

Fall 2019 Course Descriptions

Instructor: Ira Dworkin

Course: ENGL 323

Title: American Renaissance

Description: When F.O. Matthiesen defined the “American Renaissance,” he sought to characterize American literature of the period from 1830 to 1860, specifically writings by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, and Herman Melville. This era of cultural production was, in fact, even more vibrant than Matthiesen’s characterization indicates. Beyond these five men, a much wider multiracial array of literary women and men were both explicitly and implicitly part of the same national conversations that dominated that era, and sought to engage questions of reform, resistance, colonialism, slavery, gender, and revolution. This course will consider the full breadth of U.S. literary production in the decades leading up to the U.S. Civil War.

Proposed Readings: In addition to writings by Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Whitman, and Melville, we may also read works by Edgar Allan Poe, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, William Apess (Pequot), Theodore Parker, Emily Dickinson, Frederick Douglass, David Walker, Sojourner Truth, Margaret Fuller, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft (Ojibwe), Nat Turner, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Hannah Crafts, and Theodore Winthrop.