Course Description and Objectives

This class examines what Lawrence Buell has called “literary scripturism”: the tendency of nineteenth-century American literature to imagine itself as engaged in the production of sacred texts, even as they draw heavily upon the Hebrew and Christian Bible and, increasingly by mid-century, sacred texts from other major world religions, including Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. We will be exploring five works that embody literary scripturism: *Moby-Dick* and *Clarel*, by Herman Melville; *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe; *Walden*, by Henry David Thoreau; and *Leaves of Grass*, by Walt Whitman. We will consider how each of these works negotiates with the sacred texts with which it is in dialogue even as it strives to create its own canonical authority.

Required Texts

Herman Melville, *Clarel, A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land*

We will also make heavy use of such digital resources as the *MLA International Bibliography*, the *Walt Whitman Archive*, *Melville’s Marginalia Online*, and the *Melville Electronic Library*.

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/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/)

Course Requirements

**Exam:** You will write one exam for this class, on **April 30**. It will follow the structure of the department’s M.A. exam, and will provide some practice for those students who are considering taking that option. It is also a marvelous opportunity to showcase the erudition that you will have acquired this semester. It will be worth **20%** of your grade.

**Seminar Paper:** You will write an 18-25 page seminar paper (exclusive of notes and works cited) on a topic developed in consultation with me. The project will be due at the beginning of our final exam session on **May 14** and will be worth **40%** of your grade. Please note that it will be the cumulative result of the two projects that follow below.
**Initial Proposal:** You will write a two page proposal explaining the topic/method that you are developing for your seminar paper and identifying the approaches you plan to take. More than just identifying an idea for a paper, this piece should establish the importance of the topic and the angle into the topic that you plan to take. It should be written in clear, confident, lively, well-edited prose, and it should fulfill the purpose of persuading the reader that such a project is necessary and interesting. This proposal will be due on **February 26** and will be worth **10%** of your grade.

**Revised Proposal and Annotated Bibliography:** By **April 2** you will submit a revised version of your initial proposal responding to my comments on the original version along with an annotated bibliography containing at least 12 annotations of secondary sources of at least 200 words, once again in clear, lively, well-edited prose. This assignment will be worth **20%** of your grade.

**Participation:** You are expected to be present and actively engaged in the discussion every day. Participation will be worth **10%** of your grade.

**Grades**

A=90-100%
B=80-89%
C=70-79%
D=60-69%
F=0-59%

**Attendance Policy**

This is a graduate course, and you are expected to be in class for every session. Any absence falls short of the expectations for graduate student professionalism.

**Late Work**

I will not accept late work.

**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.

**CASS**

If you have or suspect you have a disability and need an accommodation, you should contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 747-5148 or at cass@utep.edu or go to Room 106 Union East Building. You are responsible for presenting to me 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.
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.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Readings/Assignments</th>
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| January 22   | *Moby-Dick*, Extracts, Etymology, Chapters 1-6 | Lawrence Buell, “Literature and Scripture in New England”  
               |                                                   | Athanasius Cristodoulou, “A Double Prelude on Melville’s *Moby-Dick*”  
               |                                                   | Neal Schleifer, “Melville as Lexicographer” |
               |                                                   | Ilana Pardes, “Remapping Jonah’s Voyage” |
| February 5   | *Moby-Dick*, Chapters 43-93        | Herman Melville, “Hawthorne and His Mosses”; Letters to Nathaniel Hawthorne in Norton  
               |                                                   | Jonathan A. Cook, “Melville’s Mosses Review”  
<pre><code>           |                                                   | Walter E. Bezanson, “Moby-Dick: Work of Art” |
           |                                                   | Geoffrey Sanborn, “The Name of the Devil” |
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Reading List</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 19</td>
<td><strong>Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Volume 1</strong></td>
<td>“Life of Josiah Henson,” From A Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 26</td>
<td><strong>Proposal Due</strong></td>
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| March 5    | **Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Volume 2** | James Baldwin, “Everybody’s Protest Novel”  
Jane P. Tompkins, “Sentimental Power”  
Susan M. Ryan, “Charity Begins at Home” |
| March 12   | **Spring Break—No Class**  |                                                                              |
Stanley Cavell, “Captivity and Despair” |
Lawrence Buell, “Thoreau and the Natural Environment”  
Stephen Fink, “The Language of Prophecy” |
| April 2    | **Revised Proposal and Annotated Bibliography Due** |                                                                              |
| April 9    | *Leaves of Grass*, “Epigraph” through *Calamus* | Michael Moon, “The Twenty-Ninth Bather”  
John Irwin, “Whitman: Hieroglyphic Bibles” |
| April 16   | *Leaves of Grass*, “Salut au Monde” through *Memories of President Lincoln* | David S. Reynolds, “To Heal a Nation”  
Karen Sanchez-Eppler, “To Stand Between” |
| April 23   | *Leaves of Grass*, *Autumn Rivulets* through *Old Age Echoes* | Allen Grossman, “The Poetics of Union”  
Betsy Erkkila, “The Poetics of Reconstruction”  
Ed Folsom, “That Towering Bulge of Pure White” |
| April 30   | **Exam**                  |                                                                              |
| May 7      | **Clarel (Parts 1 and 2)** | Samuel Otter, “How Clarel Works”  
Stan Goldman, “The Small Voice of Silence” |
| May 14     | **Clarel (Parts 3 and 4)** | Shirley Dettlaff, “Ionan Form and Esau’s Waste”  
Jonathan Gellman, “A Midrash on Melville” |