

AML 4225: “Scientia” in the American Renaissance

Professor Stephanie A. Smith/TUR 4324

Spring 2019/MWF per 4 (10:40-11:30)

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Office Hours: R 2:00 – 4:00 and by appointment



Definition of scientia: plural scientiae \-tē, ī, -chē, ē\ : knowledge, science; especially knowledge based on demonstrable and reproducible data

Despite the definition (above) that science is knowledge, the definition and communal acceptance of what knowledge constitutes remains a moving target in political and cultural debates, or in recent memory, shouting matches. What does it mean to know something for a fact, when facts are subject to violent political revisions or socio-historical change? Galileo’s reaffirmation of the Copernican heavens gained him censure from the Catholic church; AIDS was initially and widely believed by Americans to be a disease that would only infect gay men, despite the well-known biology of the virus, a dangerous and bigoted belief that epidemiologists at the time warned was farcical. Few today would argue that the earth is the center of the universe or that only gay men died of AIDS (I hope—or maybe not). Facts can and do change, but those changes should always “be based on demonstrable and reproducible data,” as has been standard scientific practice since at least the 17th century. Of course how such scientific data is acquired, revised, revisited or rejected has also changed drastically over time, so that what was once considered a fact in 1848 can seem quaint in 2018 (to some). In this class, we shall read 19th c. American literatures from the period still considered by many scholars as the “American Renaissance” that either depend upon, question, or seek to revise or revisit what the majority in that time considered factual, common-sense, “scientific” knowledge, in order to shed some historical and cultural light on similar, current debates.

Required Readings:

First, a word about these texts: many of these are available in electronic form, and in various hard-copy formats. Given that most students now use Kindles and such, I've given up trying to get us all "on the same page" even if I still think this is the most effective way of understanding literature in a classroom. That said, in most cases I've provided a link to a version of the text, if it is available online.

Bierce, Ambrose, "Moxon's Master" (orig. 1899) at <http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/MoxoMast.shtml>

_____. "An Occurrence at Owl's Creek Bridge" at <http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/OccOwl.shtml>

Fuller, Margaret. *Woman in the 19th Century*. There are many versions of this, some in Kindle format. The best version is the Norton Critical Edition.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel, "Rappaccini's Daughter" at http://www.columbia.edu/itc/english/f1124y-001/resources/Rappaccinis_Daughter.pdf

_____. "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" (PDF)

_____. *The Blithedale Romance*. Again there are many editions of this novel. I would recommend the Penguin or Dover Thrift edition.

Melville, Herman, "Benito Cereno" at <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/m/melville/herman/benito-cereno/>

_____. "Bartleby the Scrivener": <https://www.bartleby.com/129/>

Perkins-Gilman, Charlotte, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (orig. 1892). The Feminist Press at CUNY, 1997. ISBN 1558611584.

_____. *Herland*. Dover Thrift editions ISBN 0486404293

Poe, Edgar Allen. "Ligeia." (orig. 1838): <http://www.online-literature.com/poe/2126/>

_____. "Berenice" (orig. 1835): <http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/147/the-works-of-edgar-allan-poe/5230/berenice/>

Thoreau, Henry David. "Wild Apples" (orig. 1862): <http://www.thoreau-online.org/wild-apples.html> or at <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1862/11/wild-apples/411517/>

Some Recommended Secondary Reading and online resources:

American Memory: <http://www.memory.loc.gov/ammem/browse/updatedList.html>

American Literature and Science: <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/37037>

18th c. Science and Literature in America: <https://www.loc.gov/rr/scitech/tracer-bullets/scitech18tb.html>

Scholnick, Robert J. *American Literature and Science*. Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1992.

