

### Block 3: American Renaissance: Creating Faith in a Secularized Society

**Instructor:** Daniel Boscaljon **Office:** Hrs: Tues/Thurs 10-11:30 **Email:**

**Class Meeting:** 12-3, M-F. **Office Hours:** 11-12 Tuesday, Wed, Thurs.

#### Course Topic:

As was true of most of the Western world, the nineteenth century was the time when the secularization of society was beginning to have more pronounced and visible effects on the cultural world. In Europe, this awareness was most frequently vocalized philosophically—see Nietzsche's claim "God is dead...and we have killed him." In America, the advent of secularism was one that saw a number of thinkers, primarily classified by today's scholars as existing in the "American Renaissance," as reacting to secularism by promoting ways of thinking about belief without God. This class will explore the logic of post-secular religion, and the importance of the American emphasis on literature as a vehicle to convey these beliefs.

#### Course Goals:

As an educator, my desire is to give each student—without regard for innate skill level—the opportunity to improve his or her critical reading, writing and thinking skills. The texts should sufficiently provide for the first goal. In order to promote critical writing, I tend to hold to a high standard when grading. Those concerned should **visit me in office hours**, where I will provide examples of successful student writing that I have received in the past, as well as explanations for why I find it to be superior. Although past students have found my standards for writing initially daunting and perhaps overly rigorous, many—especially those who rose to the challenge of mastering writing—have stated that the course was helpful in this way. My hope is that lectures and class discussions will help to promote critical thinking, supplementing the work done in reading and in writing.

#### Expectations:

I provide materials to read and assignments to complete that I believe are worth spending time thinking through and doing well, and I work diligently to construct courses and work that will be challenging to each and every student in the course. Much of the material is difficult: I therefore do **not expect that you bring an understanding of the material to class**. My preference with all texts—literary and philosophical—is that you engage your reading informed by a sense of curiosity for what you enjoy, what you understand, and what remains unresolved. The best course discussions focus on what remains uncertain and unknowable and how it affects humans and the communities they live in—including the community of the classroom. I hope that none of the texts I assign have only one meaning or truth or thing to "get." I do certainly hope that you **read the assignments** so as to understand the discussion. Because we are immersed in the unknown, I **expect all students to treat each other with civility and respect**. Finally, I appreciate that you have other interests and obligations in your life and that you won't always have the time to devote to the class that it deserves. Nonetheless, I will grade assignments and the final exam with the assumption that you, in taking this course, have completed the work for it. Your time commitment will vary from day to day, but expect to have at least 2-4 hours of work (sometimes far more, sometimes a bit less) for each class session. **As you may have understood, your willingness to work diligently and consistently is necessary to doing well in the class.**

#### Required Texts:

Caputo, John. *On Religion* ISBN: 978-0415233330

Miller, Jerome A. *In the Throe of Wonder* (SUNY, 978-0791409541, \$22.95)

Melville, Herman. *The Confidence Man; his Masquerade* (Oxford World's Classic, 978-0199554850, \$12.95)

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden, Civil Disobedience, and Other Writings* (ISBN: 978-0393930900)

Fuller, Margaret. *Summer on the Lakes, in 1843*. ISBN: : 0252061640

Emerson, Hawthorne, and Dickinson texts will be made available electronically. The Melville, Thoreau, and Fuller are also available free, online, although I would encourage you to purchase these books as having the same pagination is useful.

**Grading:** See style sheet for a detailed account. All assignments (including reports and quizzes) are due at 9:00 a.m. on ICON. A quiz cannot be made up (even if an absence is excused). A paper that has been turned in **late** without arrangements having been made with the instructor beforehand may **not be accepted**, and a minimum of 10% of possible points will be deducted per day late. I welcome arguments regarding my failure to understand your work for seven days following the return of an assignment: after one week, I will consider the grade to be final. For my policy on **plagiarism**, go to <http://www.english.uiowa.edu/gel/resources/PlagiarismPolicy.pdf>. All plagiarized assignments will receive a 0 relative to connected competencies, and the student will lose 20% of all earned points throughout the semester. If you have a complaint, please talk to me about it in office hours. If we cannot resolve the issue, please email [jonathan-wilcox@uiowa.edu](mailto:jonathan-wilcox@uiowa.edu) and make an appointment with Dr. Wilcox. Include my name and section number with a brief overview of the nature of the problem.

**Attendance:** If you miss more than five classes, I reserve the right to fail you. Missing more than five classes will result in a reduction of grade (by at least a half-letter). I would appreciate being informed in advance of your absences, but it is not a

necessity. If you feel that special circumstances warrant leniency in this area, please meet with me—but understand that clemency is not a right. You will be held accountable for all information that you miss, even if the absence is excused.

