

English 4350—Major American Authors: Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, and the Arts

Dr. Brian Yothers

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Office Hours: MW 12:30-1:20; M 5-5:30 p.m.

Course Description

Herman Melville and Walt Whitman, both of whom were born 200 years ago this year, are two of the most influential authors in the literary history of the United States: Melville's *Moby-Dick* is the most widely discussed and studied US novel, his "Bartleby, the Scrivener" is perhaps his country's most studied short story, and *Billy Budd* may be the most widely assigned US novella today. Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* is likewise the most widely studied volume of poetry by any US writer. These literary figures are drawn together by their wide-ranging interests in aesthetics, race, gender, sexuality, nationalism, and religion, but they are also distinguished by an intense engagement with the visual arts and music. Whitman and Melville both were strongly influenced by the visual arts and music, from Whitman's love of opera to Melville's delight in Turner's seascapes and in European Renaissance art, seventeenth-century Dutch art, and indigenous artistic forms from the Pacific. They also have been broadly influential in the visual arts and music: Whitman's Civil War poems were set to music by Kurt Weill during World War II, Melville's *Moby-Dick* and *Billy Budd* were made into operas, and *Moby-Dick* has provided inspiration for artists from Frank Stella and Rockwell Kent to Eileen Lin and Claire Illouz, among many, many others. This class will explore both what Melville and Whitman made of the arts and what the arts have made of them.

Required Texts

Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick: A Norton Critical Edition*, edited by Hershel Parker

Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings: A Norton Critical Edition*, edited by Michael Moon

Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies (Available on Project Muse at no charge to you)

Walt Whitman Electronic Archive (Free online resource)

Because careful reading is one of the goals of this course, I strongly recommend that you have a good college dictionary at your side while reading in order to look up unfamiliar terms and references. I would particularly recommend that you make use of the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, which is available through the UTEP library web page.

For information on MLA format, grammar, punctuation, clarity, organization, and editing, I recommend the following site: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

Course Requirements

Short Essays

You will write two brief essays of about four pages (1000 words minimum) for this class. The first essay, on *Moby-Dick*, will discuss an issue associated with Melville and the arts using 2-3 articles from *Leviathan*, at least one of which does not appear on the syllabus. The second, on *Leaves of Grass*, will discuss an issue related to Whitman and the arts using 2-3 articles from

The Walt Whitman Archive, at least one of which does not appear on the syllabus. Both essays will need to use Modern Language Association (8th edition) format throughout. Each essay will be worth **20%** of your course grade. The essay on Melville will be due at the start of class on **October 16**, and the essay on Whitman will be due at the start of class on **November 20**.

Critical Essay

You will write one longer researched paper (10 pages, or a minimum of 3000 words, exclusive of works cited) for this class. A detailed assignment sheet for this essay, outlining three possible approaches that you can take to completing it, will be provided early in the semester. The paper must be formatted according to the standards of the eighth edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. Any deviation from the formatting and documentation guidelines in this handbook will result in a reduction in your final grade. Your paper should also show evidence of careful planning and organization and thorough editing and revision. Papers that do not address all components of the assignment, do not meet length requirements, do not show signs of careful planning and editing, or do not conform to MLA formatting guidelines will not be considered to have fulfilled the requirements of the assignment and will be graded accordingly. Late essays will not be accepted for any reason, so be sure that you plan to complete the essay early and to be revising it and editing it during the last couple of days before it is due. This essay will be worth **40%** of your final grade, and is due on **December 11 at 4:00 p.m.** A proposal and brief annotated bibliography (at least 5 secondary sources) will be due on **November 11**.

