ENG 535: Seminar in American Studies I  
Fall 2018  
ECTS Credits: 7.5  
Tue-Fri, 12:00-13:30, Room ΧΩΔ 01 102  
Dr. Antonis Balasopoulos  
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Subjectivity and Subjection: (Un)Freedom and the Making of American Culture  
1776-1861

Course Syllabus

I. Course Description and Objectives
For long, American literary history has been shaped by an emphasis on the newness, uniqueness and autonomy of American cultural experience. It was in this context that American literature was understood as both the product and the means of a pursuit of multiple kinds of metaphorical "emancipation": from prior literary models, influences and conventions, from the historical constraints of the past, from the religious oppression and social inequity plaguing the "Old World." More recently, writers and critics have attempted to interrogate these premises on a variety of levels. For one, they have reminded us that for all its emphasis on the spirit of a democratic ethos, traditional literary history has tended to downplay the haunting presence of social groups that have remained excluded from the emancipatory promise of universal human and political rights. In this respect, the historical experience and literary representation of black slavery, Native American dispossession and female disenfranchisement have become central means of understanding the implications and limits of the conventional tendency to found "freedom" upon the premises of individualistic autonomy and self-sufficiency. The aim of this course is to build upon such recent critical insights in order to explore late 18th and 19th century writing as the expression of complex, interrelated and uneven relations among individual and collective subjects. In the process of examining literary and cultural texts, we will be asking a series of questions; what varieties of unfreedom does the broader literary legacy of these two centuries render visible? Are freedom and unfreedom strictly antithetical terms, or are they in some ways complementary and interdependent? Is individualism an adequate synonym for human emancipation? Do freedom and unfreedom have a universal and generalizable meaning, irrespectively of the racial, gender or class positions of different subjects? Is every call against unfreedom an expression of a compatible system of political values? Are literary representations of freedom and unfreedom always compatible with "objective" historical circumstances? And, last but not least, what is the place of writing, literacy and literature within the context of a pursuit of emancipation? Under this set of questions, the course aims to bring into dialogue and contestation a series of voices that have all-too-often been treated as separate, and to argue for a model of American literary history beyond both monolithic homogeneity and irredeemable fragmentation.

II. Course Grading and Evaluation
1) One (1) 8-10 page final term research paper (2,000-2,500 words). In this paper, you must attempt a comparative study of two of the literary or non-fictional texts addressed during the course. The essay must retain a tight focus and examine a concrete and well-defined issue (stylistic, thematic, structural, historical or theoretical) from a comparative perspective. Specific
guidelines and proposals on possible issues to consider will be provided, but you may wish to suggest your own topic to me (at least two weeks in advance). Use of critical research is required; you should be using at least two critical sources. This paper will be due at the end of the course, in lieu of a final examination. It will count towards 50% of the final course grade.

2) One (1) four-page essay (1,000 words). For this assignment, you must respond to one out of a series of questions on the texts studied in approximately the first half of the course. The essay is a take-home assignment, must be typed, and will count towards 30% of your final grade. This assignment is in lieu of a mid-term exam and will be handed out approximately at the middle of the semester. You will have ten days to write and hand in the assignment.

3) One (1) 20-minute oral group presentation (presentation group size to be determined upon registration). The range of topics for the presentations is open: you may choose to discuss a specific theme/problem, a dense and provocative passage, a seemingly minor but critically rewarding scene or character, or an interpretive debate regarding the text which has attracted your interest. You must prepare a handout of the main issues you will cover and distribute it in class before the presentation. You are welcome to discuss your presentation plans with me ahead of time. The presentation option will count towards 20% of your final grade.

III. Class policies
Class attendance is required according to university policy. Please be punctual. If you miss more than a certain number of sessions, you may be advised to withdraw or be told to expect a failing grade in the course. All work for the course must be handed in within the deadlines provided. Please bear in mind that systematic failure to keep up with the reading load will impair your overall performance and jeopardize your course grade.

IV. Required Texts
* Readings in Course Packet.

* Purchasing the books (in the editions specified) is your own responsibility; no order has been placed in any bookstore. My personal recommendation is obtaining them at bookdepository.com, as they charge no delivery fee, but you may obtain them wherever you wish. Course packets are available at Unique Copy Center, 127 Larnacos Ave., Phone#: 22462932, email: savvia@mmprintings.com.cy. Please obtain your copy right away!

