

Darkness in the Land of Light

Professor: Jason Richards

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Course: ENGL 151.05

Semester: Spring 2009

Time: MWF 12:00-12:50pm

Room: 216 Barret

Course Description

Seen from the perspective of Puritan settlers, early America was an unsettling contradiction. It was a land of freedom, promise, and renewal but also a vast and terrifying landscape, a "howling wilderness" they perceived as the devil's domain. From the start a dark shadow has haunted this land of optimism and light as Gothic and transcendental forces have together shaped the American experience. Gothic is obsessed with how the past haunts the present, but it is also filled with a sense of impending doom. Transcendental thought seeks to free us from our bondage to the past while offering a hopeful vision of the future. In this writing-intensive seminar, we'll study the competing energies of the Gothic and transcendental in American cultural life. We'll first identify these forces in the fatalism of Puritan ideology versus the more liberatory thinking of Unitarianism. Then we'll examine how American authors have absorbed and worked against these rival energies. While we'll analyze the Gothic and transcendental in literature and film, we'll also notice how Gothic conventions have crept into non-fictional realms and how real-life people have transcended antagonistic forces. Prompts for critical thinking and writing will include works by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Edgar Allan Poe, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman as well as films such as *Psycho*, *Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Seabiscuit*, among others.

Required Texts

Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference* (Bedford, 6th Edition)

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance and Other Essays* (Dover)

Edgar Allan Poe, *The Gold-Bug and Other Tales* (Dover)

Horatio Alger, *Ragged Dick* (Signet)

Stephen Crane, *Maggie* (Signet)

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper and Other Stories* (Dover)

Grading

Essay 1 (3-4 pages)	10%
Essay 2 (4-5 pages)	20%
Essay 3 (4-5 pages)	20%
Essay 4 (9-10 pages)	30%
Paragraphs	10%
Participation	10%
Total	100%

A = 100-94; **A-** = 93-90; **B+** = 89-87; **B** = 86-84; **B-** = 83-80; **C+** = 79-77; **C** = 76-74;

C- = 73-70; **D+** = 69-67; **D** = 66-64; **D-** = 63-60; **F** < 60

Participation: While I will often begin class with a lecture, this course relies heavily on discussion. You are expected to have all the readings done for the day they are assigned and come prepared to discuss them, and you must always bring the text(s) we are discussing to class. Participation will be evaluated in terms of quantity and quality. Part of your participation grade includes quizzes, which are unannounced and given at the beginning of class. **If you are late or absent on a quiz day, you cannot make up the quiz.** Quizzes must be done on paper with clean edges. I will drop your lowest quiz grade.

Essays: Essay 1 asks you to analyze the Gothic and/or transcendental elements in Poe and Emerson. Essay 2 focuses on a Gothic and/or transcendental film. Essay 3 is a comparative analysis of *Ragged Dick*, *Maggie*, and/or "The Yellow Wallpaper." Essay 4 is a longer research project that expects you to identify and analyze a Gothic and/or transcendental event in American culture. **Note: You will receive a handout with guidelines for each essay.**

Paragraphs: During the semester, you will write several paragraphs (300 words maximum) designed to prepare you for the major essays. These brief pieces expect a concise and provocative **analysis** that addresses the assigned topic. The paragraphs, like the major essays, must follow the mode-of-submission guidelines. **Note: You will lose points for exceeding the 300 word limit; you must include a word count for each paragraph.**

Workshops and Drafts: During the semester, you are required to participate in one full-class draft workshop. If you fail to meet this requirement, your final participation grade will be lowered by ten percentage points (e.g., 80% becomes 70%).

Writing Center: The Writing Center in the Barret Library is a valuable resource that can help you improve your writing skills and essays. You are strongly encouraged to visit the Writing Center throughout the semester.

Email Policy: The best way to address questions about our class is by meeting in person. I am always happy to talk with you during my office hours, by appointment, and after class. That said, I am available by email for **simple** queries. I typically respond to email once a day between 9am-6pm Monday-Friday. Here are some rules to follow when emailing:

- Email correspondence should be treated as formal communication
- Email is not the place to negotiate any kind of special request
- Email is not the place to discuss grade concerns
- Email is not the place to seek feedback on your writing; that must be done in person
- Do not email at the last minute (e.g., the night before an assignment is due) asking for help
- Do not email with a question that can be answered by our syllabus or College website
- Do not email about your absences, unless you are missing two or more classes in a row

Mode of Submission: Papers are due at the beginning of class. All papers must be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double spaced, with one-inch margins. Please use printer ink that produces a copy dark enough to be easily legible. Place your name, instructor's name, course number, and date in the upper left-hand corner of the first page. Your last name and page number should appear in the upper right-hand corner of all pages. Do not include a title page. Place your

title above the text on page one and double space above and beneath it. Your title should not be underlined. Be sure to staple your paper. You may lose points for not following these guidelines.
Note: I do not accept papers by email.

Late Work: All work must be turned in on time. If you will not be in class when a paper is due, it must be in my mailbox before the deadline. A late paper will lose one percentage point for each day it is late (e.g., 84% becomes 83%, and so on).

