

“Reading is not walking on the words; it’s grasping the soul of them.” Paulo Freire

St. Thomas Aquinas College
English 347: Romance and Renaissance in America
Spring 2017

Instructor: Dr. Robert Murray

Class: MW 9:50-11:15 in M123

Office: Spellman 105A

Office Hours: MW 8:30-9:30; 11:30-12:30 and also by appointment anytime

Campus Phone: 845-398-4125 or 845-398-4147

Email: rmurray@stac.edu

Required Books

Harriet Wilson, *Our Nig, or Sketches from the Life of a Free Black*. Penguin.
ISBN 9780143105763

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*. Norton. ISBN 9780393979534

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, or Life in the Woods*. Norton. ISBN 9780393930900

Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*. Norton. ISBN 9780393972832

Course Description

This course may be a little different than other English classes you have taken. First of all, as you can see we are only reading four books, fewer than is typical. I designed the course this way so that we could spend more time on each work – time that will be dedicated not only to conventional analytical discussions of the works, but also to working on creating a larger, more complex context for each work.

For example, when we read *Moby-Dick* – which is a very difficult novel to begin with – we will not only talk about the usual matters of Melville’s literary style and themes; we will also look at other contextual matters, such as Melville’s world when he wrote the book, the reaction to the book over the course of time, the ways the book intersects with various theoretical approaches, the social and political implications of the book, etc. Therefore, I plan to spend a lot of time on each of these readings – as much as a month on some of them – so that we can create as complete a context as possible.

There will also be a number of very informal “oral reports” from students; this will be explained on the first day.

Course Outcomes

By the end of the semester, students in this class will be able to:

- Read critically, evaluate textual passages and inferentially draw conclusions about themes.
- Demonstrate an understanding of some aspects of the literary history of the United States.
- Write clear, correctly written essays that demonstrate the ability to support a claim through critical thinking.

- Explore, develop, and present ideas through class discussions, analytical readings of the stories, and essays.

Office Hours

I strongly encourage you to come to my office for help of any kind, or to just talk about the issues of the class. I am in my office all week; please email me or call Mrs. Mary Ann Fitzpatrick at 398-4147 to set up an appointment.

Communication

I prefer to communicate via email rather than phone. If you send me an email and do not receive a response within 24 hours, please re-send it. *Be sure to check your stac.edu email every day* as I will frequently communicate with you regarding our schedule, assignments, etc. “I didn’t get your email” will not count as a legitimate excuse for not coming to class prepared. Do not use any email accounts other than your stac.edu account.

Essays

There will be four essays in this class, one for each reading. These will be explained throughout the semester. The grade for the class is calculated in this way:

Essay 1	10%
Essay 2	25%
Essay 3	25%
Essay 4	25%
Participation	15%

Essay Drafts

I expect that you write drafts for each essay, and that you proofread before handing them in – also, please read your work out loud to catch errors and confusing sentences before you submit your essays. While I encourage you to meet with me outside of class to discuss your drafts, I ask you not to email me entire drafts to “look over” immediately before you hand them in. (That’s a fine moment to head to the Center for Academic Excellence to meet with a writing tutor.) Please feel free to come to my office with drafts for me to look over, but we will work more efficiently if you approach me in advance of the due date and with questions regarding *specific* parts of your draft.

Attendance and Participation

Nearly all class sessions will be run as discussions, and your contributions are vital to our collective learning process. This means you have to be here. There are four “sick days” which you should reserve for illness or emergencies, but otherwise you must show up because the education in a class like this is collaborative, interactive, and interdependent. People in this class — me included — rely on you to be here to add to the discussion and help us see certain things that, without you, we may not see.

Do not think that you have to have “*the* answer” to every question, or the definitive reading of a text in order to speak. At a certain level, we are all making our best guesses.

You must do the reading for the class; your participation grade depends on how evident it is that you have read and prepared. It is very obvious, even embarrassingly so, when a student has not done the reading. But to prepare for this class, don't "just do" the reading; *think very carefully about the reading*, so that you will have something to say (and this includes questions to ask) in class. Write in your texts as you read them, or take notes. Read confusing things at least twice, and out loud if necessary. Look up the definition of words you do not know; you are carrying a dictionary around with you all the time anyway.

Late Work

There will be due dates included on all writing assignments. You must turn the final copy of your essays in by that indicated time. However, you can elect to take a two-day grace period on any one paper — a no-questions-asked extension (note: that means two calendar days not two class days). If, at the end of that period, you are still having trouble completing the assignment, you must meet with me in person to go over an outline of your ideas and set a schedule for getting the paper done.

Electronic Use Policy

In this class, **CELL PHONE USE IS NOT ALLOWED**. I will warn you – usually with a stern glance – if I see you using your cell phone. The next time I see you using your cell – regardless of whether or not I let you know I see you – I will zero out your entire participation grade. We meet twice a week for 1.5 hours; put away your phones and give your instructor and fellow students your full attention during our short time together.

