Professor Cyrus R. K. Patell
Department of English
New York University
19 University Place, Room 504
Phone: 998-8827
E-mail: cyrus.patell@nyu.edu
Office Hours: Mon., Tues. 2:30-5:30 p.m.
by appt. (call Kristen Elias at 998-8803)

Course Description

This course is a survey of American literature and literary history, from the early colonial period to the eve of the Civil War. Our goal will be to acquire a grasp of the expanding canon of American literature by reading both established, canonical masterpieces and texts that have traditionally been considered to be marginal.

Topics

Topics to be considered include: the rise of “literature” as a discipline unto itself; the meaning of American individualism; the conflict between liberty and equality in American social thought; the mythology of American exceptionalism; the relation between history and cultural mythology; the dialectic of freedom and slavery in American rhetoric; the American obsession with race; the ideology of domesticity and its link to the sentimental; the aesthetics of American romance; the role of biography in literary criticism and historiography; the nature of the “American Renaissance”; what it means to say “NO in thunder!” and why so many American writers seem to say it.

Course requirements

Section attendance and participation (10%); two 750–word analyses on topics to be distributed in class; list of examples of tropes; contributions to course hypertexts (25%); midterm (15%); 2,500–3000-word final essay or a hypertext project (30%); final exam (20%). No extensions will be given on assignments or papers. If, for example, an assignment is due on a Friday and you cannot be on campus on that day, then you must turn it in earlier.

Sections

Discussion sections (“recitations”) meet once per week. You must enroll in a section when you enroll in the course. Attendance is required. The following sections times are scheduled:
Hypertext Projects

Students may apply to the professor to work on a hypertext project in lieu of writing a final paper. The project requires students to design and assemble the materials needed to create web-based hypertext versions of short texts drawn from the syllabus. The goal is both to introduce students to the concept of intertextuality by having them determine what links to outside sources would enhance their ability to read their designated text and to create a set of hypertexts that will be posted to the American Literature I web page for use by future students in the course. Examples of student hypertext projects can be found on the course web-site. Students who would like to do the hypertext project must have an NYU personal web page and will be required to upload their first writing assignment to this page no later than October 18. Students who do not do the hypertext project will be asked to contribute a “link” to a group-authored hypertext during the term. Further information about these projects will be distributed in class.

Texts and Course Materials

The following texts for the class are available at the NYU Book Center on Washington Place.

Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Huntly (Penguin)
Herman Melville, Moby-Dick (Norton, 2d. ed.)
Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom’s Cabin (Penguin)

A course reader is also required; it is available from New University Copy on Waverly Place (corner of Greene Street). Students are also responsible for all materials distributed during lectures. Please do not discard handouts; you will need them to study for your exams. Additional course materials are available on the course Blackboard site, which is available to you in the "Academics" tab of your NYUHome page.
SYLLABUS

Page numbers refer to The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Sixth Edition, Volumes A & B. Introductory sections are included in the required reading.

Wed. Sept. 3 Introduction


“Letter to Rev. Dr. Benjamin Colman,” “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” “The Beauty of the World” (477–511)

**Wed. Sept. 24**  

**Fri. Sept. 26**  
**Analysis #1 due.**

**Mon. Sept. 29**  

**Wed. Oct. 1**  
**American Gothic (I):** Thomas Gray, “Elegy Upon a Country Churchyard” (reader); Joel Barlow, “Advice to a Raven in Russia” (reader); William Cullen Bryant, Introduction and “Thanatopsis” (B 1071–74); Edgar Allan Poe, Introduction (1507–10), “The Raven” (1518–21).

**Mon. Oct. 6**  

**Wed. Oct. 8**  

**Mon. Oct. 13**  
**Review session.**

**Wed. Oct. 15**  
**MIDTERM. List of Tropes Due.**

**Mon. Oct. 20**  
Edgar Allan Poe, “The Black Cat” (reader); Frederick Douglass, Introduction and *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (B 2029–97).

**Wed. Oct. 22**  
Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (Chapters 1–22).
Fri. Oct. 24  **Analysis #2 due.**


Wed. Nov. 5  Walt Whitman, Introduction (B 2127-31), “[Song of Myself]” (2146–89).


Mon. Nov. 17  Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Chapter 29 to end).


**THANKSGIVING BREAK**


Wed. Dec. 10  **Final Essay or Hypertext Project Due.**

Mon. Dec. 15  **FINAL EXAM.** 10:00 a.m. Location to be announced.