

Class, Work, and Labor in Nineteenth-Century American Literature

AML4225-4105

MTWHF period 3 RNK 210

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Course Description

After the most recent 2017 presidential election, newspaper headlines from *The New York Times*, *The Harvard Business Review*, *The Washington Post*, and *Vanity Fair*, proclaimed the white working-class won the White House. Given this attention to a working-class identity post-election, we will explore the roots of such an identity in 19th century American literature beyond a partisan and economic explanation. We will explore the formation of a working-class identity amidst industrialization, slavery and the civil war, and explore the impacts of race, gender, nationality, individualism, and professionalism on working-class values as expressed in a variety of genres, including novels, short stories, poetry, personal narratives, and archival ephemera. We will ultimately read towards understanding the cultural significance of class, work, and labor and how they contribute to contemporary attitudes towards the “labor of love” that is nation building.

Required Texts

The following novels are required reading for this course. For the texts in bold, you must have the exact edition (we’ll be using supplemental materials from these texts). For all other electronic texts, you *must* have access to your text in class. Shorter readings, like scholarly criticism and critical theory, will be available on Canvas. Complete reading assignments appear on the Course Schedule below (page 6).

- **Wilson, Harriet E., P. Gabrielle Foreman, and Reginald H. Pitts. *Our Nig, Or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black*. New York: Penguin, 2009. ISBN: 9780143105763**
- **Alger, Horatio, and Hildegard Hoeller. *Ragged Dick, Or, Street Life in New York with Boot Blacks: An Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2008. ISBN: 9780393925890**
- **Amparo, Ruiz De Burton Maria, and Montes, Amelia Maria De La Luz. *Who Would Have Thought It?* London: Penguin Classics, 2010.**
- Elizabeth Stuart Phelps’ *Silent Partner* (available as Free e-book on Googlebooks)

Goals

By the conclusion of the course you will be able to:

1. Craft stronger original, critical readings of literary texts, using different methods of interpretation and analysis.
2. Articulate the historical and theoretical importance of class dynamics and complexities within a variety of genres of American Literature.
3. Draw connections between nineteenth-century American literature and their biographical, historical, and cultural contexts of authorship and reading.
4. Construct and support viable, original arguments about literature in an approved MLA format.

Assignments

All assignment deadlines appear on the Course Schedule below (page 6).

Detailed prompts are posted on Canvas.

Participation	100 points
Close Reading Paper	200 points
Archive Analysis Presentation	300 points
Comparative Analysis Paper	400 points
TOTAL	1000 points

Participation (100 points)

Participation includes completing assigned readings, quizzes, conferences, homework, in-class writing activities, presentations, and discussions. I expect you to come to class prepared to actively participate in class discussions and other in-class activities. This means having completed any reading or homework assigned for that day. Our classroom acts as a safe environment where you can air your opinions and consider those presented by your classmates, so take advantage of this and see how something you are thinking of writing a paper on, for instance, flies in general discussion.

Every student begins with the full 100 points of participation, but I will deduct points from your participation if you miss quiz questions, homework, and/or in-class writings. Points may also be deducted for poor behavior or class disruptions. However, you can always earn these points back if you contribute anything substantive to the discussion: a complex thought, a clarification, an observation, a question, etc.

If you require any special accommodations in regards to the participation or class work, please refer to the [Disability Resource Center](#).

Short Paper: 2 pages (200 points)

This short paper will help you practice and hone your close reading skills. You will select one of the texts we have been discussing in class and form an original argument and interpretation. You will write a short (2 page) paper, which must have a clear thesis statement and follow proper essay format construction. Further instructions can be found on Canvas.

Archive Analysis Group Project

You will complete three tasks for this assignment:

- 1) In groups of four, you will explore the 19th c. American periodical press archives about a chosen topic related to the theme of this class (there will be a list of topics and archives provided). Individually, you will each choose two pieces of materials from the archives to share and discuss with your group (recipes, images, articles, etc).
- 2) In groups you will analyze the archival materials within the context of your topic and design a webpage that features these archival materials. As a group you will compose a 500-700-word introduction and analysis of your archival materials to illuminate how these materials are representative of class issues in 19th c. America.
- 3) As a group you will each present (6-8 minutes) your webpage to the class to
 - 1) explain your research process
 - 2) summarize and identify the importance of your chosen materials
 - 3) draw connections to the archival materials and our class discussions.

