



Professor Stephanie A. Smith  
UF English/Spring 2022  
AML 6017: The American Renaissance  
M 6-8 (12:50-3:50)  
Sec. 9102/TUR 2349  
Office: TUR 4324  
Office Hours: instructor available R 1-4 and by individual appointment

*The American Renaissance* by F.O. Matthiessen shaped the way in which Americans understood their literary heritage throughout the 1950's and '60s, until social forces such as the Civil Rights Movement and Second Wave feminism challenged the concept of American exceptionalism and sought to revisit how our literary legacy had been conceived and constructed.

This course will chart the rise of an American 'canon,' while re-examining the ongoing alternation of the concept of what an American Renaissance looks like, particularly in light of recent activist calls for social justice in the face of newly re-energized narratives and/or forces upholding racial superiority, eugenics and misanthropy, promoted by think tanks like the New Century Foundation, which publishes a website and a magazine called *The American Renaissance* (see the SPLC <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/american-renaissance>).

### Required texts

Douglass, Frederick *Narrative in the Life of Frederick Douglass*. I use the Penguin.  
Emerson, Ralph Waldo: "Nature," "The American Scholar" and "Representative Men."  
Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*. I use the Bedford edition.  
Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. I'd suggest the Norton edition.  
Melville's *Moby-Dick* and *Billy Budd: Foretopman*. I use the Penguin editions.  
Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*. Poems TBA.

**Requirements:** there will be a mid-term assignment, and a final seminar paper. Final grades will be assigned according to the following numerical breakdown: Attendance/class participation 30%; Class presentations, 20%; mid-term: 20% and final paper: 30%

1. **Class participation:** This is a graduate seminar, so this class should belong to you--this means active, responsible engagement during the class period. I expect you to teach this class as much, if not more, than I do. You will agree to answer and pose 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 one (1) day of grace to be absent—after that your grade will suffer. Only illness or injury will be allowed as exceptions. In such cases, get in touch with me as soon as possible, either by phone or email 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.

2. **Class Presentations:** There will be two short presentations for each student; first, you will be assigned **one** of the minor characters in *Moby-Dick*, in order to give a brief presentation about your character's function in the novel as a whole, when we come to the end of reading it; secondly on our last day of class we will be sharing with each other our final research projects—this is more casual, part of our celebration of the end of the semester, but also part of the class requirements. Each presentation is worth 10% of your grade (i.e. cumulatively 20%).

3. **Mid-Term:** For your mid-term, I am asking you to write what is often called a 'critical crux' paper about one of the texts on our reading list, or at least from one of our authors (if you want to do a different Hawthorne text for example). What does this mean? It means that most literary works have a critical history that will reveal a problem about that text (or problems) that critics return to, redefine, re-hash, re-visit over the course of the text's critical history. The job here is to review as much of the critical history of your chosen text as you can, and then write a critical narrative (12-15 pages at most) where you locate the critical crux of the novel, and detail some of the more important approaches to that crux.

**An example:** for my own critical crux paper, I chose Henry James' *Portrait of a Lady* (okay, so I was a crazy graduate student) and soon discovered one of the most vexing issues for critics was this: why does Isabel Archer go back to her nasty, greedy, controlling husband, Gilbert Osmond, when she really doesn't have to? I wrote a paper about that 'crux' which later turned into the final chapter of my first book, and my first published article.

4. **Final Paper:** for your final project, I ask that you write a seminar paper about some aspect of the American Renaissance that interests you (25 pages). A seminar paper is a critical argument in dialogue with the critical discourse ongoing about some issue, topic, text etc. of the sort we shall examine across the semester. As noted above, you can use the critical crux mid-term, as a way to get a leg up on your final. Why is this paper and the presentations important? Because you are a graduate student, you will be spending much of your time at

conferences in the future, where you will have to present your own work, and then try to publish it. These final papers often turn into convention papers and/or chapters and/or publishable essays. IF, however, you are a creative writer, MFA student or just interested, you may do a creative final. We can discuss this option in more detail, if you are interested.

### **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. 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/eoo/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/>

**Course Delivery:** this class has been designated F2F. Until the instructor becomes ill, we shall be meeting F2F.

**Online Course Evaluation:** Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>

**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

## Schedule of Classes (subject to change if we all get ill).

### Week 1

We don't meet the first week of classes; in prep for next week, please read F.O. Matthiessen's "Method and Scope" section in *American Renaissance* [AR] (in some versions it is called "The Preface.")

### Week 2

M Jan. 10: Introductions and first things; discussion of Matthiessen.  
We have a holiday next week, so for the following week read Emerson's essays: "Nature," "The American Scholar" and "Representative Men," and "In the Optative Mode" in AR.

### Week 3

M Jan. 17: MLK Day Off. Read!

### Week 4

M Jan. 24: Emerson's Extensive Influence  
HMW: Read *The Blithedale Romance* and from Book Two Hawthorne in AR sections V, VI and in VII part 3.

### Week 5:

M. Jan. 31: Radical Conservative: Hawthorne, utopia and/or the civil compact  
HMW: Read *Moby-Dick*, up through to the end of "The Pipe," as well as "Ishmael's Loom of Time" in AR

### Week 6:

M Feb 7: Leviathan 1  
HMW: read *Moby-Dick* from "Queen Mab" to "The Gam"

### Week 7

M Feb 14. Leviathan 2  
HMW: read *Moby-Dick* from "The Town-Ho's Story" to "The Pequod Meets the Virgin" and finish your mid-term.

### Week 8

#### **Mid-term**

M Feb. 21 Leviathan 3; mid-term **due** by midnight tonight.  
HMW: read "The Honor and Glory of Whaling" to "The Doubloon"

### Week 9

M Feb 28 Leviathan 4  
HMW: Over Spring break, finish reading *Moby-Dick* and all of Book Three on Melville of AR.

*Week 10*

**Spring Break**  
**READ**

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*Week 11*

M Mar. 14     Leviathan 5 and the Minor Characters  
                  HMW: Read *Billy Budd* and section X111 from Book Three on Melville in AR

*Week 12*

M Mar. 21     The Pre-Modernist Melville  
                  HMW: Read selected poems of Whitman TBA and XIV “Man in the Open Air” in  
AR

*Week 13*

M Mar. 29     American Mythology: Whitman’s Multitudes  
                  HMW: Read Douglass’ *Narrative* and hand-out.

*Week 14*

M April 4     One of the Elephants in America’s Open Air: Raced Slavery and Civil Unrest  
                  HMW: Read *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

*Week 15*

M April 11:    The Endurance of the Damned Mob of Scribbling Women

*Week 16*

M April 18:    Last class. Time to celebrate and talk of work. Final due April 20.