#### **Block 4: Making Meaning in Suffering: Religion and 19th-century African American Literature**

**Course Competencies:** At the end of the block, you should have the ability to (rated on a scale of 0-10):

Each task within the class will build toward an improved ability to demonstrate critical thinking, writing and reading skills. I will specify per assignment which skills are being evaluated in any given assignment. Your total number of points relative to each skill will change with each assignment—hopefully improving, potentially moving downward. **Each task will be graded individually based on a 50% C, and I am open to conversations concerning how many more points per skill you deserve.** The final grade in the class will factor in the total number of points you have earned (adding each of the grade components together), although I will apply the curve suggested by CLAS loosely over gaps in the data.

There are different kinds of assignments done at different points throughout the semester. I will update your total points on ICON at the end of a type of assignment (reports, mini-papers, paper), but will give written feedback immediately following the assignment so that you have a better idea of what I am looking for. I am willing to discuss why you have been graded as you have at any given time throughout the semester, **provided you come to office hours with a specific number of points per category you desire and a reason why you merit that number of points based on the work you have handed in.** The final will be worth 50 points, and up to 10 points of extra credit can be earned over the course of the semester. **Although one *could* earn up to 240 points over the course of the semester, because I assume that the average student will earn no more than 5 points in any category (i.e. I assume that a C = 50%), it is far more likely that students will earn nearer to 120 points.**

The failure to turn in a quiz or report will result in the deduction of 5 points.

**Course Competencies:** At the end of the semester, you should have the ability to (rated on a scale of 0-10):

#### **Reports/Paper:**

- ☐ use a *claim* to frame a paragraph
- ☐ use *warrants* to support one's claim
- ☐ supply reader with appropriate *data* to concretize your claim
- ☐ support warrants with appropriate *interpretations* of data (data is necessary: points earned through *interpreting* data).
- ☐ persuade through the use of hypotests (in key paragraphs, perhaps as a penultimate paragraph)
- ☐ use an *impact* that shows the relevance of one's claim to a broader context (i.e. thesis)
- ☐ use vibrant prose and varied grammar to produce enticing sentences
- ☐ accurately proofread and edit one's thinking

#### **Paper:**

- ☐ use an introduction to set up the context for a long, developed argument
- ☐ use a conclusion to show the importance of an argument into a larger framework
- ☐ prove and defend a thesis
- ☐ persuade through offering an appropriate scope of analysis
- ☐ write an internally coherent argument that does not require the reader to make assumptions
- ☐ develop an argument in a logical progression

**Questions: Due at 7 a.m. Five points credited for up to four submissions, no more than one per author.**

- ☐ Accurately articulate one of the major issues that the author attends to resolve
- ☐ Demonstrate an ability to **organize** a persuasive justification for the choice of question
- ☐ Develop a compelling statement that helps your reader **transition** from the question to the text.
- ☐ Provide a justification for the question that is concretely anchored to the text through the use of **data**
- ☐ Acknowledge **competing possibilities** for most serious issues, and then show why they are inferior approaches.
- ☐ Clearly **indicate why answering** this question is **essential** and necessary to gain insight into the text.

**Quizzes: Given randomly throughout the semester. Five points are deducted for each one missed.**

- ☐ argue an answer as more likely than competing options
- ☐ define a key term within a sentence so as to eliminate other options

#### **Discussion:**

- ☐ contribute insights into the conversation about texts without prompting
- ☐ consistently attend class, be attentive, and take good notes

**AT THE END OF THE SEMESTER, the following grades will be added together. The total number of points will be put into a curve that loosely follows CLAS guidelines.**

- 1: The final examination (50 points possible)
- 2: The two highest quiz scores (for arguing answer/ defining key term) (20 points possible)
- 3: The amount you earn for discussion (40 points possible)
- 4: The combined grade on your final paper (which replaces points earned for “report” and “paper” categories: (140 pts.)
- 5: Extra Credit

Although up to 290 points are possible, because I grade on a 50% C and curve down from there, the lowest passing grades are often around 100 points.

#### **Block 4: Finding Faith in a Godless World: The Post-Secular Spirituality of the American Renaissance    Boscaljon**

It is possible to earn up to 250 points in this class; however, because I grade both strictly and on a curve, the total number of points rarely matters. There are five ways that you can earn points in the class. Assignments need to be delivered to me before 7:00 a.m. on the day listed on the syllabus. Because ICON will confirm delivery, you are responsible for ensuring I get your work. If you have problems, please email me your assignment and an explanation of the error.

