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## ENGL 151-04, First Year Writing Seminar: Darkness in the Land of Light, Spring 2012

Item Type	Syllabus
Authors	Richards, Jason
Publisher	Memphis, Tenn. : Rhodes College
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## Darkness in the Land of Light

Professor: Jason Richards  
 Office and Mailbox: 302 Palmer Hall  
 Office Hours: 10-10:55 (and by appointment)  
 Office Phone: 843-3517  
 Email: richardsj@rhodes.edu (see email policy)

Course: ENGL 151 Sections 4 & 6  
 Semester: Spring 2012  
 Time: 8-8:50 & 9-9:50 MWF  
 Room: 114 Clough

### 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*, *Forrest Gump*, among others.

### Required Texts

Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference* (Bedford, 7<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)

### 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/Professionalism	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/Professionalism:** 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.** I will drop your lowest quiz grade. Quizzes must be done on paper with clean edges. Finally, a lack of professionalism (e.g., not following course policies, rude behavior, and so on) will negatively affect this portion of your grade.

**Electronic Devices:** No laptops, cell phones, etc. allowed. **Texting is expressly forbidden.**

**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, or after class. That said, I am available by email for **simple and succinct** queries. I typically respond to email once a day between 9am-5pm Monday-Friday. If you do need to email, here are some rules to follow:

- Email is not the place to discuss grade concerns or negotiate any kind of special request
- Email is not the place to seek feedback on your writing or ideas; 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 if you plan to visit during office hours; I'll be there, unless otherwise stated
- Do not email about your absences, unless you are missing two or more classes in a row

**Appointments:** If you cannot meet with me during my office hours or after class, we can set up an appointment at a time that is mutually convenient. If you need to make an appointment, please plan to do so **at least 24 hours in advance.**

**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/professionalism grade.

**Paragraphs:** During the semester, you will write several paragraphs (**225 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 225 word limit; you must include a word count for each paragraph.**

**Essays:** Essay 1 asks you to analyze the Gothic and/or transcendental elements in Poe, Hawthorne, and/or 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.**

**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.

**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 1-inch margins on the top and bottom and 1.25-inch margins on the sides. 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. **No extensions are granted.** 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 weekday it is late and two percentage points over the weekend.

**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. Clear evidence of plagiarism (failure to use quotation marks around verbatim or copied language, failure to adequately paraphrase, and failure to cite the source of quoted, paraphrased, or borrowed text and ideas), regardless of the Council hearing outcome, may likewise result in failure of the course. 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.

**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 11: Introduction to Course

Jan 13: Lecture: What is Gothic?

**Week 2**

Jan 16: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Jan 18: Poe, "Tell-Tale Heart"

Jan 20: Poe, "Black Cat"; **Paragraph Due:** Analyze a Gothic Aspect of "Black Cat"

**Week 3**

Jan 23: Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" (handout)

Jan 25: Lecture: What is Transcendentalism?; Emerson, from *Nature* (handout)

Jan 27: Emerson, "Divinity School Address"

**Week 4**

Jan 30: Poe, "Fall of the House of Usher"

Feb 1: Emerson, "Self-Reliance"; **Paragraph Due:** Analyze a Transcendental Aspect of "Self-Reliance"

Feb 3: Walt Whitman, from "Song of Myself" (handout)

**Week 5**

Feb 6: Workshop: Draft of Essay 1 for Group A

Feb 8: Workshop: Draft of Essay 1 for Group A

Feb 10: **Essay 1 Due;** Presentations

**Week 6**

Feb 13: Clips/Discussion: *Night of the Living Dead*

Feb 15: Clips/Discussion: *Seabiscuit*

Feb 17: Clips/Discussion: *Nightmare on Elm Street*

**Week 7**

Feb 20: Clips/Discussion: *Forrest Gump*

Feb 22: **Paragraph Due:** Analyze One Scene from a Gothic or Transcendental Film

Feb 24: Clips/Discussion: *Psycho*

**Week 8**

Feb 27: Workshop: Draft of Essay 2 for Group B

Feb 29: Workshop: Draft of Essay 2 for Group B

Mar 2: **Essay 2 Due;** Presentations

**Week 9**

Mar 5: Alger, *Ragged Dick*, Chapters 1-14 (pages 1-99)

Mar 7: *Ragged Dick*, Chapters 15-27 (pages 100-86); **Paragraph Due:** Analyze a Transcendental Aspect of *Ragged Dick*

Mar 9: Gilman, "Yellow Wallpaper"

**Week 10**

Mar 12: Spring Recess

Mar 14: Spring Recess

Mar 16: Spring Recess

**Week 11**

Mar 19: Crane, *Maggie*, Chapters 1-9 (pages 1-38)

Mar 21: *Maggie*, Chapters 10-19 (pages 38-75)

Mar 23: No Class

**Week 12**

Mar 26: Workshop: Draft of Essay 3 for Group C

Mar 28: Workshop: Draft of Essay 3 for Group C

Mar 30: **Essay 3 Due**; Presentations

**Week 13**

Apr 2: Salem Witch Trials; Mather, *Wonders of the Invisible World* (handout)

Apr 4: Library Visit; **Paragraph Due**: Identify and Analyze a Gothic and/or Transcendental Event in American Culture

Apr 6: Easter Recess

**Week 14**

Apr 9: YouTube Moments: Gothic and Transcendental Politics

Apr 11: Clips/Discussion: *Lost Children of Rockdale County*

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

**Week 15**

Apr 16: Faulkner, "Rose for Emily" (handout)

Apr 18: Video/Discussion: Jeffrey Dahmer

Apr 20: Boyle, "Greasy Lake" (handout)

**Week 16**

Apr 23: Workshop: Draft of Essay 4 for Group D

Apr 25: Workshop: Draft of Essay 4 for Group D

Apr 27: **Essay 4 Due**