

**English 200 F: The Uncanny, the Wild, and the Macabre  
in Nineteenth-Century American Literature**

M - Th 1:30-2:20, Smith 407

Instructor: Emily K. Bald

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Office Hours: Thu. 2:30-4:30, ART 353



*Albert Bierstadt, Puget Sound on the Pacific Coast, 1870, Seattle Art Museum*

For the next ten weeks, we will explore representations of times and places that lurk outside of nationally and culturally ‘settled’ space, whether geographically, socially, or psychologically. Covering a variety of forms and media, including short fiction, novels, poetry, visual art, and film, we begin with the uncanny tales of Irving, Poe, and Alcott, set out for the ‘wildernesses’ of *Moby-Dick* and *Walden*, wind our way into the trenches (so to speak) of Civil War fiction, and finally examine psychological explorations of race and gender construction at the turn of the century. Emerging from a period marked by sustained efforts to consolidate national identity and map the nation’s “manifest” destiny onto the American landscape, these works expose the people, places, histories, and experiences that representations of the empire have attempted to repress.

An important goal of the course is for us to consider the connections and continuities between 19<sup>th</sup>-century (con)texts and contemporary culture. Rather than quarantine America’s past from its present, we will spend the second half of this course thinking about how motifs taken up in these texts—i.e. the ‘call of the wild,’ xenophobia and ‘othering,’ or sexual repression—continue to have real social and political consequences that are reflected in very recent nonfiction, fiction, and film.

Please note that this is a “W” (“writing-intensive”) course. In addition to the assigned reading, there will be short, informal writing assignments which build toward two formal (4-6-page) essays.

## COURSE TEXTS

- English 200 F Coursepack (CP)
- Selected PDFs posted to Canvas Files

The English 200 F Coursepack is available at **Rams Copy Center** (on the corner of NE 42<sup>nd</sup> St. & the Ave.).

**Course Reserves:** You will also be asked to watch two films for this class, both of which will be available for rental from our course reserve at the Suzzallo Media Library.

## COURSE GOALS

1. To develop strong analytical skills and to become active, inquisitive readers
2. To contextualize and analyze the texts and topics covered historically, politically, and culturally
3. To improve writing skills generally, and with regard to writing about literature and culture

## COURSE GRADE BREAKDOWN

Your final course grade will be divided and weighted as follows:

### **Midterm and Final Papers**

----- 60%

You will write two analytical papers in this course, each 4-6 pages in length (double-spaced, 12-pt. Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins). This 60% of your grade will be an average of your midterm and final paper grades.

### **Participation**

----- 20%

This *is not* a lecture course; rather, you are expected to participate *actively* in class. Active participation means:

1. Listening attentively to your peers (and me) in class;
2. Contributing consistently and meaningfully to both small group and larger class discussions;
3. Completing and thinking about the assigned readings before each meeting;
4. Finishing both informal and formal written assignments on time, including your blog responses;
5. Bringing the assigned readings to class. *If you do not have the appropriate text in front of you—opened to the page being discussed—you are not participating actively.*

There will be occasional **reading quizzes** at the start of class to ensure everyone is prepared. If you have done the reading, you will do fine on these quizzes. If you haven't—or if you don't show up to class to take the quizzes—your participation grade will suffer, since all of the active participation criteria above depend upon your preparedness for (and presence in) class.

## Weekly Blogging

----- 20%

There will be a continuous course blog on Canvas that serves as a place where you can track your reading process and work through thoughts, reactions, and questions in informal, low-stakes writing. I will distribute a more detailed prompt and rubric for this during the first week of class. You are expected to post and respond to others thoughtfully and on time. Ideally the blog, as an extension of our learning community, will help you develop your own lines of inquiry and insights, which you can then build upon in your midterm and final papers.

## WRITING CRITERIA

**1. Central Purpose:** Does your introduction clearly convey a central argument or line of inquiry that readers would find worthwhile? Is your purpose or argument one that can be supported primarily through close reading literary texts?

**2. Organization:** Does the opening sentence of each body paragraph clearly convey that paragraph's central claim? (We call these "topic sentences," but we *should* call them "argument sentences.") Is each body paragraph unified around that 'mini' claim and coherent? Do the paragraphs clearly relate to/build upon one another to create a sense of logical, persuasive development throughout?

**3. Evidence:** Do you closely reference the literary texts that are the objects of your analysis? Do you quote from them frequently?

**4. Textual Analysis/Close Reading:** Do you *do* something with the evidence you provide? Do you explain *how* you read it (which will differ from how others read it), and then connect your reading or analysis of the evidence to the argument of your paper? Do you pay attention to the writers' use of language, to patterns, and/or to stylistic/formal features of the texts?

**Bonus Criterion: Stakes.** The "stakes" of an essay are its claim(s) for significance. By the end of your body paragraphs, you will have (hopefully) clearly conveyed your argument about a literary text or set of texts and your supporting analysis to readers. In the conclusion, you should focus on stakes—that is, why readers should care about the argument of your essay.

