The poetry that Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson wrote in the years surrounding the American Civil War were unlike anything written in English before their time, and have had a profound influence, particularly in avant-garde circles, on poetry since their day. Although they are often seen as polar opposites — discursive vs. terse, extraverted vs. introverted, biblically inflected free verse vs. roughened common measure, not to mention male-authored vs. female-authored — they were equally challenging to the verse conventions of preceding generations, equally committed to novel and extreme experiences not often put into verse, and equally full of provocations for the future of poetry. Both poets stood in a complex relationship to Emerson, although both were more engaged with Emerson’s essays than with his verse. To these I have also added Melville, like Hardy a poet better known as a novelist, and like Hardy a poet whose techniques are often felt to be roughly textured, even clunky. But also like Hardy Melville wrote poetry of terrific intellectual depth. We will concentrate on his poems of the Civil War years, collected in his book Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War, but we will also pay some attention to his neglected late epic Clarel. We will also pay some attention to what was closer to the poetic mainstream of the nineteenth century, the poetry of the Federal period (Adams and Barlow), the poetry of the “Nightingale” poets (like Lydia Sigourney), and of the “Fireside” poets (Longfellow, Whittier, Lowell), as well as to some outliers like Poe, Very, Cranch, and Tuckerman, and poets who look ahead to the poetry of the twentieth century (Chapman, Crane, and Stickney).

Texts

- Emerson’s Prose and Poetry (Norton Critical Editions) (Saundra Morris and Joel Porte, eds.)

- Leaves of Grass and Other Writings: Authoritative Texts, Other Poetry and Prose, Criticism (Norton Critical Editions) (Michael Moon, ed.)

- The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Reading Edition (Ralph Franklin, ed.)
  Harvard University Press, ISBN: 978-0674018242 (There is a war raging between those who prefer Franklin’s recent edition and Johnson’s older edition. I’m a noncombatant in that war, so you can use Johnson if you wish. Since Johnson and Franklin number the poems differently, I use the first lines as titles (almost all Dickinson’s poems are untitled) below, rather than the poem number.)
Class Sessions

Week 1
Session 1 (Jan 12): on Latte: Joel Barlow: *The Columbiad* (excerpts), "Advice to a Raven in Russia,"
John Quincy Adams: “To the Sun-Dial,” “To Sally,”
James Kirke Paulding: from *The Backwoodsman*,
John Pierpont: from *Airs of Palestine,* from *A Word from a Petitioner,* “The Fugitive Slave’s Apostrophe to the North Star,”
Fitz-Greene Halleck: “Marco Bozzaris,” “Red Jacket,”
Lydia Huntley Sigourney, “Indian Names,”

Session 2 (Jan 16): William Cullen Bryant: “Thanatopsis,” “To a Waterfowl,” “Sonnet: To An American Painter Departing for Europe,” “Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood,” “An Indian at the Burying-Place of His Fathers,” “To the Fringed Gentian,” “The Prairies,”
Maria Gowen Brooks: from *Zophiel, or the Bride of Seven,*

Week 2
Session 1 (Jan 19): Ralph Waldo Emerson: Essays: *Nature*
Session 2 (Jan 23): “The American Scholar,” “Divinity School Address,” “Self-Reliance,”

Week 3
Session 1 (Jan 26): Ralph Waldo Emerson: Essays: “Circles,” “Experience,”
Session 2 (Jan 30): Ralph Waldo Emerson: Essays: ‘Fate,’”

Week 4
Session 1 (Feb 2): Walt Whitman: “Song of Myself”
Session 2 (Feb 6): Walt Whitman: “Song of Myself”

Week 5
Session 1 (Feb 9): “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,”
Session 2 (Feb 13): “Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking,”

Week 6
Session 1 (Feb 16): “As I Ebb’d with the Ocean of Life,”
Session 2 (Feb 27): “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d”

