

City University of New York (CUNY)

## CUNY Academic Works

---

Open Educational Resources

Queens College

---

2023

### ENGL 351: Nineteenth-Century U.S. Literature

Duncan Faherty

*Queens College & CUNY Graduate Center, [duncan.faherty@QC.cuny.edu](mailto:duncan.faherty@QC.cuny.edu)*

[How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!](#)

More information about this work at: [https://academicworks.cuny.edu/qc\\_oers/64](https://academicworks.cuny.edu/qc_oers/64)

Discover additional works at: <https://academicworks.cuny.edu>

---

This work is made publicly available by the City University of New York (CUNY).  
Contact: [AcademicWorks@cuny.edu](mailto:AcademicWorks@cuny.edu)

ENGL 351 Nineteenth-Century U.S. Literature.

Duncan Faherty

Office: Klapper 615

Office hours: Mondays 11-12 & by appointment

Email: [duncan.faherty@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:duncan.faherty@qc.cuny.edu)

### Unsettling Time and Place in Nineteenth-Century American Literature

American literary history has long framed the nineteenth century ("C19") as the high point of U.S. cultural production. This history is founded on two questionable presumptions: the first, that New England tells us all we need to know about national culture; and the second, that the Civil War was the most important event of the century. This course seeks to reckon with the complexities of C19 by embracing a more unsettled sense of time and place. We will examine how this history privileges a modern narrative of "progress" (i.e., modest beginnings to a perfected future) that overlooks any number of important contextual flashpoints and alternative geographical coordinates. What might it mean, in other words, to push past the primacy of the Civil War by grounding our sense of C19 as framed (for example) by: the legacies of Haitian Revolution; by the implications of westward expansion emerging from the Mexican-American War/Intervención estadounidense en México beginning in 1846; the insurgency of the women's rights convention at Seneca Falls in 1848; the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850; or by the working class resistance of the General Strike of 1877?

\*This course fulfills the **Literature After 1820** area elective requirement for the English major

\*\* ENGL 351 satisfies the Literature (LIT) requirement of the Queens College Option of the Pathways General Education Program.

**Accessing our Blackboard Course Site:** After you have registered for the course, you should have access to our Blackboard course site. This site will be used primarily as a repository for materials related to the class, including all of the readings materials for the course itself since this an open access materials course (readings can all be found under the "content" section on the Blackboard site and are labeled by author's name). In addition to these reading materials, there are also copies of the syllabus and all of the assignments for the course.

#### **Tech Support:**

The Queens College Helpdesk (for help with any tech support) can be found here:

<https://www.qc.cuny.edu/computing/helpdesk/Pages/Welcome.aspx>

**Course Objectives:** The purpose of this course is to explore the complexities of C19 American literature by emphasizing the relationship between writing, reading, and intellectual inquiry. In addition to our examination of primary texts, we will be reading a range of critical essays to think about the conventions and limitations of disciplinarity (considering, for example, the differences between literary, biographical, and historical approaches to marshaling and deploying evidence). In so doing, we will consider the challenges of writing about canonical and non-canonical texts (to contemplate, among other questions, whether the canonical “status” of a literary text demands a different kind of scholarly engagement). As such, our engagement with the secondary material will be aimed at thinking about how and why critics frame their arguments in the ways that they do (as we actively interrogate their writing practices and strategies) as much as it will be about the content and conclusions of those arguments. You should come away from this course with a heightened sense of the conventions of literary analysis and of the boundaries of disciplinary thinking.

**Learning Goals:** Students successfully completing the course should be able to:

- 1) Understand operant C19 American concepts of national expansion, trans-nationalism, and settler colonization. As such, students will address how, in the discipline of English data and evidence are construed and knowledge is acquired; that is, how questions are asked and answered.
- 2) Understand how C19 American texts address social, cultural, and political concerns; how they dramatize, explain, reflect upon, and rethink the relationship between citizenship, belonging, and national expansion. As such, the course will position our work in the liberal arts curriculum and the larger society.
- 3) Understand the limitations of national conceptions of literary development, particularly in accounting for indigenous, forcibly enslaved, forcibly displaced, and mobile populations.
- 4) Undertake close reading and critical interpretation of diverse range of C19 cultural productions in order to illuminate recurring motifs and themes.
- 5) Understand contemporary debates in critical scholarship concerning this period and the concept of an American C19 itself.
- 6) Understand and be able to express the advantages of reading literature.
- 7) Engage in the practice of reading and to appreciate different genres, including narratives, poetry, and essays in their original language.

