

AML 4311—Major Authors: Herman Melville



Prof. S. A. Smith

University Term Professor, 2018-20

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Fall 2020/Class # 10432/Sec. 19CG/MWF 3 (9:35-10:25 a.m.)/MAT 0117 (but really, online) *

Office Hours: By Zoom, W 1:00-4:00 (scheduled) or by appointment. *

*This course will be a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous classes, for 3h credit.

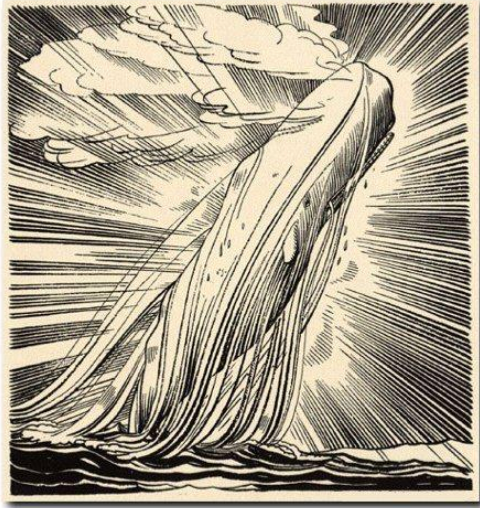
Famously, in 1851 Herman Melville wrote to his friend the author Nathaniel Hawthorne: “what I feel most moved to write, that is banned—it will not pay. Yet, altogether, write the other way I cannot. So the product is a final hash, and all my books are botches.”

Yet this is the same author whose works are now held in such high esteem he is often regarded as a giant of American letters, with Moby Dick still often being acclaimed as **the** American novel. And yet it is also probably the least-read novel in America today, even if references to Captain Ahab and the White Whale show up frequently in popular culture, in everything from comic books to cereal boxes.



In this major author’s class we will re-examine some of the literary legacy of Herman Melville, with an eye to seeing how his work became so famous, and why his work is still relevant (or ought to be) to readers of the 21st century, i.e. why Herman Melville remains a ‘major American author.’

Caveat: given all the recent political and civil unrest, let’s just say this right now: Herman Melville was a white man of the mid-19th century, and his handling of racial injustice, particularly the legal institution of race-based slavery at that time, must be at the forefront of our discussions. He lived in a racist and violent society, on the brink of a Civil War that would eventually lead to the abolition of the institution of slavery, and the emancipation of the enslaved; but we still live in an America that is grappling with these and other social injustices of our past, so part of our inquiry this semester will include questions about how this white male author handled race in his fictions and how that may have contributed to his stature in American letters.



Required Readings: first, a word about these texts: 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 to read any text together. I will be using the editions listed below, if you want to follow my readings. In addition, I will be using online text to facilitate shared examinations of Melville's prose.

And to help you choose an edition that isn't poorly edited, abridged or otherwise a sham, do watch Prof. Roger Maoli's guide to choosing a 19th c. text:

[How to choose good editions for your literature classes - YouTube](#)

Melville, Herman, ed. Peter M. Coviello. *Billy Budd, Bartleby and Other Stories* (NY: Penguin, 2016 ISBN 13: 9780143107606).

_____, *Moby Dick* (NY: Penguin, almost any Penguin version will do; there are several available).

Philbrick, Nathaniel. *Why Read Moby-Dick?* (NY: Viking, ISBN: 9780670022991)

A Few Recommended Secondary Materials:

A brief, online written [biography](#) of Melville

Hoare, Philip. ["The Hunt for Moby Dick"](#) a documentary

Philbrick, Nathaniel. *In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex* (NY: Penguin, ISBN: 0-14-100182-8)

Philbrick, Nathaniel. ["The Enduring Power of Moby Dick"](#) a Symposium featuring Mr. Philbrick himself, 40 minutes.

[The Power of the Sperm Whale](#), by James Nestor. Funky, but informative.

Requirements: Final grades will be assigned according to the following numerical breakdown: class participation, which will include all assigned asynchronous course work; 40%; mid-term project 30% and a final project 30%.

1. Class participation: As much as possible, this class should belong to you, by which I mean active, responsible engagement with the material. You will agree to work through the assigned coursework (both reading and written) with due respect to yourself, me and your classmates, 40%.

