

Brown University
Religious Studies 2110B, Spring 2014

***Radical American Romanticism:
Democratic, Environmental, and Religious Traditions in America***

Professor Mark S. Cladis
59 George Street, Room 104
Office hours: Monday, 2:30-4:30

Office Phone: 863-3106
email: Mark_Cladis@brown.edu

Books Ordered

Margaret Fuller, *The Essential Margaret Fuller*, ed. Jeffrey Steele (Rutgers)
William James, *Variety of Religious Experience* (Penguin)
John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (Perigee)
W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford World Classics)
Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (Perennial Classics)
Terry Tempest Williams, *The Open Space of Democracy* (Orion)
Wendell Berry, *Life is a Miracle*

OCRA

Many of our readings are available via OCRA (on-line course reserves) on the library website. The password for access to electronic copies of the readings is "Romanticism."

Course Description and Objectives

Is America fundamentally defined by Romanticism? What do we mean by Romanticism? We will explore the sustained legacies of Romanticism in America, giving special attention to the topic of radical democratic, environmental, and religious traditions, by reading such authors as Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Thoreau, and Whitman; William James, John Dewey, and W.E.B. Du Bois; Annie Dillard, Terry-Tempest Williams, and Wendell Berry.

This seminar will investigate the central religious, democratic, and environmental dispositions and ideologies that mutually informed each other, starting with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British Romantic literature and then focusing on subsequent and sustained Romantic legacies in America. One normative aim is to explore how this plural Romantic legacy, which has already shaped many of Euro-American sensibilities, can be more deeply engaged and serve as a public resource for the cultivation of interrelated environmental and democratic beliefs and practices. The material will be approached as both ideology to be critiqued and an inheritance to be critically appropriated.

There are no substantive studies of the Western, three-way intersection of religion, democracy and the environment. There are separate accounts of Romanticism and religion, Romanticism and democracy, and, more recently, Romanticism and ecology, but none of these examines the ways the three—religion, democracy, and the environment—mutually inform each other. This *triscopic* approach will be emphasized in the course, with the hope that it will yield fresh interpretations.

Course Requirements

Regular attendance. If you cannot attend a seminar, let me know in advance. Read the assignments carefully and be prepared to say something about them during our conversations together. Members of the seminar will lead discussions throughout the semester. Members are

not expected to become experts for the sessions lead; they are expected to be informed readers and thoughtful hosts for our conversations. Throughout the semester, we will endeavor to make connections between past and present sessions.

The following written work is required:

1) A class journal. Make one or more entries per week. Sometimes, I may ask you to reflect on a particular question in your journal; most of the time, it will be open-ended. This journal requirement is not intended to be onerous, but to provide a flexible venue in which to reflect on a variety of issues that arise during our course together. It is an excellent venue for risk and exploration. Paper topics and content often emerge from these journals.

2) A 15-20 page paper **due by 5:00 pm on May 12 (PDF via email).**

Institutional Grade Evaluation

Your letter grade will normally be calculated as follows:

Class participation, including your journal and hosting sessions: 40%

Final paper: 60%

Reading Assignments

Week 1, Jan 22: Introduction

Week 2, Jan. 29: British Romanticism in Wordsworth and Coleridge (hosted by Cladis;)

Wordsworth (all readings on OCRA, from William Wordsworth, *The Major Works*, ed. Steven Gill [Oxford World Classics]):

- Wordsworth, Preface to “Lyrical Ballads”
- “The Old Cumberland Beggar”
- “Expostulation and Reply”
- “The Tables Turned”

Coleridge (all readings on OCRA, from Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Major Works*, ed. H J Jackson [Oxford World Classics]):

- *Biographia Literaria*, chapter 13
- *Table Talk* (p. 597 only)
- “Fears in Solitude”
- “Dejection”

Week 3, Feb. 5: Emerson (hosted by Cladis)

(all readings on OCRA, from Emerson, *Essays and Poems*, ed. Bloom and Kane [Library of America])

- *Nature* (sections: Intro, Nature, Prospects)
- “Divinity School Address”
- “Self-Reliance”
- “Man the Reformer”

Week 4, Feb 12: Emerson (hosted by _____)

(all readings on OCRA, from Emerson, *Essays and Poems*)

- “The Poet”
- “Experience”
- “Illusions”
- “Threnody”

Week 5, Feb. 19: Margaret Fuller (hosted by _____)

From *The Essential Fuller* :

- *Summer on the Lakes* Chs 1, 3, and 6
- *Women in the Nineteenth-Century*, pp. 247-58, 309-313, 341-349
- “New York Tribune Reviews and Essays,” pp. 379-404
- “Recollection of Mystical Experiences” (OCRA)
- “On the Italian Revolution” (OCRA)
- “The Great Lawsuit” (OCRA)

Week 6, Feb. 26: Thoreau (hosted by _____)

(all readings on OCRA, from Thoreau, *Walden, Maine Woods, Essays, & Poems*, ed Robert Sayre [Library of Am])

- “Walking”
- *Walden* (chapters: Where I lived, and What I lived For; Reading; Spring; Conclusion)

Week 7, March 5: Walt Whitman (hosted by _____)

(all readings on OCRA, from *Whitman: Poetry and Prose*, ed Justin Kaplan [Library of Am])

- “Nature and Democracy—Morality” (pp.925-926)
- “Democratic Vistas” (pp. 929-994)
- “Song of Myself” (pp. 188-247) (From *Leaves of Grass*, 1891-92)

Week 8, March 12: William James (hosted by _____)

- from *Will to Believe* (“Will to Believe” and “Is Life Worth Living”) (OCRA)
- from *Talk to Teachers* (“On a Certain Blindness”) (OCRA)
- from *Varieties* (pp. 1-18; 26-52; 78-83; 133-139; 149-165; 430-457; 485-519)

Week 9, March 19: William James and John Dewey (hosted by _____)

James:

- from *Pluralistic Universe* (“Conclusion” [Lecture 8]) (OCRA)

Dewey:

- “Poetry and Philosophy” (OCRA)
- “Emerson: The Philosopher of Democracy” (OCRA)
- *Democracy and Education* (chapters 1, 7, and 26) (OCRA)

Week 10, March 26: No class, Spring break

Week 11, April 2: John Dewey (hosted by _____)

- *Art as Experience* (chapters 1, 2, 7, 9, 12, and 14)
- *A Common Faith* (chapter 1 and pp. 84-87) (OCRA)

Week 12, April 9: W.E.B. Du Bois (hosted by _____)

- *The Souls of Black Folk*

Week 13, April 16: Annie Dillard (hosted by _____)

- *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (chapters 1-3, 6, 8, and 15)
- “Teaching a Stone to Talk” (OCRA)

Week 14, April. 23: Terry Tempest Williams (hosted by _____)

- *The Open Space of Democracy*
- “The Clan of One-Breasted Women” (OCRA)
- “Yellowstone: the Erotics of Place” (OCRA)
- “In Cahoots with Coyote” (OCRA)
- “All that is Hidden” (OCRA)

Week 15, April 30: Wendell Berry and Conclusion (hosted by Cladis)

- from *What are People For* (“Damage,” “Healing,” “The Work of Local Culture”) (OCRA)
- from *Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community* (“Christianity and the Survival of Creation”) (OCRA)
- from *Citizenship Papers*, “A Citizen’s Response” (OCRA)
- *Life is a Miracle* (ch. I, IV, V, and VII)