8) Through discussion and writing, develop and improve upon skills used in understanding and appreciating literature.

### **Course Requirements & Expectations:**

#### **1) Attendance and Participation (15%):**

In order to really learn and engage with the course material and each other, we must show up prepared, with all our materials, having completed readings and assignments, and ready to be attentive and actively participate in a variety of in-class activities.

#### **2) Critical Reading Assignment (15%) Due Week 4**

#### **3) C19 Book Review, or, Thinking about Partisan Media Streams Assignment Due Week 7 (20%)**

#### **4) Reading at the Margins Due week 11 (20%)**

#### **5) C19 Now: Is the Past Still Present? Due Week 15 (30%)**

\*\*\* All assignments can be emailed directly to me as word or google documents.

### **Grading/Assessment/Late Submissions:**

Your success in this course will depend almost entirely on engagement with the material and your willingness to participate in our collective discussions and work. I realize that this semester will be challenging, perhaps even a bit messy at times and somewhat possibly subject to change. Still, I ask is that you show up. Show up for your classmates, and for me, and we will show up for you.

Given continuing uncertainties of the pandemic, I am happy to grant brief extensions for any of the formal assignments scheduled for the semester. In order to be granted an extension you will need to contact me in advance so that we can reach an agreement about the length of that extension **prior** to the assignment due date. Otherwise late submissions will be penalized by one half letter grade (except in the case of medical or family emergencies in which case please contact me as soon as you can).

**Academic Integrity:** Academic dishonesty demonstrates disregard for intellectual property, the College, the instructor, your fellow students, and yourself. Taking credit for work that is not your own, copying ideas from the web, and not properly citing your sources are all forms of plagiarism. The CUNY POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY states that Academic Dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion as provided at <https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/legal-affairs/policies-procedures/academic-integrity-policy/>.

Please note that using Artificial Intelligence, like ChatGPT for example, without attribution or citation counts as plagiarism, and these same policies noted above apply.

**Writing Center:** You are welcome and encouraged to take drafts of your essays to The Writing Center, located in Kiely Hall 229. Tutors are trained to help writers at all stages of the writing process, and from all disciplines. You can opt for one-on-one appointments or online tutoring. The Writing Center serves writers at all levels of expertise and experience, from freshmen to graduate students. To make an appointment or learn more about the Writing Center, go to the web site: <http://writingcenter.qwriting.qc.cuny.edu/>

#### **Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**

Candidates with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: 1) register with and provide documentation to the Special Services Office, Frese Hall, Room 111; 2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. For more information about services available to Queens College candidates, visit the website, or contact: Special Service Office; Director, Miriam Detres-Hickey, Frese Hall, Room 111; 718-997-5870 or <http://www.qc.cuny.edu/StudentLife/services/specialserv/Pages/default.aspx> ).

**Equal Access:** This course aims to provide fair and equal access to all students regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic background, religion, age, ability, etc. Each member of this course (myself included) is expected to treat everyone else with respect. Behavior that intimidates or makes difficult the attendance of another student will not be tolerated. If you ever feel uncomfortable with a situation or discussion that occurs before, during, or after class, please don't hesitate to contact me or someone at Student Affairs or Counseling Services.

**QC Library:** The Queens College Library can be accessed here: <https://library.qc.cuny.edu/>

**Netiquette:** Here is a helpful guide that outlines ways of appropriate ways of communicating in an on-line academic environment:

<http://catalog.sps.cuny.edu/content.php?catoid=2&navoid=205&hl=%22Netiquette%22&returnto=search>

### Required Readings:

This course uses digital course materials designed using Open Educational Resources (OER), high quality, openly licensed educational materials, rather than a traditional textbook. You can access all readings either on our course site or by clicking on the links for each sessions reading. You will not have any additional cost for textbooks for this course.

