

ENG 660
Fall 2015
Thoreau, Melville, and Secularization
Thurs 2-4:50, PLC 253

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Hrs: W 1-3
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SYLLABUS

In this seminar we will examine writings by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Thoreau, and Herman Melville in the light of renewed debates concerning secularization and modernity. Our double aim will be to read their works of social reform, religious and cultural critique, and natural history in both historical and contemporary frames. Questions at issue to be considered in these works include the tensions between a transcendent and an immanent metaphysics, the phenomenon of temporal emergence, and human relations to nonhuman nature, among others.

Required Texts

Herman Melville, *Melville's Short Novels*, ed. Dan McCall (Norton, 2002).

_____, *Moby-Dick, or The Whale*, 2/e, ed. Hershel Parker and Harrison Hayford (Norton, 2001).

_____, *Typee*, introduction by John Bryant (Penguin, 1996).

James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Eerdmans, 2014).

Henry D. Thoreau, *Walden, Civil Disobedience, and Other Writings*, 3/e, ed. William Rossi (Norton, 2008).

_____, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. Ed. Carl Hovde, William L. Howarth, and Elizabeth Hall Witherell (Princeton, 2004).

Written and Oral Work

(Guidelines for written assignments will be distributed at our second week meeting.)

- Short paper on *A Week* passage (Week 4) [150 pts]
- Three responses (Weeks 3, 5, 6, 7) [50 each]
- Critical article presentation (Weeks 3, 5, 6, 7) [150]
- Draft Prospectus/Talk (Week 7) [no points, no pressure]
- Paper Prospectus, with bibliography (Week 8) [100]
- Draft of first 7 pp. of final paper (beginning Week 10) [150]
- Final conference-length paper (Week 11) [300]

** Assignments may be submitted any time during the week they are due, but no later than noon that Friday. All assignments due in hard-copy unless otherwise noted.

Readings Schedule

Week 1

10/1 Introductions and course business

READINGS

Charles Taylor: excerpts from *A Secular Age* (2007)

Michael Warner, et al: "Introduction," *Varieties of Secularism* (2010)

Bruce Robbins: "Enchantment? No, Thank You" (2011)

Ralph Waldo Emerson: "The American Scholar" (1837)

Week 2

10/8 READINGS

- Thoreau: *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, “Sunday” (1849)
 Emerson: Sermon CLVII (1832), “Divinity School Address” (1838), “Circles” (1841)
 Taylor: SA chapter 15, “The Immanent Frame” (sections 1-6, 9-10) [pdf]
 Eric Wilson: “Melville, Darwin, and the Great Chain of Being” (2000) [pdf]

Week 3

10/15 READINGS

- Melville: *Typee* (1846)
 Thoreau: Walden Journal excerpt (1846) [pdf]
 Thoreau: “Ktaadn and the Maine Woods” (1848) [pdf]

Response Due/Presentation (or 2)**Week 4**

10/22 READINGS

- Emerson: “The Poet” (1844)
 Thoreau: *A Week*: “Saturday,” “Monday,” “Wednesday,” “Thursday” (298-304, 320-33)
 and “Friday” (334-66, 377-93)
 William E. Connolly: “Belief, Spirituality, and Time,” *A World of Becoming* (2011)
 [pdf]
 Rossi: “Performing Loss, Elegy, and Transcendental Friendship” (2008) [offprint]

Short Paper Draft Due Thursday; Final Version by Monday (10/26) 5pm**Week 5**

10/30 READINGS

- Thoreau: *Walden* (1854)
 Thoreau: NCE Walden Journal selections, 1845-54 (319-75)
 Rossi: “The Journal and *Walden*” (NCE 315-8)

Response Due/Presentation (or 2)**Week 6**

11/5 READINGS

- Melville: *Moby-Dick*, chaps 1-42; “Hawthorne and His 'Mosses'” (1850); and NCE
 Melville-Hawthorne Letters (532-48)

Response Due/Presentation (or 2)**Week 7**

11/12 READINGS

- Melville: *Moby-Dick* chaps 43-Epilogue

Response Due/Presentation (or 2)
Draft Prospectus/Talk

Week 8

11/19 READINGS

Thoreau: “Resistance to Civil Government”/“Civil Disobedience” (1849, 1862); “Slavery in Massachusetts” (1854) [both in NCE]; “A Plea for Captain John Brown” (1859) [pdf]

Prospectus w/Bibliography Due**Week 9**

11/? READINGS

Melville: “Bartleby” (1853), *Benito Cereno* (1855)

Week 10

11/30 (Monday) **First 7 pp. of final paper due by 5pm (emailed to rossiw@uoregon.edu)**

12/3 Conferences in 363 PLC (no group seminar meeting)

Week 11 (Finals)

Final Papers DUE (in hardcopy) no later than 2pm Thursday in 363 PLC or mailbox

ADDITIONAL EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS**Class Participation**

Regular and productive class participation is expected in graduate seminars. In this seminar participation will comprise 10% of the final grade.

Attendance

Missing more than one seminar session will result in a lowered final grade equivalent to one-fourth for each absence beyond the first.

Plagiarism

You are expected to abide by university regulations on the proper acknowledgement of source material, and to follow accepted conventions for the correct scholarly presentation of research papers. The university’s student conduct code is posted here:

[<http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/StudentConductCode/tabid/69/Default.aspx>]. Be sure to consult it if you have any questions about this.

Late papers/undelivered presentations

I will deduct one-half of a letter grade for each day, including Saturday and Sunday, that a paper is late (that is, after noon Friday, unless otherwise specified). I will not accept papers after five days (Wednesday). Failure to deliver any assigned presentation will result in a two-thirds letter grade deduction from the final grade. Extensions may be possible under some circumstances, but we will need to discuss this as far in advance of the due date as possible.

Disability

If you have a documented disability and will need accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to discuss this with me as soon as possible. Also please request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities send a letter outlining your approved accommodations. Counselors can be contacted at Accessible Education Services [<http://aec.uoregon.edu>] 346-1155.