- a. If you know that you have a chronic condition, and are likely to miss significant class work, please avail yourself of the [Disability Resource Center](#).
- b. You will agree to have **prepared** whatever the day's assignment is. Just logging in hours does not constitute good participation.
- c. By taking this class, you are agreeing to making your voice heard in any mode of discussion sessions we shall be having.

In the course of the class, there will be four Reading Responses and six Question Sets.

2. Mid-Term Project (see Canvas), 30%

3. Final (see Canvas), 30%

And now for the obligatory UF materials:

[Academic Honesty Policy](#): UF students are bound by the Honor Pledge that states, “[w]e, 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](#) 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).

[Civility](#): I regret having to state this, but please do not be cruel, rude, or dismissive either to me, or to your fellow students, and please follow these polite netiquette rules:

1. Please dress as if you were going to come into a F2F course.
2. Remember, we can see each other...let's try not to embarrass ourselves, please.
3. If possible, either use headphones, or try for a quiet environment.
4. If you need to leave the class for any reason, please turn off your video and email me a reason for your absence.

In addition, 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](#).

[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.

[Counseling and Wellness Center](#) open to students for mental health issues.

[Online Course Evaluation](#): Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing [online evaluations](#). 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.

[Student Complaint Process](#): There is a formal UF process for the resolution of student complaints.

Final Grade Appeals: If you want to appeal the final grade you receive for this course, you should contact Professor Kenneth Kidd Associate Chair and Undergraduate Coordinator of the English Department. You will submit your course materials for evaluation by a committee assembled by Professor Kidd. 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](#)



Schedule of Course Work

The following schedule is a working plan, and an aerial roadmap, an overview to give you a week by week plan. All specific details on Canvas. If it becomes necessary to alter the schedule for whatever reason, I will try to give ample warning.

Week 1 Biographical: from celebrity to obscurity to genius



M. August 31—Zoom meeting, synchronous, 50 minutes. When you can, please use the camera option. Introductory matters, the syllabus, and I'd like to begin to schedule individual Zoom or other types of virtual meetings, in 'office hours', to begin to get to know you, as early as possible.

A [word](#) about multi-tasking online: [pros and cons](#)

W. Sept. 2—Asynchronous. More biographical matters: an introduction to our author and his influence: watch this [short biography](#) (10 minutes; take notes).

Warning: the narrator's voice is a bit annoying, but the information is accurate (unlike Wikipedia). After watching the video, please complete RR (reading response) #1 (see Canvas).

F. Sept. 4—Zoom, visual lecture, synchronous, 50 minutes. A different 'view' of Melville's life and career.

Help: [Reading *Moby Dick*](#) is a challenge, so try out the link for help—it is funny, it is accurate, it has some great pictures...it is not a quick and dirty cheat and it is optional, but it can be helpful, if you get stuck. The novel is long, it seems to meander, it requires concentration, dedication and a willingness to laugh. It has VOCABULARY.

HMW: over the long holiday weekend, begin reading *Moby Dick* (up through to the end of Chp. 23 i.e. the first 100 or so pages) and Philbrick's *Why Read* Chps. 1-5 (they're short peeps). Write RR#2 assignment.

Week 2 Why Read *Moby-Dick*? 1.0

M. Sept. 7—Labor Day, off.

W. Sept. 9—#RR2 due. Zoom, synchronous. A visual introduction to *Moby-Dick*.

F. Sept. 11—Asynchronous. Watch [“Why you should read Moby-Dick”](#) an amusing overview of the novel you are reading. Hits a number of important aspects of the book (5 minutes). A transcript is available. And then listen to [this podcast \(Moby Dick: A Novel for a Strange Year\)](#) (50 minutes) why the novel remains so relevant. Email me with any questions you have about either piece.

HMW: Keep reading MD (by Monday Sept. 14 up to and through Chapter 44; and read Philbrick chapters 6-8.

Week 3 Why Read *Moby-Dick* 2.0

M. Sept. 14—Synchronous. Roundtable discussion/questions for our readings so far, method TBA.

W. Sept. 16—Synchronous, Continued.

For a visual aid in seeing how the crew of the Pequod work together, see a clip from the [1956 John Houston film, *Moby-Dick*](#). Starring Gregory Peck as Ahab; Richard Basehart as Ishmael and Orson Welles as Father Mapple. Screenplay by Huston and Ray Bradbury.

