1174-1208)  
 26 M Douglass, *Narrative* continued Chapter X-Appendix (pp. 1208-1239)  
 28 W Harriet Jacobs, from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (pp. 921-942)  
 30 F Henry David Thoreau, from “A Plea for Captain John Brown” (pp. 1166-1170) + Herman Melville, “The Portent” from *Battle-Pieces* (p. 1583)

November:

- 2 M Emily Dickinson, Poems 112, 194, 202, 225, 320, 353, 479, 591, 620, and 1096 (pp. 1663-1694)
- 4 W Rebecca Harding Davis, “Life in the Iron-Mills” (pp. 1706-1732)
- 6 F Louisa May Alcott, “My Contraband” (pp. 1735-1749)
- 9 M Whitman, “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d” from *Memories of President Lincoln* (pp. 1402-1408)
- 11 W S. Weir Mitchell, “The Case of George Dedlow” *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1866, pp. 1-11 (Making of America-Cornell)
- 13 F **Research Report Four Due** [possible primary research subjects include Frederick Douglass’s *North Star* newspaper (later called the *Frederick Douglass Paper*—both titles available via Accessible Archives), the *Southern Literary Messenger* and the *Atlantic Monthly*, whose editors began a war of words that set the stage for the Civil War (available via American Periodicals Series and Making of America-Cornell, respectively), and William Lloyd Garrison’s abolitionist newspaper, the *Liberator* (American Periodicals Series).]
- 16 M **Research Day—class meets in the Downtown Library**
- 18 W **Research Day—class meets in the Downtown Library**
- 20 F **Research Day—class meets in the Downtown Library**  
 ---Thanksgiving Recess---
- 30 M **Workshop: Peer Review of Final Research Essay Introduction—Draft of Introduction Due**

December:

- 2 W **Workshop: Peer Review of Final Research Essay—Complete Draft of Final Research Essay Due**
- 4 F **Workshop: Peer Review of Final Portfolio**
- 7 M **Final Portfolios Due** + course evaluations