#### **Grading: Course Skills:**

Each task within the class will build toward an improved ability to demonstrate critical thinking, writing and reading skills. I will specify per assignment which skills are being evaluated in any given assignment. Your total number of points relative to each skill will change with each assignment—hopefully improving, potentially moving downward. **Each task will be graded individually based on a 50% C, and I am open to conversations concerning how many more points per skill you deserve.** The final grade in the class will factor in the total number of points you have earned (adding each of the grade components together), although I will apply a standard 90-80-70-60 curve loosely over gaps in the data.

There are different kinds of assignments done at different points throughout the semester. I will update your total points at the end of a type of assignment, but will give written feedback immediately following the assignment so that you have a better idea of what I am looking for. I am willing to discuss why you have been graded as you have at any given time throughout the semester, **provided you come to office hours with a specific number of points per category you desire and a reason why you merit that number of points based on the work you have handed in.** The final will be worth 50 points, and up to 10 points of extra credit can be earned over the course of the semester. **Although one *could* earn up to 240 points over the course of the semester, because I assume that the average student will earn no more than 5 points in any category (i.e. I assume that a C = 50%), it is far more likely that students will earn nearer to 120 points.**

#### **Final Exam: 50 points**

There will be 10 questions—open note, open book. You will get 1 point for defining the question, one for justifying why one answer is correct and up to three points for explaining why the wrong answers fail.

#### **Quizzes: 20 points**

These take the form of multiple choice questions. You will select one answer and provide a warrant for why the answer that you selected is true. Not only will these provide you with a way to practice the critical thinking necessary for the final (defining a key term to eliminate rival answer possibilities), but it will also allow you to practice writing concise sentences.

#### **Reports: 1 paragraph**

Reports are small essays, intended to be one paragraph s in length. Each report makes an argument about a meaning of the text, supported with warrants and data from the text. These are intended to help work on the writing of paragraphs: thus, I will pay strict attention to the way each sentence fits/does not fit within each paragraph. As a whole, I will look for a clear **claim** sentence, supported with solid **warrants**, using relevant **data** from the texts and a possible **hypotest**, and making an **impact** that will tell me why your paragraph is important. Each **category error** will negatively impact the proofreading category.

#### **Questions:**

This portion of the written work consists of two parts. The question requires that you articulate, in ONE sentence (20-35 words), what question the selection you choose seems designed to answer (this can be written as a statement). I will grade this based on how well your question seems to find a central issue that the author explores in the text. The remainder of the grade rests on your ability to offer an explanation for the viability of the question you select AS central.

#### **Paper (6 pages):**

In some ways, this is easier to write than reports as a developed argument allows for clearer impacts. You should look at the first paper as a way to get feedback on your skills in preparation for the second paper. In general, I will be looking for clarity of argumentation and a consistent formal structure. I expect that you make an effort to hone your paper, going beyond a level of checking the grammar and spelling: look at your word choice, think of how to be more clear or more concise, attempt to strengthen the logic of your argument. You will be given at least four weeks to complete the papers. I encourage you to come to office hours or utilize the writing lab, especially if you are not doing well on the reports. **Students who desire at least a B on the paper are encouraged to visit me frequently for help in outlining the argument and/or with reading rough drafts.**

**Category Errors include** *spelling, grammar, word choice, subject/verb and subject/pronoun agreement, comma usage, typographical, structural, and cohesion errors. Use gender inclusive language.* A half point is deducted with each manifestation of a category error in all take homes, papers and reports.

**Block 4: Finding Faith in a Godless World: The Post-Secular Spirituality of the American Renaissance**      **Boscaljon**  
**Expectations:** The goal for my assignments is to promote critical thinking and **GOOD** writing.

1. A **thesis** statement: one sentence that articulates your answer. A good thesis statement includes a hint as to how your answer will be organized. The thesis should be a carefully considered and eloquently constructed statement that you *successfully* prove by the end of the paper. A good thesis demands to be proved—it is prescriptive (I ought to believe you) rather than descriptive (This is true).
2. **Argumentation (content):** An argument is more than a continually asserted claim. It moves in a direction, building on earlier points in order to reach the conclusion (which often strongly resembles the thesis). To encourage development, it is helpful to have one cohesive argument (as opposed to many disparate points). Make sure that everything included in the paper is within the scope of the argument that you are making overall. Also, make sure that the argument of the paper accomplishes the task that it set out to do—in this case, to describe the tension between image and object.
3. **Evidence:** the bulk of your paper should be your thoughts and arguments. Be selective of how much you need to quote directly from texts: at least 80% should be your original thoughts. Evidence is necessary to use to validate your points—make sure your arguments are grounded in the text. Make sure that you cite (using whatever you want, but be consistent) where necessary (after a quote or paraphrase). Overall, be sure that I am never left wondering why a claim you make is true.
4. **Category Errors:** The form of the paper should be worthy of the excellence of the ideas included: don't count on your first draft fulfilling this goal. As such, it is necessary that the paper be **proofread**. Keep in mind, however, that this level of proofreading is necessary but not sufficient for excellent work.
5. **Claims:** A frame around your paragraph, which introduces the reader to the argument that this paragraph intends to make. This makes a judgment that connects two different kinds of terms. This should be your first sentence. Beware of claims embedded in the middle of a paragraph—every claim needs a warrant. An argumentative claim (assertion) and NOT a descriptive claim should begin each paragraph. **Hint:** state claims in terms of what the author is saying/doing and NOT what a character says/does.