Society for Literature, Science and the Arts: <https://litsciarts.org/>

Requirements: We shall be doing short reading question-responses, a mid-term assignment and a final paper. Final grades will be assigned according to the following numerical breakdown: Attendance/class participation 20%; short question-response papers (4 of them) 20%; mid-term: 25% and final paper: 35%

1. **Class participation:** I ask for as much active, responsible engagement during the class period as we might expect for a class of 35 students, which means I expect you to try to pose or answer questions in class, with due respect to the class and your classmates. I know this is difficult for some of us. I ask for a good faith effort. Class participation includes:

a. Attendance. This should probably go without saying but you will agree to be in class, promptly, at the opening of the class period with the reading assignment. If you are 15 minutes late, you will be marked late; twenty, you are absent. You have 3 days of grace to be absent—after that your grade will suffer. Only severe illness or injury will be allowed as exceptions. In such cases, phone me at home or in the office.

b. Preparation. You will agree to have prepared the assignment and will be ready to discuss it or write about it or ask questions about it.

Just showing up does not constitute good class participation. Please, no cell phone use in class, unless we all need to Google something ASAP.

Short reading response papers: There will be four units to this course, and each unit will feature one short reading response paper, questions below. Together all four will be worth 20% of the final grade.

“Scientia” or Knowledge in the 19th Century (Jan. 7-Feb. 1)

What or Who is Nature? or Those Wacky Transcendentalists (Feb.4 –Mar. 1)

Engineering a New Society? (Mar. 11-29)

States of Mind (April 1-24)

1. We will have read four short stories, two by Hawthorne, two by Poe, each of which features some form of potentially immoral or questionable human experimentation. Choose one of the four, and write a one-page response to this question: do you consider the experiment in the story you’ve chosen immoral, unjust or illegal? Explain why, and then consider: does the story itself punish the crime, if you feel a crime has been committed? How or how not?
2. Transcendentalism as an American philosophy was (in part) about what might be the proper relation between man and nature. Of the three Transcendentalists we’ve read, which one’s ‘take’ on Nature is still relevant today? If you find *none* of them relevant, explain why (one page).
3. After the Civil War, Americans had to contend with a host of challenges: how to reconceive their nation state, how to redefine the mission of the federal government, how to deal with the end of slavery, what to think about a host of new technological inventions, how to process death on a massive scale in war unimagined until then...i.e. America before the Civil War was a different place than ante-bellum America. Hawthorne wrote his novel before the war, Gilman after it—write a short response paper in which you argue that the various effects of the war are evident in Gilman’s novel, as compared to Hawthorne’s (one to two pages—you’ll want evidence from the novel to support your observations).
4. As you can see from the link next to “Benito Cereno’s” title in the syllabus Topic Studios is developing a scripted TV series based on the story. The series, which will be adapted to take place in deep space, is created by *The Knick* scribe/co-executive producer Steven Katz, who will write and executive produced project. Inspired by the novella — considered one of Melville’s finest works—the series will be a science fiction thriller centered on an accidental encounter between a human commercial ship and an alien slave freighter. “Benito Cereno” is one of Melville’s most thought-provoking short stories, and Steven has been able to retain its essence, while

reimagining it for modern audiences,” said Lisa Leingang, SVP Programming & Content at Topic Studios. “The result will be something so innovative and radical that we can’t wait for audiences to see it.” Having read and discussed the story, why do you think Topic decided to develop this version of story now? What do you see as still relevant to audiences today that would have inspired Katz to take it on as science fiction? One page.

2. **Mid-Term:** Although we shall have discussed “Bartleby the Scrivener” in class, we will not have written about it, so for your mid-term project, I would like you to write an argumentative paper in which you make a claim as to how this story reinvents, challenges or revises one or more settled forms of “knowledge.” This is a fairly broad topic—I want you to narrow it down to make an argument about a specific type(s) or form(s) of knowledge that the story works hard to reinvent, revise or challenge—6-10 pages.
3. **Final Paper:** for your final project, I ask that you write an argumentative paper about some aspect of “scientia” in the 19th century that interests you, using either *The Blithedale Romance* or *Herland* as your central text—however, if the issue you choose to consider appears in any of the other texts we’ve read in this course, I expect you to use evidence from some of those texts to support your claim about the novel you chose. For example, here’s a question that might pertain to *all* of the texts we’ve read: perspective is crucial to many if not most of the texts we’ve read. How does the choice of perspective determine one’s faith in or the reliability of knowledge? Again, this is a fairly broad topic so you might want to come and talk to me about how to narrow it down.

