

English 5306—American Literature 1800-1865: Edgar Allan Poe and His Circles

Dr. Brian Yothers
Office: Hudspeth 212
Phone: 747-5886
Email: byothers@utep.edu
Office Hours: M 4:00-6:00 p.m.; R 5:30-6:00 p.m.

Course Description

This course will examine Poe and his circles in two senses: first, we will be considering Poe in relation to his literary context in the 1830s and 1840s, focusing on the literary magazines with which he was associated and the writers who influenced and were influenced by him. Second, we will be considering the role that the dominant metaphor of the circle plays in his work and the way in which it brings him into conversation with writers with whom he might seem to have little in common, from Emersonian Transcendentalists to genteel poets like Longfellow, figures whom Poe often attacked in print. Finally, we will consider how Poe functions as the center of a loose circle of writers who developed the form of the American short story in the mid-nineteenth-century. You will research and write about nineteenth-century American literature with a focal emphasis on Poe as a short story writer, poet, and critic.

Required Texts

Edgar Allan Poe, *The Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe: A Norton Critical Edition*
George Lippard, *The Quaker City, or, The Monks of Monk Hall: A Romance of Philadelphia Life, Mystery, and Crime* (U of Massachusetts Press)

---. *The Killers*

Julia Ward Howe, *The Hermaphrodite*

Additional critical and contextual readings are available online through the *MLA International Bibliography* and online archives of the various magazines Poe edited as well as online and in standard anthologies.

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 also strongly encourage you to make use of the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, which is available through the library and provides thorough etymologies and histories for words as well as definitions.

Course Requirements

Magazine Oral Presentations/Handouts (20%)

Early in the semester you will sign up for one 10-12 minute presentation. You will identify a text from a magazine that Poe edited or in which he published, and you will explain how this text (poem, story, or essay) illuminates Poe's body of work. You will provide a one page, single-spaced, typed handout to the entire class with each of these presentations. You will need to make sure that you keep your oral presentations within the 10-12 minute time frame.

Presentations will be timed, and presentations that fall short of 10 minutes or are in excess of 12 minutes will be considered severely deficient in terms of planning.

Seminar Paper (40%)

You will write a seminar paper of 15-20 pages in length that will be due during the final exam session. This paper will conform to MLA format (Eighth edition) and will show evidence of significant research as well as careful reading. You must consult with me regarding your topic at least six weeks in advance of the end of the semester to ensure that your project is appropriate for this course. You will also have the option of constructing a scholarly edition, and I will be

providing an assignment sheet describing your options early in the semester. This assignment will be due on **December 13**.

Participation and Weekly Responses (20%)

You are expected to make a substantial contribution to our discussion during every single class session. Therefore, you will need to bring a typed, double-spaced response of at least one page (300 words) in Times New Roman font to one or more of the assigned readings to class each week. I will collect these responses at the end of each class, and I may call on you to summarize your response at any time.

Exam (20%)

You will write one exam for this class, on October 18. It will follow the structure of the second portion of the department's M.A. exam, the close reading of a poem drawn from a small selection of poetry that you'll be given at the time of the exam, and will provide some practice for those students who are considering taking that option.

Grades

A=90-100%

B=80-89%

C=70-79%

D=60-69%

F=0-59%

Attendance Policy

Because this is a graduate seminar and is thus heavily oriented toward discussion, I assume you will attend every class session and will be on time for every class session. Excessive absence or lateness will significantly affect your participation grade.

Late Work

I will not accept late work for any reason.

Plagiarism

The work that you do for this class must be your own. If there is material drawn from an outside source in one of your assignments that is not cited properly, you will receive no credit for that material.

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.

		Herman Melville, "Bartleby, The Scrivener" and "The Bell-Tower" Poe's Hawthorne reviews Melville's "Hawthorne and His Mosses"
November 15	R	Poe— <i>Eureka</i> , The Colloquoy of Monos and Una Context: Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Circles" Criticism: Richard Wilbur, "The House of Poe"
November 22	R	Thanksgiving
November 29	R	Julia Ward Howe, <i>The Hermaphrodite</i>
December 6	R	George Lippard— <i>The Quaker City, Or the Monks of Monk Hall</i>
December 13 7:00-9:45	R	Lippard, continued Seminar Papers due