

## Darkness in the Land of Light

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Course: ENGL 151.06  
Semester: Fall 2008  
Time: MWF 2:00-2:50pm  
Room: 203 Palmer Hall

### 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 Kate Chopin; films such as *Psycho*, *Nightmare on Elm Street*, and *Forrest Gump*; and the political discourse leading up to the 2008 presidential election.

### Required Texts

Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference* (Bedford, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition)  
Joseph M. Williams, *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* (Longman, 9<sup>th</sup> 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)  
Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (Dover)

### Grading

Essay 1 (3-4 pages)	10%
Essay 2 (4-5 pages)	20%
Essay 3 (4-5 pages)	20%
Essay 4 (8-10 pages)	30%
Other Writing	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 this course is writing intensive, it also 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. 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 or transcendental elements in Poe and Emerson. Essay 2 is a comparative analysis of two texts: *Ragged Dick*, *Maggie*, or *The Awakening*. In Essay 3, you will focus on the 2008 presidential election, analyzing the Gothic and transcendental forces that shape the contemporary political climate. Essay 4 is a longer research project that expects you to identify and analyze a specific Gothic and/or transcendental event in American culture. **Note: You will receive a handout with specific guidelines for each of these essays.**

**Other Writing:** During the semester, you will write several "paragraphs" (approx. 200 words) designed to prepare you for the major essays. The paragraphs, like the major essays, must follow the mode-of-submission guidelines. You can expect other small writing tasks from time to time as well.

**Workshops and Drafts:** During the semester, you are required to participate in one full-class draft workshop. You are also required to work on one draft with the Writing Fellow. If you fail to meet these requirements, your final participation grade will be lowered by ten percentage points (e.g., 90% becomes 80%). You are assigned a group for both the workshop and conference.

**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 your writing or our class is by meeting in person. That said, I am available by email for simple queries. I typically respond to email during business hours: 9am-5pm Monday-Friday. Please treat email correspondence as formal communication. It is always best to ask a specific rather than general question in an email. If you have a query about an assignment, do not wait until the last minute. It is not advisable to email me the day before an assignment is due asking for help, since there is very little I can do at that point. Besides, last-minute emails are very unprofessional. **Note: Please do not email me about your absences.**

**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 three percentage points for each day it is late (e.g., 88% becomes 85%).

**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 three percentage points (e.g., 80% becomes 77%). 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

Aug 27: Introduction to Course; Lecture: What is Gothic?

Aug 29: Edgar Allan Poe, "The Black Cat"; **Paragraph Due:** What is Gothic about "The Black Cat"?

### Week 2

Sept 1: Labor Day Holiday

Sept 3: Lecture: What is Transcendentalism? Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Divinity School Address"; **Paragraph Due:** Summarize "The Divinity School Address"; Joseph Williams, "Understanding Style"

Sept 5: Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart"; Williams, "Correctness"

### Week 3

Sept 8: Emerson, "Self-Reliance"; **Paragraph Due:** What is Transcendental about "Self-Reliance"?

Sept 10: Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher"

Sept 12: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"

**Week 4: Group A Meets with Emily by Thursday (with a Draft of Essay 1)**

Sept 15: Workshop: Draft of Essay 1 for Group C; Williams, "Actions"

Sept 17: Workshop: Draft of Essay 1 for Group C

Sept 19: **Essay 1 Due;** Presentations

### Week 5

Sept 22: Horatio Alger, *Ragged Dick*, Chapters 1-8 (pages 1-56); Williams, "Characters"

Sept 24: *Ragged Dick*, Chapters 9-17 (pages 57-120)

Sept 26: *Ragged Dick*, Chapters 18-27 (pages 121-86); **Paragraph Due:** What is Transcendental about *Ragged Dick*?

### Week 6

Sept 29: Stephen Crane, *Maggie*, Chapters 1-9 (pages 1-38)

Oct 1: *Maggie*, Chapters 10-19 (pages 38-75)

Oct 3: TBA

### Week 7

Oct 6: Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*, Chapters 1-15 (pages 1-45)

Oct 8: *The Awakening*, Chapters 16-26 (pages 45-82)

Oct 10: *The Awakening*, Chapters 27-39 (pages 82-116); **Paragraph Due:** Is *The Awakening* a Gothic or Transcendental Text? Why?

**Week 8: Group B Meets with Emily by Thursday (with a Draft of Essay 2)**

Oct 13: Workshop: Draft of Essay 2 for Group D; Williams, "Cohesion and Coherence"

Oct 15: Workshop: Draft of Essay 2 for Group D

Oct 17: **Essay 2 Due;** Presentations

### Week 9

Oct 20: Fall Recess

Oct 22: Rhetorical Analysis: Political Speeches; Williams, "Emphasis"

Oct 24: Rhetorical Analysis: Political Speeches

**Week 10**

Oct 27: Analysis: 2008 Presidential Campaign; Williams, "Concision"

Oct 29: Analysis: 2008 Presidential Campaign; **Paragraph Due:** Analyze the Gothic and/or Transcendental Forces in the Presidential Campaign

Oct 31: Analysis: 2008 Presidential Campaign

**Week 11: Group C Meets with Emily by Thursday (with a Draft of Essay 3)**

Nov 3: Workshop: Draft of Essay 3 for Group A

Nov 5: Workshop: Draft of Essay 3 for Group A

Nov 7: **Essay 3 Due;** Presentations

**Week 12**

Nov 10: The Salem Witch Trials; Cotton Mather, *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (handout)

Nov 12: Video/Discussion: Jeffrey Dahmer

Nov 14: **Paragraph Due:** Identify a Gothic or Transcendental Event in American Culture

**Week 13**

Nov 17: In-Class Screening: *The Lost Children of Rockdale County*; Williams, "Shape"

Nov 19: In-Class Screening: *The Lost Children of Rockdale County*

Nov 21: **Paragraph Due:** Does *Lost Children* Support the Thesis of Our Course?

**Week 14**

Nov 24: Library Visit

Nov 26: Thanksgiving Holiday

Nov 28: Thanksgiving Holiday

**Week 15**

Dec 1: Clips/Discussion: *Psycho*; Williams, "Elegance"

Dec 3: Clips/Discussion: *Nightmare on Elm Street*

Dec 5: Clips/Discussion: *Forrest Gump*; Williams, "The Ethics of Style"

**Week 16: Group D Meets with Emily by Thursday (with a Draft of Essay 4)**

Dec 8: Workshop: Draft of Essay 4 for Group B

Dec 10: Workshop: Draft of Essay 4 for Group B

Dec 12: **Essay 4 Due**