And now for the obligatory UF stuff.

Academic Honesty Policy: UF students are bound by the Honor Pledge that states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: ‘On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.’” The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor of this class.

Plagiarism: I regret having to remind you that plagiarism is a serious offense. All students are required to abide by the Academic Honesty Guidelines, which have been accepted by the University. The academic community of students and faculty at the University of Florida strives to develop, sustain and protect an environment of honesty, trust and respect. Students are expected to pursue knowledge with integrity. Exhibiting honesty in academic pursuits and reporting violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines will encourage others to act with integrity. Violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and a student being subject to the sanctions in paragraph XIV of the Student Conduct

Code. The conduct set forth hereinafter constitutes a violation of the Academic Honesty Guidelines (University of Florida Rule 6C1_4.017). For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and collusion, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.php>

Civility: Please turn off cell-phones during class time; if you need to leave the classroom during class, please be sure to and leave with discretion. You will be marked absent if you are gone more than 10 minutes; unless you have an official disability that requires laptop use in the class, please do not use laptops during class; if you need sleep, please stay home and sleep; please do not be rude, either to me, or to your fellow students. It is the policy of The University of Florida to provide an educational and working environment for its students, faculty and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. In accordance with federal and state law, the University prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment. Sex discrimination and sexual harassment will not be tolerated, and individuals who engage in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action. The University encourages students, faculty, staff and visitors to promptly report sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about the University of Florida policies regarding harassment, see the University of Florida Student Conduct Code at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/conductcode.php> and policies regarding harassment at <http://wwwhr.ufl.edu/eco/sexharassment.html>

The Disability Resource Center: The Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. Staff at the Disability Resource Center will assist any student who registers as having a disability. Official documentation of a disability is required to determine eligibility for appropriate classroom accommodations. The professional employees at the Disability Resource Program serve as full-time advocates for students with disabilities ensuring students have physical and programmatic access to all college programs. For more information about Student Disability Services, see: <http://www.ufl.edu/disability/>

Online Course Evaluation: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <http://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

Final Grade Appeals: If you want to appeal the final grade you receive for this course, you should contact Professor John Cech, Associate Chair and Undergraduate Coordinator of the English Department. You will submit your course materials for evaluation by a committee assembled by Professor Cech. The committee may decide to raise, lower, or leave unchanged your final grade for the course. Its decision is final.

Grading Scale A = 94-100; A- = 90-93; B+ = 87-89; B = 84-86; B- = 80-83; C+ = 77-79; C = 74-76; C- = 70-73; D+ = 67-69; D = 64-66; D- = 60-63; E = 0-59

UF Grading Policies for Assigning Grade Points

<http://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Schedule of Classes

The following schedule of readings is a working plan. If it becomes necessary to alter the schedule, I will give as ample warning as possible.

Week 1: “Scientia” or Knowledge in the 19th Century

M Jan 7: Introduction—syllabus, policies, and some poetry.

W Jan 9: Mr. Hawthorne’s Experiments (Heidegger and Rapaccini)

F Jan 11: con’t.