## THE GRID

On papers for this class you'll find (in addition to end comments) a set of four numbers (i.e. 3 2 3 4). These numbers correspond to each of the criteria described above. The point of these numbers is to give you a quick mini-grade on each of the criteria we use to score papers. As I assign each number, I have in mind the following general sense of what they mean:

1. Not enough sense of this category to be functional in college-level work. (e.g., a paper that hasn't any specific evidence to explain or clarify the argument.)
2. A sense of what this category is asking for, but not much more. (e.g., a paper that offers specific evidence, but doesn't analyze or develop it sufficiently to be effective.)
3. Functional success with this category, but not yet showing full control. (e.g., some exploration of a few quotations, but without substantial analysis, or without consistency.)

4. Functional success with this category, with some lapses and/or inconsistencies. (e.g., full exploration of evidence, but without clear relevance to central purpose.)
5. Success with this category but a success not rhetorically integrated throughout the draft. (e.g., a paper with a good sense of how to use evidence and to develop it far enough to make it useful to the argument, but not well deployed throughout the paper.)
6. Full success with this category. (e.g., a paper with insightful and well-developed evidence, all relevant and effectively informative.)

These criteria scores aim to help you see which skills you're really crushing and which you might focus on next time. A paper is more than the sum of its parts, so the relationship between these numbers and the final score you get will not always be exact (I don't just add them up); however, there is a very strong correlation. Four 6's, for example, would undoubtedly earn a 4.0.

## **CLASS EXPECTATIONS**

### **LATE POLICY**

Assignments should be submitted to the "Assignments" page on Canvas by the due date and the due time. If you turn in the paper late, I will not give you written feedback on it, and you will lose half of a point (on a 4.0 scale) for each day past the deadline. If an emergency situation arises, e-mail me or come talk to me and we will work something out.

### **PAPER LENGTH**

Each essay must be **ABSOLUTELY** no shorter than 4 FULL pages and no longer than 6 pages. I mean that; don't test me. If your essay falls outside either of these limits—but especially the lower limit—it will be considered late and subject to the policy above.

### **OFFICE HOURS AND E-MAIL**

My office hours—Thursdays, 2:30-4:20 in Art 353—are a set time each week during which you can come to me with questions, concerns, and/or budding ideas you want to sort out. I am also happy to address questions or concerns by email, and aim for a 24-hour (max) turnaround.

### **LAPTOPS AND PHONES**

I realize the times are a-changin', but please be advised that I do not permit the use of electronic screens of any kind during class *unless* I specify otherwise (i.e. for a particular reading I've provided as a PDF). I realize that some students prefer to take notes on laptops, but this convenience is counterbalanced by the fact that they distract others (like me). They also tempt users to multi-task (further distracting others). Before class, then, please put away your laptop (likewise your smartphone, iPad, etc.). There is lots of research demonstrating that students learn better by taking notes the old fashioned way, with paper and ink, so that is what we'll try this quarter.

## **PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism, also known as academic dishonesty, is presenting someone else's ideas or writing as your own. I encourage you to refer to other people's thoughts in your writing for this class; just be sure to **cite** them properly. Remember, **improper citation counts as plagiarism**. We'll go over proper citation in class, but if you ever have any questions about how to cite or about whether you need to cite something, play it safe and ask me. As a matter of policy, any student found to have plagiarized any piece of writing in this class will be immediately reported to the College of Arts and Sciences for review.

## **ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY**

Racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination and bias are hurtful and unacceptable. There is no tolerance for words, speech, behavior, actions, or clothing/possessions that insult, diminish, demean, or belittle any individual or group of persons based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual preference, ability, economic class, national origin, language, or age. Academic freedom, freedom of speech, and freedom of discourse **DO NOT** protect racism or other acts of harassment and hate. Violations of this Zero Tolerance Policy may result in removal from the classroom and actions governed by the student code of conduct will be taken.

## **UNIVERSITY RESOURCES**

### **WRITING CENTERS**

The Odegaard Writing and Research Center (OWRC) offers free, one-on-one help with all aspects of writing at any stage in the writing process—including the “I have no ideas for this paper and don't know where to start” stage. To make the best use of your time there, please bring a copy of your assignment prompt with you and double-space any drafts (or brainstorming notes, outlines, etc.) you want to bring in.

The OWRC is located in Odegaard Undergraduate Library room 121. Book your appointments early at <http://depts.washington.edu/owrc/>.

The CLUE Writing Center in Mary Gates Hall is open Sunday to Thursday from 7pm to midnight. The graduate tutors can help you with your claims, organization, and grammar. You do not need to make an appointment, so arrive early and be prepared to wait.