Submission of All Work: All major assignments are integral to the goals of the course. Failure to complete any major assignment will result in a grade of F for the course.

Intellectual Honesty: All work is assumed to be the student's own and produced exclusively for the course in which it is submitted. Papers written for one course, even if revised, are not to be submitted in another without the instructor's prior approval. Borrowing of ideas or language from other sources (including published material, other student papers, the internet or other electronic resources, etc.) must be carefully documented. Students are advised against posting their work on the internet since doing so may lead to suspicion of plagiarism. Students are advised to maintain drafts of their work to verify its originality. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, and the student if convicted will receive a grade of F in the course in addition to sanctions assigned by the Council. Carelessness in documenting sources, even if not technically plagiarism, will be penalized as the instructor deems appropriate. If you are uncertain about how or whether to document sources, consult me.

Attendance: While I expect you to attend every class, you are allowed three absences during the semester. After three absences, every additional absence will lower your final grade by one percentage point (e.g., 80% becomes 79%, and so on). If you miss more than six classes, you will fail the course. **Note: If you miss class, please don't contact me to ask what you missed. Instead, you should exchange contact information with other classmates and ask them what we covered in class.**

Tardiness: Please do not come late to class. Tardiness disrupts the flow of class and distracts other students. If you have a scheduling conflict, you are advised to drop the class. Tardiness will lower your participation grade.

Disability Issues: Students with documented disabilities should meet with me at the beginning of the semester to discuss appropriate accommodations. Please contact the office of Student Disability Services for more information. In all cases, it is your responsibility to provide me with an official letter from SDS.

Schedule (subject to change)

Week 1

Jan 14: Introduction to Course; Lecture: What is Gothic?

Jan 16: Poe, "Tell-Tale Heart"

Week 2

Jan 19: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day: No Classes

Jan 21: Poe, "Black Cat"; **Paragraph Due:** What is Gothic about "Black Cat"?

Jan 23: Lecture: What is Transcendentalism?; Emerson, from *Nature* (handout)

Week 3

Jan 26: Emerson, "Divinity School Address"

Jan 28: Poe, "Fall of the House of Usher"

Jan 30: Emerson, "Self-Reliance"; **Paragraph Due:** What is Transcendental about "Self-Reliance"?

Week 4

Feb 2: Workshop: Draft of Essay 1 for Group A

Feb 4: Workshop: Draft of Essay 1 for Group A

Feb 6: **Essay 1 Due;** Presentations

Week 5

Feb 9: Clips/Discussion: *Night of the Living Dead*

Feb 11: Clips/Discussion: *Seabiscuit*

Feb 13: Clips/Discussion: *Nightmare on Elm Street*

Week 6

Feb 16: Clips/Discussion: *Forrest Gump*

Feb 18: **Paragraph Due:** Identify and Analyze a Gothic and/or Transcendental Movie

Feb 20: Clips/Discussion: *Psycho*

Week 7

Feb 23: Workshop: Draft of Essay 2 for Group B

Feb 25: Workshop: Draft of Essay 2 for Group B

Feb 27: **Essay 2 Due;** Presentations

Week 8

Mar 2: Alger, *Ragged Dick*, Chapters 1-8 (pages 1-56)

Mar 4: *Ragged Dick*, Chapters 9-17 (pages 57-120)

Mar 6: *Ragged Dick*, Chapters 18-27 (pages 121-86); **Paragraph Due:** What is Transcendental about *Ragged Dick*?

Week 9

Mar 9: Crane, *Maggie*, Chapters 1-9 (pages 1-38)

Mar 11: *Maggie*, Chapters 10-19 (pages 38-75)

Mar 13: Gilman, "Yellow Wallpaper"

Week 10

Mar 16: Spring Recess

Mar 18: Spring Recess

Mar 20: Spring Recess

Week 11

Mar 23: Workshop: Draft of Essay 3 for Group C

Mar 25: Workshop: Draft of Essay 3 for Group C

Mar 27: **Essay 3 Due**; Presentations

Week 12

Mar 30: The Salem Witch Trials; Mather, *Wonders of the Invisible World* (handout)

Apr 1: Video/Discussion: Civil War

Apr 3: Faulkner, "Rose for Emily" (handout)

Week 13

Apr 6: Library Visit

Apr 8: **Paragraph Due**: Identify and Analyze a Gothic and/or Transcendental Event in American Culture

Apr 10: Easter Recess

Week 14

Apr 13: Clips/Discussion: *Lost Children of Rockdale County*

Apr 15: Clips/Discussion: *Lost Children of Rockdale County*

Apr 17: **Paragraph Due**: Does *Lost Children* Support the Thesis of Our Course?

Week 15

Apr 20: YouTube Moments: Gothic and Transcendental Politics

Apr 22: Video/Discussion: Jeffrey Dahmer

Apr 24: Boyle, "Greasy Lake" (handout)

Week 16

Apr 27: Workshop: Draft of Essay 4 for Group D

Apr 29: Workshop: Draft of Essay 4 for Group D

May 1: Conferences

Week 17

May 4: **Essay 4 Due by 12:00pm (leave in my mailbox)**