**Claim Types:** Identity (x is y), Evaluative (x is good/bad), Comparative (x is better/worse), Analytical (discussion of method).

**Warrants:** These are statements that explain why a claim is true. It continues the line of thought that your claim posits, allowing me to follow why you believe it is true. It often is a **clarification or development** of a phrase within the claim.

**Data:** These are facts, which may be linked to a claim via a warrant. This is **textual** in nature.

**Impacts:** The function of this sentence is to inform me why the paragraph I just read is important to your argument. For it to be important to your argument, make sure it extends your thesis. This can take the form of if/then logic: If x is true, it means ...

**Hypotest:** This functions to test the claim by presupposing the truth of an alternative, then arguing why this alternative is inferior.

In short (and in general): claims refer to authors, interpretation focuses on narrators and characters, impacts apply to the reader.

6. **Intro/Conclusion:** Follow the hourglass model—general intro, narrowing to argument, expanding back out to a conclusion which ties into the introduction. This should contextualize your thesis.

7. **Assistance:** I will answer questions about your paper and will be willing to look over outlines and drafts until three days before the paper is due. This allows time for you to consider any suggestions made during our visit.

8. **Length:** I prefer good writing to fulfilling the page requirements. To condense an answer to the question should require effort and word economy. While I will not *directly* penalize you for falling short of the suggested number of pages, do realize that failing to meet the length suggestion is probably indicative of an incomplete argument. Rather than write in passive voice or include irrelevant paragraphs, I would prefer you talk to me about how to compose a more appropriate topic sentence.

9. **Grading:** I am not a gentle grader, and do not operate under the theory that handing in sheets of paper should be rewarded. My grading policy is to allow you to earn the points that you desire to learn. This means that even if you “work hard” on the paper, when you fail to write according to the guidelines I provide (above), you will **not do well** on the paper assignment. **Not only do I assume that a C is 50%, but I also have no problems giving 1 or 2 points out of 50.**

Please consider your paper carefully before handing it in. As always, however, if you feel that I have been overly critical; **PLEASE TALK TO ME** about it. I am willing to listen to **an argument** about how I misread your paper. Be prepared to be specific in where you feel you deserve more points when providing me with your justifications.

## **Block 4: Finding Faith in a Godless World: The Post-Secular Spirituality of the American Renaissance    Boscaljon**

**Syllabus:** This is a roughly accurate map of the semester; however, I retain the right to alter the syllabus when necessary.

### **Week 1:**

31 October: Introduction: Miller 1: 1-32, Caputo C. 1-2, Dickinson FR236

01 November: Miller 2: 33-52, Taylor 31-53, Franklin Ch. 6, Caputo C. 3-4, Dickinson FR1734

    \*\*Report 1

02 November: Caputo 5, Miller 4: 79-100, Hawthorne "The Celestial Railroad." Dickinson FR849

    \*\*Report 2

03 November: Miller 5: 101-122, Hawthorne, "The Birthmark," "Young Goodman Brown,"

04 November: Miller 6: 123-142, "The Minister's Black Veil," Dickinson FR1581

### **Week 2:**

07 November: Miller 8: (165-198), Dickinson 525, 202, 978

08 November: Emerson :: Nature, The American Scholar, The Divinity School Address

    \*\*Paper 1 Hawthorne and Dickinson (2 Pages)

09 November: Emerson :: The Transcendentalist, Self-Reliance, Compensation

10 November: Emerson :: Spiritual Laws, The Over-Soul, The Poet

11 November: Thoreau 1-96

### **Week 3:**

14 November: Thoreau 97-160

15 November: Thoreau 161-224

16 November: Fuller 3-67

17 November: Fuller 68-156

18 November: Melville Chapters 1-16 (pp. 1-109)

### **Week 4:**

21 November: Melville Chapters 17-29 (pp. 110-222)

    \*\*Paper 2 Emerson and Thoreau (6 Pages)

22 November: Melville Chapters 30-45 (pp. 223-336)

23 November: Final Examination