Reading Journal

Each day, you will write a typed response of at least 150 words discussing the connection between *Moby-Dick* or *Leaves of Grass* and a critical or contextual work that is part of each day's reading assignment. You should use the journal as a questioning/reaction strategy to help you engage each text more fully. You should select either a specific passage or a specific theme or technique from the text upon which to comment. You should not simply summarize the text, and you should not draw upon sources external to the syllabus for this assignment. In particular, the presence of any un-cited material from an external source will result in no credit being given. This is an academic assignment, so you should proofread carefully for clarity, grammar, and punctuation. Responses that do not meet these standards will occasion a warning, and if the shortcoming is not addressed in future entries, credit may be denied. You may be called upon, without prior warning, to read out your journal entry for a particular day in class as a springboard for that day's class discussion. I will collect your responses at the end of each class session and return them at the beginning of the next class session. Late responses will not be accepted for any reason, so it is important that you attend class regularly and that, if an absence is unavoidable, you send your response to me by the beginning of class. Handwritten responses will also not be accepted, nor will responses sent over email. The journal as a whole will be worth **20%** of your final grade. I will provide occasional opportunities to make up missed entries by attending and responding to events that contribute to the intellectual life of the university. To keep up with such events from this department, I would encourage you to "like" English at UTEP on Facebook. The November *Moby-Dick* marathon and our monthly "Mining Books" events will be particularly important opportunities.

Grades

A=90-100%

B=80-89%

C=70-79%

D=60-

69% F=0-

59%

Attendance Policy

Because much of the course is based on in-class discussion, work and instruction, my attendance policy is strict. You will be allowed four absences without any penalty. Any absences beyond that will mean that you will be dropped from the class if the fifth absence takes place before the drop deadline or that you will receive a failing grade if the fifth absence takes place after the drop deadline. If you are late to class more than three times, your final grade for the class will be reduced by a percentage point for each instance of lateness beyond the third. I do recognize the validity of university-approved excused absences, but the only way in which these can contribute to an exception to the four absence limit listed above is if **all** absences are for either university-approved approved excused absences or documented major medical emergencies.

Late Work

I will not accept late work. If you know you are going to miss a class on the day an assignment is due, turn in your work early. If you did your work and simply forgot to bring it to class, it will be considered late and I will not accept it. Please do not tell me that you are unable to submit an assignment on time because of computer problems; make sure you back up your work sufficiently so that such crises do not arise.

Originality of Work

The work you do for this course must be your own. No credit will be given for any un-cited material from an outside source. If you appear to have deliberately committed plagiarism, your case will be referred to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action.

Center for Accommodation and Support Services (CASS)

If you suspect you may have a disability and need an accommodation, you should contact CASS at 747-5148 or at cass@utep.edu or go to Room 106 Union East Building. You are responsible for providing me with any CASS accommodation letters and instructions.

Email Etiquette

Email is a useful tool if you have questions for me, and emailing me is generally the easiest and most efficient way to make contact outside class. Given that this is a university setting, you should recognize that your emails are documents that represent you professionally, and therefore should rise to certain standards of professional decorum. There are some basic guidelines that you should follow, both in my class and in your other classes.

1. All emails should have a clear subject heading.
2. All emails should have a clear, courteous salutation. "Dear Dr. Yothers:" or "Dear Professor Yothers:" would be appropriate in the case of this class.
3. All emails written for professional purposes should adhere to standard

- grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.
4. All emails should be signed with your name (otherwise, your reader may not know who you are!)
 5. Emails should be sent from your UTEP account. If you do use another account, be sure that the name on the account is appropriate for professional interactions.
 6. If there are any attachments, you should explain your reason for sending them and indicate the program in which they were written. In general, your attachments should take the form of Word documents or PDFs.
 7. You should consider your rhetorical context when emailing. What is the purpose of your email, and how can you most effectively accomplish that purpose? Three particularly important matters to keep in mind are brevity, clarity, and courtesy. If your email is not clear, specific, and to the point, you may not elicit the response you desire. If your email is discourteous, you diminish the professionalism of the persona you present to others. To cite just one example, some professors find emails that include calls for action “ASAP” to be discourteous or even presumptuous.

Emails that do not meet the standards of professionalism, clarity, and courtesy outlined above will be disregarded.