Week 7
James Russell Lowell: from A Fable for Critics,

Week 8
Session 1 (Mar 9): Emily Dickinson: “Sleep is supposed to be”, “Baffled for just a day or two—”, “There is a morn by men unseen—”, “Morns like these—we parted—”, “By such and such an offering”, “I never lost as much but twice”, “A little East of Jordan”, “Papa above!”, “I can’t tell you — but you feel it —”, “Success is counted sweetest,” “I never hear the word “escape””, “Going to Heaven!”, “As by the dead we love to sit,”, “One dignity delays for all,” “Will there really be a “Morning”?”?, “Our share of night to bear—”, “Talk with prudence to a Beggar”, “Bring me the sunset in a cup,” “These are the days when Birds come back,” “Dust is the only secret—”, “Musicians wrestle everywhere,” “Just lost, when I was saved!”, “A Wounded Deer — leaps highest,” “To learn the Transport by the Pain–”, “I shall know why—when Time is over—”, “As if some little Arctic flower,” “Faith’ is a fine invention,” “I taste a liquor never brewed,” “Safe in their Alabaster Chambers,”
Session 2 (Mar 13): Emily Dickinson: “You’re right—“the way is narrow”–”, “I like a look of Agony,” “Wild Nights — Wild Nights!” “I can wade Grief—”, ““Hope” is the thing with feathers—”, “There’s a certain Slant of light,” “A solemn thing— it was — I said —”, “A single Screw of Flesh,” “I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,” “How noteless Men, and Pleiads, stand ,”, “Of Bronze — and Blaze,” “I got so I could take his name,”

Proposal Due March 13
Week 9
Session 1 (Mar 16): “I reason, Earth is short,” “The Soul selects her own Society,” “The Soul’s Superior instants,” “I should have been too glad, I see,” “He fumbles at your Soul,” “I’ll tell you how the Sun rose,” “The nearest Dream recedes, unrealized,” “There came a Day at Summer’s full,” “I cannot dance upon my Toes,” “Before I got my eye put out,” “A Bird came down the Walk,” “I know that He exists,” “After great pain, a formal feeling comes,” “ ‘Twas the old — road — through pain —”, “God is a distant — stately Lover,” “Dare you see a Soul at the White Heat?”

Session 2 (Mar 20): “I reason, Earth is short,” “The Soul selects her own Society,” “The Soul’s Superior instants,” “I should have been too glad, I see,” “He fumbles at your Soul,” “I’ll tell you how the Sun rose,” “The nearest Dream recedes, unrealized,” “There came a Day at Summer’s full,” “I cannot dance upon my Toes,” “Before I got my eye put out,” “A Bird came down the Walk,” “I know that He exists,” “After great pain, a formal feeling comes,” “ ‘Twas the old — road — through pain —”, “God is a distant — stately Lover,” “Dare you see a Soul at the White Heat?”

Week 10
Session 1 (Mar 23): “I saw no Way — The Heavens were stitched —”, “Of Course, I prayed,” “A Visitor in Marl,” “What Soft — Cherubic Creatures,” “ ‘Twas like a Maelstrom, with a notch,” “Much Madness is divinest Sense.” “The Wind — tapped like a tired Man,” “This was a Poet — It is That,” “ ‘I died for Beauty — but was scarce,” “I heard a Fly buzz — when I died—”, “The World is not Conclusion,” “ ‘I’m ceded — I’ve stopped being Theirs,” “It was not Death, for I stood up,” “ ‘I started Early — Took my Dog,” “You cannot put a Fire out —”, “ ‘Mine — by the Right of the White Election!” “The Heart asks Pleasure — first,” “ ‘I’ve seen a Dying Eye,” “One Crucifixion is recorded — only,” “ ‘I reckon, when I count at all,” “ ‘Three times — we parted — Breath — and I —”, “ ‘I like to see it lap the Miles,” “ ‘There is a pain — so utter,” “ ‘They shut me up in Prose,” “ ‘Our journey had advanced,”


Bibliography Due April 10
Week 11


Week 12


Week 13


Session 2 (April 25): from Latte: Stephen Crane: from The Black Riders and Other Lines, Paul Laurence Dunbar: “Accountability,” “We Wear the Mask,” “When Malindy Sings,” “The Colored Soldiers,” “Sympathy,” Trumbull Stickney: “Mnemosyne,” “You say, Columbus with his argosies,” “Live blindly and upon the hour,” “Be still. The Hanging Gardens were a dream,” “He said: ‘If in his image I was made,’” “Pandora’s Songs,” “Mt. Lykaion,”