V. Books Ordered on Short-term Loan

**Baehler, Paul ed. White Slaves**

**Black Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity**


VI. Further Sources for Research

B a n k e r, P a u l e d . W h i t e S l a v e s , B l a c k M a s t e r s : A n A n t h o l o g y o f A m e r i c a n B a r b a r y C a p t i v i t y N a r r a t i v e s . U n i v e r s i t y o f C h i c a g o P r e s s , 1 9 9 9 . I S B N : 0 2 2 6 0 3 4 0 4 6


VII. Online Resources
The library offers online access to several of the top academic journals in the field of American literature and culture, including: American Literary History, American Quarterly, American Literature, Comparative American Studies, Journal of African-American Studies, and Journal of American Studies.

Searchable online collections of early American literature and culture, including important primary texts and archival material are to be found in the Library of Congress Digital Collections:


Cornell University’s “Making of America”:

<http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa>

and the Early Americas Digital archive:

<http://www.mith2.umd.edu/eada/>

VIII. Course Structure and Detailed Class Reading Schedule

Unit I. Debating (Un)Freedom in Revolutionary America

Tuesday, September 4
Introduction and Course Logistics
Friday, September 7
James Madison, From *The Federalist*, No.10 *Heath Anthology* 1013-1018 (Course Packet).
Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, From “What is an American?” *Heath Anthology* 895-899 (Course Packet).

Tuesday, September 11
Crèvecoeur, From “What is an American?”
Priscilla Wald, “Terms of Assimilation” *Cultures of United States Imperialism* 59-84 (Course Packet).

Friday, September 14
Thomas Jefferson, From *Notes on the State of Virginia* *Heath Anthology* 970-971 (Course Packet).
Prince Hall, “To the Honorable Council and House of Representatives” *Heath Anthology* 686-687 (Course Packet).

Tuesday September 18
David Cooper, “A Serious Address to the Rulers of America” *Race and Revolution* 117-130 (Course Packet).

Friday, September 21
Susan Buck-Morss, “Hegel and Haiti” 821-836 (Course Packet).
Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark* 3-17, 44-54 (Course Packet).

Tuesday, September 25

Friday, September 28
Cathy Davidson, “Privileging the Feme Covert” *Revolution and the Word* 110-125.

Tuesday, October 2
Judith Murray “On the Equality of the Sexes” 1032-1039 (*Heath Anthology*).

Friday, October 5
“The Declaration of Independence” *Heath Anthology* 960-964 (Course Packet).

No Class-Absence at Conference
Class will be remade, preferably on Wednesday, September 19

Tuesday, October 9
“The Declaration of Independence” continued
Robert A. Ferguson, “We Hold these Truths” 1-28 Reconstructing American Literary History (Course Packet).

**Unit II. Gothic Elaborations: The Dream-Life of the Republic**

Friday, October 12  
Leslie Fiedler, From *Love and Death in the American Novel* 139-148 (Course Packet).

Tuesday, October 16  
Jane Tompkins, From "What Happens in Wieland" Sensational Designs 44-58 (Course Packet).

Friday, October 19  
Cathy Davidson, “Early American Gothic” Revolution and the Word 236-253 (Course Packet).

Tuesday, October 23  

Friday, October 26  
Paul Downes “Irving and the Gender of Democracy” Democracy, Revolution and Monarchism in Early American Literature 144-164 (Course Packet).

Tuesday, October 30  
Irving, “Rip van Winkle” continued  
Nathaniel Hawthorne, “My Kinsman, Major Molineux” (Course Packet).  
**Mid-term assignment topics handed out**

Friday, November 2  
Hawthorne, “My Kinsman, Major Molineux” continued  
No class-Absence at Conference  
Class will be remade

**Unit III. "Ourselves as Others, Others as Ourselves": Captivity and/as National Identity**

Tuesday, November 6  
Royall Tyler, The Algerine Captive  
No class-Absence at Conference  
Class will be remade

Friday, November 9  
Royall Tyler, The Algerine Captive.

**Mid-term assignment due**

Tuesday, November 13
Royall Tyler, *The Algerine Captive*.

Friday, November 16
Royall Tyler, *The Algerine Captive*

Tuesday, November 20

Friday, November 23
There is a chance this class will be missed due to participation in hiring committee. Students will be duly informed and the class will be remade if missed.

Tuesday, November 27

Friday, November 30

*Final paper due according to university exam schedule.*