

HI 560
 Fall 2018
 HIS 504
 Th 3:30-6:15

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 Hours: W 10:30-12

The American Transcendentalists

The seminar will focus on the American Transcendentalists and the major social, cultural, and intellectual movements with which they interacted. Famous for producing Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, this nineteenth-century circle of writers, reformers, ministers, and teachers created America's first distinctive literature, philosophy, and religion. It also constituted the nation's first "counter-culture" of public intellectuals. Standing between the learned ministers and statesmen of the colonial period and the specialized academics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Emerson, Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, Orestes Brownson, George Ripley, Theodore Parker, and their colleagues connected to American society by the eloquence of their words and the power of their ideas rather than the status of their professions or their affiliations with institutions. The first generation of young intellectuals to absorb the shock of European Romanticism, they imagined that within the self lay an infinity of meaning and value traditionally identified with the divine. In the age of early industrialization and western expansion, they advocated the ecological virtues of unexploited nature. In the laissez-faire and populist "Age of Jackson," they advanced a political philosophy of individual freedom, reciprocal justice, and organic wholeness that profoundly influenced antislavery, women's rights, and socialist movements in America. And, though deeply rooted in New England culture and highly conscious of their American nationality, they traveled further into the wider world, both intellectually and many personally, than any group of authors and thinkers before the twentieth century. Finally, the Transcendentalists were individually fascinating. Introspective, performative, heroic, and at times bizarre, they made up arguably the most colorful intellectual circle in American history.

For students wanting further background on major topics in American Transcendentalism, I recommend the *The Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism* (New York, 2010) edited by Joel Myerson, Sandra Harbert Petrucci, and Laura Dassow Walls.

REQUIRED READING

Lawrence Buell, ed., *The American Transcendentalists: Essential Writings* (Modern Library)
 Joel Myerson, ed., *Transcendentalism: A Reader* (Oxford)
 Bruce Wilshire, ed., *Romanticism and Evolution: The Nineteenth Century—An Anthology* (University Press of America)
 Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays & Lectures*, ed. Joel Porte (Library of America)

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, Civil Disobedience, and Other Writings*, 3rd Ed., ed. William Rossi (Norton Critical Edition), ed. William Rossi
 Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment and Other Writings* (Penguin)

SEMINAR REQUIREMENTS

Discussions and Presentations (35% of Grade)

As the classes are primarily discussions, participation is a major part of the grade. For this reason the assigned reading must be done *before* the date indicated. In addition each student will give one oral presentation of about 15 minutes that will be scheduled for the beginning of the class on the day the “*Critique*” paper on which it is based is due (see below).

Short Papers (25% of Grade)

Two 4-5-page papers will be required. One will be on a passage contained in the reading. Its length should be preferably no more than two or three pages and can be as short as a paragraph, a few sentences, or a stanza. The object of the paper is to unpack the passage’s meaning and make an argument about how much it epitomizes (or not) the Transcendentalist movement as you understand it so far. This paper will be due on the day the seminar discusses the reading that includes the chosen passage. Each student should bring to class enough Xerox copies of the passage to hand out to everyone in class. The second paper will be a critique or analysis of an article or chapter on a major Transcendentalism topic and will be due in class on the day the essay is listed under “*Critique*” in the Topics and Reading Schedule below.

Term Paper (40% of Grade)

The 12-15-page term paper can be one of two sorts. In one version you will compare the thought and writing of two Transcendentalist authors on a major topic or theme in American Transcendentalism. What is similar and what different in their thinking and how do these commonalities and differences help us understand the defining character of the Transcendentalist movement? Alternatively, you can compare the ideas of a major Transcendentalist with those of some thinker associated with a different but related intellectual or ideological movement at the time. How do their similarities and differences shed light on the boundaries and historical significance of Transcendentalism—i.e., what was distinctive about it? How did it interface with the larger American culture then? The topics and themes you can use to center your essay are almost infinite (!) and as we get further along in the term I’ll want to talk with you about what you think might best work for you. The research base will include both primary writings (usually a book or a set of major essays by each of your figures) as well as secondary reading, which I’ll also be available to advise you about.

For all the writing assignments your citation forms should be consistent and generally follow those recommended in the *Chicago Manual of Style*. If you frequently cite the same text, you can place a shortened version of its author and title in parentheses at the end of a quotation or sentence and before the period and create a bibliography of full citations at the end of the paper. The essay will be due **Dec. 17**.

READING: All the required readings are available in paperbacks, which can be purchased at BU's Barnes and Noble Bookstore and elsewhere. Documents and articles noted as "reserve" are on reserve in the Mugar Library.