F. Sept. 18—Asynchronous. 19th C. American culture was far more of an oral culture than today’s visually oriented one. MD was meant to be heard. So go to [The Big Read: Moby Dick](#) and choose a voice and a chapter you’d like to hear aloud (your choice), listen to it, and **write a response (RR#3)**.

HMW: in addition to RR#3, keep reading MD. By Monday, Sept. 21 we should be up through to the end of Chp. 70, and through 9-13 of Philbrick.

Week 4 Why Read *Moby-Dick* 3.0

M. Sept. 21—Synchronous. **RR#3 due.** The poetry of *Moby-Dick*, a visual examination of Melville’s prose-style.

W. Sept. 23—Synchronous. continued.

F. Sept. 25—Asynchronous. Take the first question-set, **QS#1** on your own time, due by the end of today See Canvas.

HMW: in addition to QS#1, keep reading MD. By Monday, Sept. 28, we should be up through to the end of Chp. 99 and through 14-19 of Philbrick.

Before our next class watch [“How The Sperm Whale Got Its Name”](#) (1:36 secs).

Week 5 Why Read *Moby-Dick*, 4.0

M. Sept. 28—Synchronous. Sexualities, or how you see them, how you don't! a little walk through Melvillian jokes.

W. Sept. 30— Synchronous con't and **RR#4 (do over the long weekend)**

F. Oct. 2—Homecoming, day off.

HMW: over the long weekend, finish reading MD. Finish reading Philbrick.

Week 6 Why Read *Moby-Dick* 5.0

M. Oct. 5— Synchronous: Prophets and Prophecies **RR#4 due**

W. Oct. 7— Synchronous: The Chase

F. Oct. 9—Asynchronous. Watch what is arguably Gregory Peck's [best imitation of Ahab](#), and the 'end' of *Moby-Dick*. And then answer the second question set (**QS#2**).

HWM: over the weekend, return to the video questions of Sept. 11 and finish the assignment, to be uploaded to Canvas by Sunday night.

Week 7 Having Read *Moby-Dick*

M. Oct. 12—Synchronous. Reflections: return to video questions of Sept. 11.

W. Oct. 14—Synchronous, con't.

F. Oct. 16—**No class today. Mid-term due.**

HMW: over the weekend, read "Bartleby the Scrivener"

Week 8 Shorts (mid-term)

M. Oct. 19—Synchronous. "I Prefer Not": A Step by Step Analysis of this Story of Wall Street

W. Oct. 21—Synchronous, con't.

F. Oct. 23—On your own, do **QS#3**, due by end of the day.

HMW: over the weekend, read "Benito Cereno"

Week 9 Shorts 2.0

M. Oct. 26—Synchronous. The Problem of Slavery. Before our next class watch ["The Amistad"](#) (1:22 sec.)

W. Oct. 28— Synchronous. Reality into Fiction: The Amistad

F. Oct. 30—Asynchronous. On your own, do **QS#4**, due by the end of the day.

Week 10 Shorts 3.0

M. Nov. 2—Synchronous. "Benito Cereno," con't

W. Nov. 4—Synchronous. Legal Language

F. Nov. 6—Asynchronous. On your own do **QS#5** due by the end of the day.

HMW: over the weekend read "The Paradise of Bachelors/Tartarus of Maids"

Week 11 Shorts 4.0

M. Nov. 9—Synchronous. Paradise/Tartarus

W. Nov. 11—**Veteran's Day Off**

F. Nov. 13—Synchronous. Paradise/Tartarus

HMW: over the weekend, read *Billy Budd*

Week 12 Shorts 5.0

M. Nov. 16—Synchronous Another 'fact' into fiction—an overview of BB

W. Nov. 18—Synchronous, con't

F. Nov. 20—Synchronous, con't

HMW: QS#6 (due next Friday)

Week 13 Holiday

M. Nov. 23—Thanksgiving week (off) QS#6 due on Friday.

Week 14 Billy Budd and Modernism

M. Nov. 30—Synchronous. Versions of Budd

W. Dec. 2—Synchronous, con't

F. Dec. 4—Synchronous, con't

Week 15

M. Dec. 7—Synchronous. Wrap-up.

W. Dec. 9—Last day, no class. Hand in final. Please do the online evaluations and have a safe holiday.