Week 2

M Jan 14: con’t

W Jan 16: Poe’s Optical Obsessions: (Ligeia and Berenice)

F Jan 18: con’t

Week 3

M Jan 21: Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday—day off

W Jan 23: Poe con’t

F Jan 25: con’t and **first reading response due**

Week 4

M Jan 28: Melville’s Mechanical Man: “Bartleby the Scrivener”

W Jan 30: con’t

F Feb 1: con’t

Week 5: *What or Who is Nature? or Those Wacky Transcendentalists*

M Feb 4: Emersonian Nature

W Feb 6: con’t

F Feb 8: con’t

Week 6

M Feb 11: Thoreau’s Version “Wild Apples”

W Feb 13: con’t

F Feb 15: con’t

Week 7

M Feb 18: Fuller’s Refutation: “Woman in the Nineteenth Century”

W Feb 20: con’t

F Feb 22: con’t and **second response paper due**

Week 8—Mid-term

M Feb 25: con’t

W Feb 27: con’t

F March 1: **Mid-term due**

Week 9

M March 4-Fri March 8: Spring Break

Week 10: *Engineering a New Society?*

M March 11: Hawthorne's Brave New World: *Blithedale Romance*

W March 13: con't

F March 15: con't

Week 11

M March 18: con't

W March 20: con't

F March 22: con't

Week 12

M March 25: Gilman's Utopia: *Herland*

W March 27: con't

F March 29: con't and **third response paper due**

Week 13: *States of Mind*

M April 1: Ambrose Bierce "Occurrence at Owl's Creek Bridge"

W April 3: con't

F April 5: "Moxon's Master"

Week 14

M April 8: "The Yellow Wallpaper"

W April 10: con't

F April 12: "Benito Cereno" (see <https://deadline.com/2018/11/benito-cereno-tv-series-space-stein-katz-topic-studios-1202510099/>)

Week 15

M April 15: con't

W April 17: con't

F April 19: con't and **fourth response paper due**

Week 16

M April 22: con't

W April 24: **Final paper due and course evaluations**

Sonnet--To Science

Edgar Allan Poe

Science! true daughter of Old Time thou art!
Who alterest all things with thy peering eyes.
Why preyest thou thus upon the poet's heart,
Vulture, whose wings are dull realities?
How should he love thee? or how deem thee wise,
Who wouldst not leave him in his wandering
To seek for treasure in the jewelled skies,
Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing?
Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car,
And driven the Hamadryad from the wood
To seek a shelter in some happier star?
Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood,
The Elfin from the green grass, and from me
The summer dream beneath the tamarind tree?
(1829)

Each and All

By Ralph Waldo Emerson

Little thinks, in the field, yon red-cloaked clown,
Of thee from the hill-top looking down;
The heifer that lows in the upland farm,
Far-heard, lows not thine ear to charm;
The sexton, tolling his bell at noon,
Deems not that great Napoleon
Stops his horse, and lists with delight,
Whilst his files sweep round yon Alpine height;
Nor knowest thou what argument
Thy life to thy neighbor's creed has lent.
All are needed by each one;
Nothing is fair or good alone.
I thought the sparrow's note from heaven,
Singing at dawn on the alder bough;
I brought him home, in his nest, at even;
He sings the song, but it pleases not now,
For I did not bring home the river and sky; —
He sang to my ear, — they sang to my eye.
The delicate shells lay on the shore;
The bubbles of the latest wave
Fresh pearls to their enamel gave;
And the bellowing of the savage sea
Greeted their safe escape to me.
I wiped away the weeds and foam,
I fetched my sea-born treasures home;

But the poor, unsightly, noisome things
Had left their beauty on the shore,
With the sun, and the sand, and the wild uproar.
The lover watched his graceful maid,
As 'mid the virgin train she stayed,
Nor knew her beauty's best attire
Was woven still by the snow-white choir.
At last she came to his hermitage,
Like the bird from the woodlands to the cage; —
The gay enchantment was undone,
A gentle wife, but fairy none.
Then I said, "I covet truth;
Beauty is unripe childhood's cheat;
I leave it behind with the games of youth:" —
As I spoke, beneath my feet
The ground-pine curled its pretty wreath,
Running over the club-moss burrs;
I inhaled the violet's breath;
Around me stood the oaks and firs;
Pine-cones and acorns lay on the ground;
Over me soared the eternal sky,
Full of light and of deity;
Again I saw, again I heard,
The rolling river, the morning bird; —
Beauty through my senses stole;
I yielded myself to the perfect whole.
(1839)