LATE WORK: Late papers will not be accepted except in the case of extraordinary emergencies, such as a severe illness or the death of a family member. I need to be informed in advance unless the event's suddenness makes that impossible.

PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism is arguably the most serious ethical violation that a student or scholar can commit. Read the Academic Conduct Code to understand the college policy on plagiarism. All cases of its suspected perpetration, as well as all other acts of suspected academic misconduct, will be referred to the Dean's Office. If found guilty, a student will receive the maximum punishment allowed at the university.

ETIQUETTE: To preserve a classroom atmosphere conducive to discussions and collective learning, turn off cell phones and laptops.

TOPICS AND READING SCHEDULE

Sept. 6 **Introduction to Seminar**

Sept. 13 **Origins, Anticipations, and Definitions**

Introduction, in *American Transcendentalists*, xi-xxviii

Mary Moody Emerson to Ralph Waldo Emerson, in *American Transcendentalists*, 3-8

William Ellery Channing, "Likeness to God," in *Transcendentalism*, 3-20

Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The 'Lord's Supper' Sermon" (1832), in *Essays & Lectures*, 955-67

Henry F. May, "After the Enlightenment," in May's *The Divided Heart: Essays on Protestantism and the Enlightenment in America* (1991)

(on reserve in Mugar)

David M. Robinson, "Transcendentalism and Its Times," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1999), 13-29

(on reserve in Mugar)

Sept. 20 **Romantic Shocks and Nature's Vision**

Introduction, in *Romanticism and Revolution*, 9-31

- Jean Jacques Rousseau, [from *Emile* (1762)], in *Romanticism and Revolution*, 34-40
- Immanuel Kant, [from *The Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785)], in *Romanticism and Revolution*, 41-53
- Friedrich Schleiermacher, [from *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (1799)], *Romanticism and Revolution*, 114-17
- Johann Fichte, [from *The Vocation of Man* (1800)], *Romanticism and Revolution*, 117-25
- Thomas Carlyle, from “The Signs of the Time,” in *American Transcendentalists*, 16-19
- Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Selection from *Aids to Reflection* (1825), in *American Transcendentalists*, 9-10
- Frederic Henry Hedge, “Coleridge’s Literary Character,” in *Transcendentalism*, 78-97
- George Ripley, “Victor Cousin and the Future of American Philosophy,” in *American Transcendentalists*, 25-27
- James Freeman Clarke, from “Cambridge,” *Transcendentalism*, 670-73
- Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* and “The Over-Soul,” in *Essays & Lectures*, 3-49, 383-414

Critique: Arthur O. Lovejoy, “The Meaning of ‘Romantic’ in Early German Romanticism” and “Schiller and the Genesis of German Romanticism,” in Lovejoy’s *Essays in the History of Ideas* (1948), 185-227 (on reserve in Mugar)

Critique: M. H. Abrams, “English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age” (1963) [available in *Romanticism: Points of View* by Robert F. Gleckner (1974), on reserve in Mugar]

Critique: Perry Miller, “New England’s Transcendentalism: Native or Imported?” (1964) [in *Emerson’s Prose and Poetry: Authoritative Texts, Contexts, Criticism* (2001), on reserve in Mugar]

Sept. 27

Fidelities and Infidelities: Religious Controversies

- Orestes Brownson, from *New Views of Christianity, Society, and the Church*, in *American Transcendentalists*, 76-81
- Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Divinity School Address,” in *Essays & Lectures*, 73-92
- Andrews Norton, “The New School in Literature and Religion,” in *Transcendentalism*, 246-50
- Henry Ware, Jr., from *The Personality of the Deity*, in *Transcendentalism*, 250-60
- Andrews Norton, from *A Discourse on the Latest Form of Infidelity*, in *American Transcendentalists*, 152-54
- George Ripley, from “The Latest Form of Infidelity” Examined, in *American Transcendentalists*, 155-57

- Theodore Parker, *A Discourse of the Transient and Permanent*, in *Transcendentalism*, 340-66
- Henry David Thoreau, [Christianity and Hinduism Compared], in *American Transcendentalists*, 178-81
- Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "The Sympathy of Religions," in *American Transcendentalists*, 182-87
- Charles Grandison Finney, Selection from *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (1835) (available in *American Intellectual Tradition*, on reserve in Mugar)

Critique: David M. Robinson, "'A Religious Demonstration': The Theological Emergence of New England Transcendentalism" in Charles Capper and Conrad Edick Wright, eds., *Transient and Permanent*, 49-72 (1999) (on reserve in Mugar)