### **ACCOMMODATIONS**

If you need accommodation of any sort, please let me know so that I can work with the UW Disability Services Office (DSO) to provide what you require. This syllabus is available in large print, as are other class materials. More information about accommodation may be found at <http://www.washington.edu/admin/dso/>.

## UW SAFE CAMPUS

Preventing violence is everyone's responsibility. If you're concerned, tell someone.

- Always call 911 if you or others may be in danger.
- Call 206-685-SAFE (7233) to report non-urgent threats of violence and for referrals to UW counseling and/or safety resources. TTY or VP callers, please call through your preferred relay service.
- Don't walk alone. Campus safety guards can walk with you on campus after dark. Call Husky NightWalk 206-685-WALK (9255).
- Stay connected in an emergency with UW Alert. Register your mobile number to receive instant notification of campus emergencies via text and voice messaging. Sign up online at [www.washington.edu/alert](http://www.washington.edu/alert) For more information visit the SafeCampus website at [www.washington.edu/safecampus](http://www.washington.edu/safecampus).

## Course Calendar

### Week 1

- Mon. 3/28 Introduction, Syllabus
- Tue. 3/29 **John L. O'Sullivan**, "Annexation" (Canvas)  
19<sup>th</sup>-century visual art & cartography
- Wed. 3/30 **Washington Irving**, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"
- Thu. 3/31 **Edgar Allan Poe**, "Ms. Found in a Bottle"

### Week 2

- Mon. 4/4 **Sigmund Freud**, *The Uncanny*
- Tue. 4/5 **Poe**, "The Fall of the House of Usher"
- Wed. 4/6 **Louisa May Alcott**, "A Whisper in the Dark"
- Thu. 4/7 **Andrew Bennett & Nicholas Royle**, "The Uncanny" (from *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*)

### Week 3

- Mon. 4/11 **Herman Melville**, *Moby-Dick* (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 14, & 28)
- Tue. 4/12 *Moby-Dick* (Chapters 35, 41, 42, & 44)

- Wed. 4/13      *Moby-Dick* (Chapters 93 & 104)  
Thu. 4/14      **Henry David Thoreau**, *Walden* (pp. 81-98)

#### Week 4

- Mon. 4/18      *Moby-Dick* (Chapters 133-end)  
Tue. 4/19      *Walden* (pp. 131-33; 155-60; & 299-319)  
Wed. 4/20      *Walden* (pp. 320-333)  
Thu. 4/21      Peer Review (Bring Paper One draft)

**\*Midterm Paper Due Sun. 4/24 by midnight (Submit via Canvas Assignments)\***

#### Week 5

- Mon. 4/25      **Ambrose Bierce**, “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”  
Tue. 4/26      **Bierce**, “Chickamauga”  
Wed. 4/27      **Stephen Crane**, “An Episode of War”  
Thu. 4/28      **Tony Horwitz**, *Confederates in the Attic* selections (Canvas)

#### Week 6

- Mon. 5/2      **Joel Chandler Harris**, selected *Uncle Remus* stories (“Some Goes Up and Some Goes Down”; “The Wonderful Tar-Baby”; and “The Briar Patch”)  
Tue. 5/3      **Charles Chesnut**, “Superstitions and Folklore of the South” & “The Goophered Grapevine” (from *The Conjure Woman*)  
Wed. 5/4      **W.E.B. Dubois**, *The Souls of Black Folk* selections  
Thu. 5/5      **Alice Walker**, “Uncle Remus, No Friend of Mine”  
                 **Ta’Nehisi Coates**, *Between the World and Me* selections (Canvas)

#### Week 7

- Mon. 5/9      **Thoreau**, “Walking”  
                 **Frederick Jackson Turner**, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History”  
Tue. 5/10      **Jack London**, “To Build a Fire”

Wed. 5/11 **Theodore Roosevelt**, “The Strenuous Life”

Thu. 5/12 **Sean Penn (dir.)**, *Into the Wild*

### Week 8

Mon. 5/16 **Charlotte Perkins Gilman**, “The Yellow Wall-Paper”

Tue. 5/17 **Kate Chopin**, “The Story of an Hour”

Wed. 5/18 **Chopin**, “The Storm”

Thu. 5/19 **Margaret Atwood**, “Simmering” and “The Sunrise”

### Week 9

Mon. 5/23 **Poe**, “The Man that was Used Up”

Tue. 5/24 **H.P. Lovecraft**, “The Outsider”

Wed. 5/25 **Alex Garland (dir.)**, *Ex Machina*

Thu. 5/26 *Ex Machina*

### Week 10

Mon. 5/30 **Melville**, “Bartleby the Scrivener”  
**Alan Trachtenberg**, *The Incorporation of America* selections

Tue. 5/31 *The Office* selections

Wed. 6/1 Peer Review

Thu. 6/2 Course Conclusion & Evaluations

**\*Final Paper Due Sun. 6/5 by midnight (Submit via Canvas Assignments)\***