Additionally, here is STAC's policy on cell phones and laptops: Faculty members at St. Thomas Aquinas College have the discretion to regulate the use of electronic devices in their classes, and students should not use such devices without the expressed consent of the professor. This policy covers cell phones, PDAs, laptop computers, or any other device the use of which might constitute a distraction to the professor or to the other students in the class, as determined by the professor. Students with documented disabilities should discuss the issue of laptop use with their professor at the beginning of the semester.

When a professor designates a time during which laptop computers may be used, they are only to be used at the discretion of the faculty member and in accordance with the mission of the college. Professors can develop specific and reasonable penalties to deal with violations of these general policies. For more extreme cases of classroom disruption, refer to the College's Disruptive Student Policy.

Academic Integrity

There are various forms of plagiarism – from blatant theft, to submitting the same work for two different classes, to neglecting to acknowledge a source in your writing. We will discuss plagiarism during the course, but let me say up front: All work you do for this class must be your own original work (not the work of your roommate or some unknown online "expert") and written specifically for *this* class. We will discuss MLA citation in

class, and I will expect that if you use outside sources you correctly document them. Bear in mind that it is as easy for your instructors to find material via a Google search as it is for you; if you have taken material from an online source without properly documenting it, there is a good chance we will figure that out pretty quickly. *Evidence of plagiarism will result in a zero grade with no rewrite for the assignment and the possibility of further disciplinary action.*

Let me offer some advice based on many years of teaching: Don't let yourself get into a bind. Plagiarism nearly always occurs out of the sheer panic that results from one of two perceived crises: 1) I cannot do this or 2) I don't have time to do this. In the first case, you must see me because part of my job is to help you figure out how to do the work. In the second case, start your assignments early so you can allow time for writer's block, crashing computers, roommates in crisis, unexpected travel delays, and other such catastrophes that might lead to desperate measures – and so that you can leave time to meet with tutors and your instructor. Remember that the worst piece of writing you can give me is better than anything you will find on the Internet; it is your own work, it is risk free, and we will be able to discuss revising it for a better grade.

Additionally, here is STAC's formal policy on academic integrity: *Academic Integrity, a commitment to honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility, is the foundation of the learning process. All members of the St. Thomas Aquinas College community are held to the highest standards of academic honesty. While we recognize the participatory nature of education, we take academic integrity very seriously, and the College policy on academic dishonesty details consequences that can include dismissal from the College. That policy can be found in both the Student Handbook and the College Catalog.*

As a student in this class, you must demonstrate your commitment to academic integrity by submitting work which originates in your own imagination, analytical faculties, or your own knowledge, which you have done yourself, and which represents your very best efforts. When appropriate, your work should be supplemented and supported by other sources; however, you must always insure that these sources are properly cited using the recommended documentation system.

Accommodations Statement

It is the policy of St. Thomas Aquinas College to accommodate students with disabilities in accordance with federal and state laws. Any student with a disability who needs an accommodation from the appropriate disability services committee (through the Office of Academic Advisement) must follow-up with the instructor about the logistics of implementing any accommodations.

If you, as a student with a documented disability, have difficulty accessing any part of the course materials or activities for this class, please notify me immediately.

Schedule

Jan 23	Introduction to the Course
Jan 25	Romanticism Overview
Jan 30	American Literary Theory Handouts
Feb 1	American Literary Theory Handouts Wilson, <i>Our Nig</i>
Feb 6	<i>Our Nig</i>
Feb 8	<i>Our Nig</i>
Feb 13	Essay 1 due Melville, <i>Moby Dick</i>
Feb 15	<i>Moby Dick</i>
Feb 20	<i>Moby Dick</i>
Feb 22	<i>Moby Dick</i>
Feb 27	<i>Moby Dick</i>
Mar 1	<i>Moby Dick</i>
Mar 6	<i>Moby Dick</i>
Mar 8	<i>Moby Dick</i>
Mar 20	Essay 2 due Hawthorne, <i>The Scarlet Letter</i>
Mar 22	<i>The Scarlet Letter</i>
Mar 27	<i>The Scarlet Letter</i>
Mar 29	<i>The Scarlet Letter</i>
Apr 3	<i>The Scarlet Letter</i>
Apr 5	<i>The Scarlet Letter</i>
Apr 10	Essay 3 due Thoreau, <i>Walden</i>
Apr 12	<i>Walden</i>
Apr 17	<i>Walden</i>
Apr 19	<i>Walden</i>
Apr 24	<i>Walden</i>
Apr 26	<i>Walden</i>
May 1	Essay 4 due
May 3	

Handouts will be assigned throughout the semester, including passages from:

American Renaissance, F. O. Matthiessen
Beneath the American Renaissance, David Reynolds
The Machine in the Garden, Leo Marx
The American Adam, R.W.B. Lewis
The Puritan Origins of the American Self, Sacvan Bercovitch
The Anatomy of National Fantasy, Lauren Berlant
American Incarnation, Myra Jehlen
Love and Death in the American Novel, Leslie Fiedler
The Signifying Monkey, Henry Louis Gates
Manhood and the American Renaissance, David Leverenz