Critique: Elisabeth Hurth, "The 'Credentials' of Faith: The Miracles Controversy in New England," from Hurth's *Between Faith and Unbelief: American Transcendentalists and the Challenge of Atheism* (2007) (available via Google Books)

Oct. 4 **Education, Community, and Reform**

- A. Bronson Alcott, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Human Culture*, in *Transcendentalism*, 167-81
- Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, from "Explanatory Preface," *Record of a School*, 2nd ed., in *Transcendentalism*, 97-124
- A. Bronson Alcott, from *Conversations with Children on the Gospels*, in *Transcendentalism*, 181-95
- Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar," "Man the Reformer," and "New England Reformers," in *Essays & Lectures*, 51-71, 133-150, 589-609
- Louisa May Alcott, "Reflections of my Childhood," in *American Transcendentalists*, 513-19
- George Ripley and Emerson, correspondence, in *Transcendentalism*, 307-13
- Elizabeth Peabody, "Plan of the West Roxbury Community," in *American Transcendentalists*, 232-34
- A. Bronson Alcott and Charles Lane, "Fruitlands," in *Transcendentalism*, 428-29
- Charles Lane and A. Bronson Alcott, "The Consociate Family Life," in *Transcendentalism*, 435-42
- Charles Lane, "Brook Farm," in *Transcendentalism*, 456-61
- Brook Farm Association for Industry and Education, *Constitution*, in *Transcendentalism*, 1st and 2nd Editions, 461-72
- George Ripley, Prospectus and "Introductory Notice" for the *Harbinger*, in *Transcendentalism*, 478-83
- Horace Greeley and Henry Jarvis Raymond, *Association Discussed: Or,*

The Socialism of The Tribune Examined, pp. TBA (on reserve in Mugar)

Critique: Charles Strickland, “A Transcendentalist Father: The Child-Rearing Practices of Bronson Alcott” (1969) (on reserve in Mugar)

Critique: Taylor Stoehr, “Huts Are Safe,” in Stoehr’s *Nay-Saying in Concord: Emerson, Alcott, and Thoreau* (1979), 67-114 (on reserve in Mugar)

Critique: Carl Guarneri, “Brook Farm, Fourierism, and the Nationalist Dilemma in American Utopianism,” in Capper and Wright, *Transient and Permanent*, 447-470 (on reserve in Mugar)

Oct. 11 **Emerson and Transcendental Individualism**

Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Transcendentalist,” “Self-Reliance,” “Friendship,” “Experience,” “Fate,” “Power” in *Essays & Lectures*, 191-209, 257-82, 339-54, 469-92, 767-94, 795-812

Lidian Jackson Emerson, “Transcendental Bible,” in *Transcendentalism*, 381-83

Critique: Robert Milder, “The Radical Emerson?” in *Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson* (1999) (on reserve in Mugar)

Critique: David M. Robinson, *Emerson and the Conduct of Life: Pragmatism and Ethical Purpose in the Later Work* (1993), Introduction, Chaps. 2 and 4 (on reserve in Mugar)

Oct. 18 **Transcendentalist Liberalism and Democratic Politics**

Orestes Brownson, *New Views of Christianity, Society, and the Church* (“The Reconciliation of God, Humanity, State, and Church”), in *American Transcendentalists*, 76-81

Orestes Brownson, “The Laboring Classes,” in *American Transcendentalists*, 193-200

Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Young American” and “Politics,” in *Essays & Lectures*, 211-30, 557-71

Theodore Parker, “A Sermon of Merchants,” in *American Transcendentalists*, 244-50

Margaret Fuller, Dispatches in the *New-York Tribune*, in *American Transcendentalists*, 251-56

Henry David Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience,” in *Walden, Civil Disobedience, and Other Writings*, 227-46

George Bancroft, “The Office of the People in Art, Government, and Religion” (1835)

Abraham Lincoln, "Address Before the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society" (1859) (available in *American Intellectual Tradition*, on reserve in Mugar)

Critique: Duane E. Smith, "Romanticism in America: The Transcendentalists," *Review of Politics*, 35 (July 1973), 302-325
Critique: George Kateb, "Democratic Individuality and the Claims of Politics," in Kateb's *Inner Ocean: Individualism and Democratic Culture* (1988), 77-105 (on reserve in Mugar)

Oct. 25 **Women's Rights and Gender Trouble**

Margaret Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit. Man versus Men. Woman versus Women," in *Transcendentalism*, 383-427
 Theodore Parker, *A Sermon of the Public Function of Woman*, in *Transcendentalism*, 566-86
 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Address at the Woman's Rights Convention," in *Transcendentalism*, 615-28
 Louisa May Alcott, "A Transcendental Childhood," in *American Transcendentalists*. 513-19
 Sarah Grimké, Selection from *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes, and the Condition of Woman* (1838) (available in *American Intellectual Tradition*, on reserve in Mugar)