Schedule

Please note that this schedule is subject to revision. I will provide ample notice if the schedule will be revised. Unless otherwise noted, all readings are available in the Norton Critical Editions. Readings from *Leviathan* and other journals are available through Project Muse.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Readings/Assignments</u>
August 26 M	Introduction
August 28 W	<i>Moby-Dick</i> Etymology and Extracts Letter: "To Nathaniel Hawthorne: November 17, 1851" Mary K. Bercaw Edwards and Wyn Kelley, "Melville and the Spoken Word" Review: "People who delight in mulligatawny" Matt Kish, " <i>Moby-Dick</i> Extracts" (available at matt-kish.com)
September 2 M	Labor Day
September 4 W	Chapter 1 Harrison Hayford, "Loomings": Yarns and Figures in the Fabric"
September 9 M	Chapters 2-15 Robert K. Wallace, " <i>Moby-Dick</i> and the Arts in the Twenty-First Century" (<i>Leviathan</i>) "Understanding Frank Stella: The Moby Dick Series" (available at https://www.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2018/january/11/understanding-stella-the-moby-dick-series/)
September 11 W	Chapters 16-22 Timothy Marr, "Kraken: <i>Moby-Dick</i> in Popular Culture" Craig Bernardini, "Heavy Melville" (<i>Leviathan</i>)
September 16 M	Chapters 23-35 Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses"
September 18 W	Chapters 36-42 Claire Illouz, " <i>The Whiteness: An Unreadable Book</i> " (<i>Leviathan</i>)
September 23 M	Chapters 43-53 Tony De Los Reyes, "A Closer Reading" (<i>Leviathan</i>)
September 25 W	Chapters 54-57 Elizabeth Schultz, "The New Art of <i>Moby-Dick</i> " (<i>Leviathan</i>) Eleen Lin, <i>Mythopoiea</i> (available at eleenlin.com)
September 30 M	Chapters 58-80 Robert K. Wallace, "The Ache of Longing and the Song of Redemption: An Interview with Jake Heggie" (<i>Leviathan</i>)
October 2 W	Chapters 81-96 Walter Bezanson, "The Dynamic in <i>Moby-Dick</i> "
October 7 M	Chapters 97-114 Dawn Coleman, "Whales in Cincinnati" (<i>Leviathan</i>)
October 9 W	Chapters 115-132 Zachary Hutchins, " <i>Moby-Dick</i> as Third Testament" (<i>Leviathan</i>)

October 14 M	Chapters 133-Epilogue Owen Chase, "The Essex Wrecked by a Whale" Melville, "Notes on Owen Chase," "Review of J. Ross Browne"
October 16 W	Moby-Dick Short Paper due Samuel Otter, "An Aesthetics in All Things" (Representations)
October 21 M	<i>Leaves of Grass</i> Inscriptions "Preface to the 1855 Edition" David S. Reynolds, "To Heal a Nation" Images of Whitman and the cover of the 1855 <i>Leaves of Grass</i>
October 23 W	"Song of Myself" Karen Sanchez-Eppler, "To Stand Between"
October 28 M	"Song of Myself" Michael Moon, "The Twenty-Ninth Bather"
October 30 W	"Song of Myself" John Irwin, "Hieroglyphic Bibles and Phallic Songs"
November 4 M	"Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" William Carlos Williams, "An Essay on <i>Leaves of Grass</i> "
November 6 W	<i>Children of Adam</i>
November 11 M	<i>Calamus</i> <i>Live Oak, with Moss</i> Ruth Bohun, "Walt Whitman and the Sister Arts" <i>Walt Whitman Review</i>
November 13 W	"Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" Donald Barlow Stauffer, "Opera and Opera Singers" <i>Walt Whitman Archive</i>
November 18 M	<i>Drum-Taps</i> Ed Folsom, "That Bulge of Pure White" (Leviathan)
November 20 W	<i>Drum-Taps, Sequel to Drum-Taps</i> ; Walt Whitman Short Paper Due Betsy Erkkila, "The Poetics of Reconstruction"
November 25 M	"When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" Allen Grossman, "The Poetics of Union"
November 27 W	"Italian Music in Dakota," "Proud Music of the Storm," "My Picture Gallery" Ruth Bohan, "Painters and Painting" Robert Strassburg, "Music, Whitman and" <i>Walt Whitman Archive</i>
December 2 M	"The Prayer of Columbus," "Passage to India"
December 4 W	"Whispers of Heavenly Death," "A Noiseless Patient Spider," "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer," "Goodbye My Fancy"
December 11 4-6:45 W	Final Exam Session: Longer Paper Due