



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 2021 Monday, Wednesday, Friday 11-11:50

Room: Online

Instructor: Anthony Kemp

Office: Online

Office Hours: TBA

Email: kemp@usc.edu

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:

January

F 15: Introduction

M 18 Martin Luther King Day

W 20: John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity"

F 22: John Winthrop, *Journal*

M 25: Roger Williams, "The Bloody Tenet of Persecution"

W 27: Roger Williams, "Letter to the Town of Providence"

F 29: Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*

February

M 1:

W 3: Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Divinity School Address"

F 5: Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance," "The Transcendentalist"

M 8: Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*

W 10:

F 12: Presidents' Day

W 17: Herman Melville, "The Piazza"

F 19: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative*

M 22:

W 24: Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*
F 26:
March
M 1:
W 3: Henry James, *The Beast in the Jungle*
F 5:
M 8:
W 10:
F 12: Wellness Day
M 15: Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*
W 17:
F 19:
M 22: T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*
W 24:
F 26:
M 29:
W 31:
April
F 2:
M 5: Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood*
W 7: Wellness Day
F 9:
M 12:
W 14: F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*
F 16:
M 19:
W 21: Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*
F 23:
M 26: Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club*
W 28:
F 30: Wellness Day
May
W 5: Final Exam 11-1



Evaluation

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 pages minimum each; some students choose to write papers of 10-20 pages), and midterm and final examinations, each piece of written work accounting for 25% of the final grade. Papers should conform to the written instructions that will be provided to each student. Examinations are objective and test knowledge of the texts and of the concepts presented in class. Students need to attend every class meeting, unless excused by exceptional circumstances. No student may take early or omit the final examination.



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

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct: Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>. Support Systems: Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255 Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

Sexual Assault Resource Center For more information about how to get help or help a survivor,

rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: <http://sarc.usc.edu/>

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086 Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response.
<https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710 Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/>

Diversity at USC – <https://diversity.usc.edu/> Tabs for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students