Draft Due to Writing Groups April 25

Requirements

1. Short papers There will be short (two pages or so) writing assignments due every Tuesday for 5 weeks, beginning January 19, and ending February 16. You will pick a
passage of about 250 words from the reading for that day or the next and type it out. Be sure to pick a passage which strikes you as rich and interesting and full of a significance that might not be already obvious to every reader of that text. In other words, I don’t want you to pick a passage that will enable you to repeat some point I have already made in the lecture, but rather some passage which will enable you to bring a new reflection into our conversation, some passage that casts some new light upon the conversation we have already been having, some light that we might not have seen were it not for you. You will write a two page (or so) commentary on that passage, giving what you take its point to be, noting its context, and developing in cogent detail the claim it leads you to make about the text. Imagine that you are writing for someone who has some knowledge of the text but who does not know what precisely is your point of view about it—someone rather like the other members of this class, for instance. I will not give particular papers letter grades, but I will comment upon them and give them either a check, a check plus, or a check minus.

2. **Research Paper** The principal assignment for this class will be a research paper, of 12 pages minimum, concerned with one of the texts this course will examine. To prepare this paper you will need to start with an overarching paradigm from literary study. Some overarching studies of southern literature might give you a starting point. Literary theory might provide you with paradigms to discuss issues of racial conflict, cultural conflict, colonialism, or gender and sexuality issues. You should also make yourself familiar with the critical literature on your chosen novel, which you can access using *The MLA International Bibliography* or *JSTOR Language and Literature.*

You will develop the papers in stages, which will include

- A one-page research proposal, giving your topic, developing your take, and outlining the stakes of your project, due on March 13
- An annotated bibliography, outlining what is to be learned from your key sources, due on April 10
- A conference with me, which will take place during the week of April 20
- A rough draft, which will be due to a writing group of your peers on April 25
- A completed research paper, due on May 1

### Learning Goals

1. Develop the habit of independent critique, intellectual self-reliance, and self-confidence from the perspective of attentive reading and collaborative discussion

2. Become conversant with the major questions, concepts, theories, traditions, and techniques of humanistic inquiry about the southern fiction
3. Reflect on quality peer-to-peer interaction.
4. Develop and sharpen writing skills through rigorous assignments.

Policies

1. Disability If you are a student with a documented disability at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see the course instructor immediately.

2. Attendance and Participation Attendance in this course is required. A student with more than two unexcused absences should expect to fail the course. Participation in the class discussion is required, so come to class prepared to speak. There may well be classes at Brandeis in which you can coast for much of the term and recover yourself by heroic efforts at the end, but this isn’t one of them. It’s best to plan to work steadily.

3. Extensions You must contact me no later than the class before a paper is due to receive an extension. I will not grant extensions on the due date of the paper. Late papers will be docked in proportion to their lateness.

4. Academic Honesty You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. The University policy on academic honesty is distributed annually as section 5 of the Rights and Responsibilities handbook. Instances of alleged dishonesty will be forwarded to the Office of Campus Life for possible referral to the Student Judicial System. Potential sanctions include failure in the course and suspension from the University. If you have any questions about my expectations, please ask.

5. Electronics You are not allowed to have an open laptop in this class. Please turn off your cell phones for the duration of the class.

6. Four-Credit Course (with three hours of class-time per week) Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

7. Communications The course will have a mailing list on LATTE. Information about snow days, changed deadlines, and so forth will be broadcast on that mailing list. We may make use of LATTE discussion forums as well.

Assignment Weights

I view calculations using these values with suspicion, and I will not accept arguments about your final grade based on calculations from this table, but I include this table to give you a rough idea of how much each assignment is worth.

- Short Papers 15 %
- Research Proposal 5 %
- Annotated Bibliography 10 %
• Research Paper First Draft 10 %
• Research Paper Final Draft 35 %
• Participation 25 %