Critique: Phyllis Cole, "Woman Questions: Emerson, Fuller, and New England Reform," in Capper and Wright, *Transient and Permanent*, 408-446 (on reserve in Mugar)
Critique: Selection from Charles Capper, *Margaret Fuller: An American Romantic Life*, Vol. 2: *The Public Years* (2007) (available via BU online access to Oxford Scholarship Online)

Nov. 1 **Making It New: Literature and the Arts**

Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Editors to the Reader" and "New Poetry," in *American Transcendentalists*, 383-91
 Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet," in *Essays & Lectures*, 445-68
 Margaret Fuller, from "American Literature," in *American Transcendentalists*, 405-9
 Walt Whitman, from Preface to *Leaves of Grass*, in *American Transcendentalists*, 416-18
 Poems by William Ellery Channing II, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Frederic Henry Hedge, Ellen Sturgis Hooper, Henry David Thoreau, Jones Very, and Walt Whitman, in *American Transcendentalists*, 441-96
 John Sullivan Dwight, "Music Philosophically Considered," in *American Transcendentalists*, 410-15

Critique: Raymond Williams, “The Romantic Artist,” in Williams’s *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (1958; 1983) (on reserve in Mugar)

Critique: Lawrence Buell, “Transcendentalist Literary Legacies,” in Capper and Wright, *Transient and Permanent*, 605-19

Nov. 8 No Class

Nov. 15 **Walden: Nature, Economy, and the Body**

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, in *Walden, Civil Disobedience, and Other Writings*, 5-224

Charles Lane, “Life in the Woods,” 327-28, in *American Transcendentalists*,

Henry David Thoreau, Two Proposals for Land Preservation, in *American Transcendentalists*, 336-37

Thomas Wentworth Higginson, “Saints, and Their Bodies,” in *American Transcendentalists*, 338-43

Critique: Leo Marx, [Walden’s Transcendental Pastoral Design], in *Walden, Civil Disobedience, and Other Writings*, 450-464;

Critique: Lawrence Buell, “Thoreau and the Natural Environment,” in *ibid.*, 527-43 (on reserve in Mugar)

Critique: Nina Baym, “English Nature, New York Nature, and Walden’s New England Nature,” in Capper and Wright, *Transient and Permanent*, 168-89 (on reserve in Mugar)

Nov. 21-25 Thanksgiving Recess

Nov. 29 **Antislavery, Race, and Civil War**

Ralph Waldo Emerson, “An Address on the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies,” in *Essays & Lectures*, 967-992

Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Seventh of March Speech on the Fugitive Slave Law,” in *Transcendentalism*, 586-602

Theodore Parker, from “The Function of Conscience” and “The Fugitive Slave Law,” in *American Transcendentalists*, 357-61

Henry David Thoreau, “Slavery in Massachusetts,” in *Walden, Civil Disobedience, and Other Writings*, 247-59

Henry David Thoreau, “A Plea for Captain John Brown,” in *American Transcendentalists*, 370-78

Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment and Other Writings*, 1-206

Frederick Douglass, “What to a Slave Is the Fourth of July” (1852) (available in *American Intellectual Tradition*, on reserve in Mugar)

Critique: Albert J. von Frank, “Mrs. Brackett’s Verdict: Magic and Means in Transcendental Antislavery Work,” in Capper and Wright, *Transient and Permanent*, 385-407 (on reserve in Mugar)

Dec. 6 **History and Memory**

William Henry Channing, from *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli*, in *American Transcendentalists*, 526-28

Theodore Parker, from *Theodore Parker’s Experience as a Minister*, in *American Transcendentalists*, 532-37

Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England,” in *American Transcendentalists*, 538-41

Octavius Brooks Frothingham, from *Transcendentalism in New England: A History*, in *American Transcendentalists*, 542-45

Caroline Wells Healey Dall, from *Transcendentalism in New England*, in *American Transcendentalists*, 546-53

George Santayana, “The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy” (1913) (available online from <http://www.monadnock.net/santayana/genteel.html>)

Critique: Charles Capper, “‘A Little Beyond’: The Problem of the Transcendentalist Movement in American History,” in Capper and Wright, *Transient and Permanent*, 3-45 (on reserve in Mugar)

Dec. 17 **TERM PAPERS DUE (by 4:30 pm in my box in the History Department)**