### Tentative Reading Schedule

Week 1: Looking Back to Look Forward

Read: Introduction

Read: William Apess “[An Indian Looking Glass for the White Man](#)” (1833)

Week 2: C19 American Poetry

Read: Walt Whitman “[I Sing the Body Electric](#)”

“[Crossing Brooklyn Ferry](#)”

“[You Felons on Trial in Courts](#)”

Read: Emily Dickinson “[After great pain, a formal feeling comes](#)”

“[Because I could not stop for Death](#)”

“[Crumbling is not an instant's Act](#)”

Week 3: Dead Letters & Quiet Quitting

Read: Herman Melville “[Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street](#)” (1853)

Read: Lauren Klein “[What Bartleby Can Teach Us About Occupy Wall Street](#)”

Jonathan D. Greenberg “[Occupy Wall Street's Debt to Melville](#)”

Nina Martyris “[A Patron Saint for Occupy Wall Street](#)”

- Week 4: Circulation & Transformation
- Read: Sojourner Truth "[May I Say a Few Words](#)" (1851) & Frances Dana Gage "[Ar'n't I a woman?](#)" (1863)
- Read: Frances E. W. Harper "[We Are All Bound Up Together](#)" (1866)
- Week 5: C19 Families & Identities
- Read: Louise May Alcott "[Transcendental Wild Oats](#)" (1873)
- Read: Anonymous, "[The Man Who Thought Himself a Woman](#)" (1857)
- Week 6: Financial Panics & Racial Capitalism
- Read: George Lippard, *[The Bank Director's Son: A Real and Intensely Interesting Revelation of City Life](#)* (1852) pp 1-30 (read till Part XL)
- Read: George Lippard, *[The Bank Director's Son: A Real and Intensely Interesting Revelation of City Life](#)* (1852) pp30-end
- Week 7: Witnessing Resistance
- Read: Frederick Douglass – *[The Heroic Slave](#)* (1853) pp. 1-39
- Read: Frederick Douglass – *[The Heroic Slave](#)* (1853) pp. 40-end
- Week 8: Territoriality, Belonging, & Border Crossings
- Read: Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton – *[The Squatter and The Don](#)* (1885) Chapters I-VIII
- Read: Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton – *[The Squatter and The Don](#)* (1885) Chapters XIX-XVII
- Week 9: Territoriality, Belonging, & Border Crossings
- Read: Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton – *[The Squatter and The Don](#)* (1885) Chapters Chapters XVIII-XXIV
- Read: Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton – *[The Squatter and The Don](#)* (1885) Chapters XXV-XXXIII

- Week 10: Territoriality, Belonging, & Border Crossings
- Read: Maria Amparo Ruiz de Burton – [The Squatter and The Don](#) (1885)  
Chapters Chapters XXXIV to end
- Read: Pablo A. Ramirez, “[American Imperialism in the Age of Contract: Herbert Spencer and the Defeat of Contractual Capitalism in Ruiz de Burton's \*The Squatter and the Don\*](#),” *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 57.4 (2011): 427-455.
- Meagan Meylor, “[California Nerves: Health, Disability, and Whiteness in \*The Squatter and the Don\*](#),” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 62.3 (2020): 297-315.
- Week 11: “Low-Key” Speculative Histories
- Read: Sutton Griggs [Imperium in Imperio](#) (1899) pp. 1-98
- Read: Sutton Griggs [Imperium in Imperio](#) (1899) pp. 99-154
- Watch:
- Week 12: “Low-Key” Speculative Histories
- Read: Sutton Griggs [Imperium in Imperio](#) (1899) pp. 155-end
- Read: Levander, Caroline. “[Sutton Griggs and the Borderlands of Empire](#).” *American Literary History* 22, no. 1 (2010): 57-84.
- Week 13: Passing & Belonging
- Read: [The Colored American Magazine October, 1900](#)
- Watch: [Tamla Gordon Critical Edition](#)
- Week 14: Silence, Display, Erasure, & Recovery
- Read: Sui Sin Far “[Chan Hen Yen, Chinese Student](#)”  
“[The Bird of Love](#)”
- Read: Sally Wen Mao “[The Diary of Afong Moy](#)”  
Linda Kimiko August “[Remembering Afong Moy](#)”  
Kristin Chang “[Afong Moy](#)”
- Week 15: C19 Now
- Workshopping Final Papers & Review Sessions