



The collective myths and ideologies of most cultures precede historical self-consciousness; that of America, by contrast, arises in the very recent past, and comes into being simultaneously with European modernity. As such, it provides an extreme and simplified exemplar of all of the movements and conflicts of the modern. The course will introduce the student to the major themes and issues of American literature and culture from the seventeenth century to the present. We will concentrate particularly on attempts to find a new basis for community, divorced from the Old World (the continent of Europe and the continent of the past), and the dissatisfaction with and opposition to that community that comes with modern subjectivity. The journey will take us from raw Puritan colonies to the repressive sophistication of Henry James' and Kate Chopin's nineteenth-century salons—worlds of etiquette and porcelain in which nothing can be said—to the transgressive experiments of decadents, modernists and postmodernists, all united by a restless desire to find some meaning beyond the obvious, some transcendence that will transfigure and explain the enigma of the self and of the unfinished errand, America.

The goals of the course are that students should understand the works studied, and their relations to the societal, intellectual, and aesthetic movements of the period covered by the course: Puritanism, Calvinism, theocracy, Enlightenment, Romanticism, Transcendentalism, slavery, Abolition, Decadence, Modernism, Postmodernism.



Spring 2015 Tuesday, Thursday 12:30-1:50

Room: Mark Taper Hall of Humanities (THH) 203

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Texts:

Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Selected Essays*

Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*

Herman Melville, *Billy Budd*

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative*

Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*

Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*

T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood*

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*



Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club*



Schedule:

August

- |    |    |   |
|----|----|---|
| T  | 25 | Introduction                                  |
| Th | 27 | John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" |

September

- |    |    |   |
|----|----|---|
| T  | 1  | John Winthrop, <i>Journal</i>                                 |
| Th | 3  | Roger Williams, "The Bloody Tenet of Persecution"             |
| T  | 8  | Roger Williams, "Letter to the Town of Providence"            |
| Th | 10 | Benjamin Franklin, <i>Autobiography</i>                       |
| T  | 15 |   |
| Th | 17 | Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Divinity School Address"            |
| T  | 22 | Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance," "The Transcendentalist" |
| Th | 24 | Herman Melville, <i>Moby-Dick</i>                             |
| T  | 29 |   |

October

- |    |    |                                      |
|----|----|--------------------------------------|
| Th | 1  | Herman Melville, "The Piazza"        |
| T  | 6  | Frederick Douglass, <i>Narrative</i> |
| Th | 8  |                                      |
| T  | 13 | Kate Chopin, <i>The Awakening</i>    |

Th	15	
T	20	Henry James, <i>The Beast in the Jungle</i>
Th	22	
T	27	Henry James, <i>The Turn of the Screw</i>
Th	29	
November		
T	3	T. S. Eliot, <i>The Waste Land</i>
Th	5	
T	10	Djuna Barnes, <i>Nightwood</i>
Th	12	
T	17	F. Scott Fitzgerald, <i>The Great Gatsby</i>
Th	19	
T	24	Thomas Pynchon, <i>The Crying of Lot 49</i>
Th	26	Thanksgiving
December		
T	1	
Th	3	Chuck Palahniuk, <i>Fight Club</i>

Final exam: Tuesday, December 15, 11-1



This syllabus is subject to revision, particularly in matters of schedule. The reading list will be



supplemented by handouts. There will be two papers (5-7 pages each), and midterm and final examinations, each accounting for 25% of the final grade. Papers should conform to the written instructions that will be provided to each student. Students need to attend every class meeting, unless excused by exceptional circumstances.



Illustrations: Thomas Cole, *The Course of Empire: Savage State, Pastoral State, Consummation, Destruction, Desolation*, New York Historical Society.

## **Student Behavior, Disability, and Integrity**

### **Student Behavior**

Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action. These strictures may extend to behaviors outside the classroom that are related to the course.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register

with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.--5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

## **Academic Integrity**

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A:

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>.

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at:

<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.