We will be working on this project throughout the course and a full detailed assignment sheet can be found on Canvas.

Comparative Analysis Paper: 6-8 pages (400 points for the entire project)

Your final research paper will be a comparative analysis in which you will compose an original, argumentative thesis that explains how two texts from the syllabus enhance our understanding of themes discussed in class. The main objective of this assignment is for you to articulate an argument about thematic trends occurring across multiple authors and texts, using the compare and contrast strategy to illuminate nuances, contradictions, and complications. For example, you might perform a comparative analysis of factory boys in *Ragged Dick* and *Silent Partner* in order to better understand how the figure of the working-class boy functions among different authors. Or, you might perform a comparative analysis on genre, such as Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's use of realism in *Silent Partner* with Maria Luiz de Burton's use of sensationalism in *Who Would Have Thought It?* This project requires scholarly research, and you will collect and utilize **three secondary sources** to inform your comparative analysis. Detailed instructions for this assignment can be found on Canvas.

Grading

General Assessment Rubric

Here is the meaning behind the grades I assign to your papers (use the Grading Scale above to convert between points and letters as necessary); you can use these statements to determine how you might work toward a higher grade:

A-range papers—Insightful: Your paper is thoughtful, carefully developed, and clearly presented. You demonstrate strong comprehension of the materials under discussion, clear engagement with course themes and contexts, and offer a sustained reading that successfully illuminates the text or texts under discussion. A-range papers are well-organized, well-supported, and well-developed. They are written in an engaging, polished, and clear prose style.

B-range papers—Proficient: Your paper is solid, competent, and capable; it would clearly benefit from **either** more complex development, fuller explanation or examples, stronger organization, increased risk-taking (including subtler or more original examples), **or** clearer presentation (structure, prose style, grammar/mechanics).

C-range papers—Satisfactory: Your paper is passable, even promising, but has **multiple** key areas that require **considerable** improvement: a more rigorous topic, a stronger thesis, stronger development of ideas, improved focus (in identifying the issue or guiding the reader through your analysis), fuller explanation of examples, increased risk-taking (including subtler or more original examples), **and/or** clearer presentation (structure, prose style, grammar/mechanics).

D papers—Poor: Your paper is not yet adequate. D papers are often off track, superficial, have a non-viable thesis (or struggle to narrow down a viable topic), or they struggle to organize and sustain a persuasive reading in readable prose.

E papers—Fail: F papers fail to meet the basic criteria of argument, organization, and mechanics, or they fail to respond in a meaningful way to the assignment, or they contain passages that are plagiarized.

Course Policies

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the [Student Honor Code](#). The Honor Code prohibits and defines plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism. A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to):

- a.) Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.

- b.) Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.

University of Florida students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire [Student Honor Code](#).

All the work submitted on Canvas will be passed through Turnitin.com, a website that compares your paper to other papers on the Internet, any published work, and the Internet itself. If you plagiarize, you will be caught, which could result in an automatic E for the assignment, the course, or a disciplinary measure from the university, depending upon the gravity and frequency of the matter.

Attendance

Attendance is *required*. You are allowed **three absences** without any direct effect on your grade. If you reach **four absences**, your final grade will drop a letter. If you reach **five absences**, you will automatically fail the course. If you are facing unusual circumstances that affect your ability to abide by these expectations, please schedule a conference with me.

Similarly, tardiness (more than three minutes late to class) will not be tolerated. **Two tardies will be considered as an absence.**

Absences for events and obligations recognized by UF as excused absences are not counted against your attendance record for this course. When possible, please discuss such absences with me *prior* to the date that will be missed. This course complies with [UF's official attendance policies](#).

If you are absent, it is your responsibility to be aware of all due dates/classwork. If absent due to a scheduled event, you are still responsible for turning assignments in on time.

Classroom Civility

Please keep in mind that you and your classmates come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from the class.

Grade Appeals

You may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, Department of English. Appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower grade.

In-Class Work

You will be expected to work in small groups and participate in group discussions, writing workshops, and other in-class activities. You must be present for all in-class activities to receive credit for them. In-class work cannot be made up. In general, you are expected to contribute constructively to each class session.

Instructor Evaluations

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

Mode of Submission

All papers will be submitted as MS Word (.doc or .docx) documents to Canvas **by midnight**. Final drafts should be polished and presented in a professional manner with an original title. File names will be your last name_assignment name (like: Smith_ShortPaper.docx).

All papers must follow MLA format. They should be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced with 1-inch margins and pages numbered. Your last name should precede the page number (like: Smith 1). Your name, my name, the course number, the date, and the word count should appear in the upper left-hand corner of the document. Every paper should have a title centered at the top of the document, but after your name, etc. All of this information, like the body of your paper, will be double spaced with no additional extra spaces.

Papers are due at Midnight. Late papers will not be accepted. Failure of technology is not an excuse.

Paper Maintenance Responsibilities

You are responsible for maintaining duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course and retaining all returned, graded work until the semester is over. Should the need arise for a resubmission of papers or a review of graded papers, it is the your responsibility to have and to make available this material.

Phones, Computers, etc.

Out of courtesy for your fellow classmates, and myself, you should silence your cell phone/other gadgets before class. If you are using a laptop in class, please only use it for taking notes or accessing the reading.

Sexual Assault and Harassment

Students, faculty, and staff of the University of Florida are protected under [UF policies](#) that mandate an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment.

Students with Disabilities

The University of Florida complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Should you need any accommodation, contact the Students with Disabilities Office, Peabody 202. That office will provide you with documentation that you will then present to me when requesting accommodation.

Tentative Course Schedule

Reading and assignments are due the day they appear on the calendar. Additional homework/reading may be assigned at my discretion.

	Week 1 June 26-30	Week 2 July 3-7	Week 3 July 10-14	Week 4 July 17-21	Week 5 July 24-28	Week 6 July 30-August 4
Monday	Introductions; Syllabus & Assignments	Herman Melville's "Paradise of Bachelors and Tartarus Maids" (1855) Excerpts from the "Lowell Factory Girls" (1846)	Elizabeth Stuart Phelp's <i>Silent Partner</i> (1873) ch 1-10 Close Reading DUE	Harriet Wilson <i>Our Nig</i> (1859) ch 4-12	Horatio Alger's <i>Ragged Dick</i> (1868) ch 13-27 Michael Moon's "The Gentle Boy from the Dangerous Classes"	Maria Ruiz de Burton's <i>Who would have thought?</i> (1872) ch 21-36
Tuesday	Introductory lecture and discussion	NO CLASS	Elizabeth Stuart Phelp's <i>Silent Partner</i> (1873) ch 12-15	Lois Leveen's "Dwelling in the House of Oppression: The Spatial, Racial, and Textual Dynamics of <i>Our Nig</i> "	Maria Ruiz de Burton's <i>Who would have thought?</i> (1872) ch 1-9	Maria Ruiz de Burton's <i>Who would have thought?</i> (1872) ch 37-44 Comparative Analysis DUE
Wednesday	Hawthorne's "The Artist of the Beautiful" (1844); Walt Whitman "On Occupations" from <i>Leaves of Grass</i> (1855)	Rebecca Harding Davis "Life in the Iron Mills" (1861)	David R. Roediger's "White Slave, Wage Slaves and Fee White Labor" from <i>The Wages of Whiteness</i>	Horatio Alger's <i>Ragged Dick</i> (1868) ch 1-6	Maria Ruiz de Burton's <i>Who would have thought?</i> (1872) ch 10-20	Maria Ruiz de Burton's <i>Who would have thought?</i> (1872) ch 44-54
Thursday	George Foster <i>New York by Gaslight</i> (1850)	Rebecca Harding Davis "Life in the Iron Mills" (1861)	Harriet Wilson <i>Our Nig</i> (1859) Introduction-ch 3	Horatio Alger's <i>Ragged Dick</i> (1868) ch 7-12 Anne Scott McLeod's "Good Democrats"	Archive Group Presentations DUE	Maria Ruiz de Burton's <i>Who would have thought?</i> (1872) ch 54-60
Friday	Archive Group Assignments and Archive Analysis	Archive Research Day I Archive Topics DUE	Archive Research Day II- In-class group work.	Archive Group Analysis DUE	NO CLASS	Final day celebration for all your hard work