

Professor Rebecca Entel
Office: 208 South Hall x4225
rentel@cornellcollege.edu

Office Hours:
Weds. & Fri. after class
and by appointment

English 345: Late-Nineteenth-Century American Literature
Romance, Realism, and Social Reform
Block 8-2016 Classroom: Armstrong 24

Can books change the world? During America's "Age of Reform," many authors believed texts could be agents of reform. The late-nineteenth century was also the age in which many authors turned away from Romance and toward Realism, because the "real" world needed to be represented before it could be seen and altered. This course focuses on the relationship between social reform and literary genre. We will interrogate authors' theories about the functions of literature in relation to civic reform as well as the specific reform movements they wrote about and within. We will read critiques of social ills as well as critiques of reformists themselves. Class discussions will focus on authors' models of reform, including the sometimes-problematic relationships between the reformers and those people ostensibly being helped. Many of the texts we will read are among the most well-known – and best-selling – in their own time; we will research the effects these works had both on their societies and on literary history.

This course counts toward the "Efforts to Address Societal Issues" requirement for the Civic Engagement minor. One of our course goals, then, is to apply the study of literature to our engagement with our own world, and we will be exploring the ways nineteenth-century questions are addressed in social justice endeavors of our own time. Katie Wilson of the Civic Engagement office will be working with our class to connect our scholarly questions to current questions about social change.

Through our study of literature, our exploration of larger questions about the relationship between literature and the social world, and our engagement with civic context, our class will address the following educational priorities of the college:

Knowledge: Students will integrate and apply knowledge from a focused area of study as well as a broad general education, which includes disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives in the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences.

Inquiry: Students will respond to the complexities of contemporary and enduring problems using information literacy tools, research skills, creative thinking, and analysis.

Communication: Students will speak and write clearly, listen and read actively, and engage with others in productive dialogue.

Intercultural literacy: Students will connect with diverse ideas and with people whose experiences differ from their own and that may be separated from them by time, space, or culture.

Citizenship: Students will collaborate with others and contribute in their communities and the larger world.

Required Texts:

Ida B. Wells Barnett, *Southern Horrors and Other Writings* (Bedford Cultural Edition required)

Rebecca Harding Davis, *Life in the Iron Mills* (Bedford Cultural Edition required)

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (Bedford Cultural Edition required)

Herman Melville, *Bartleby* (any edition)

Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (any edition that includes photographs)

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Bedford College Edition required)

Readings on Moodle must be printed and brought to class (designated with “M”)

Schedule

- Class will typically meet 1-3 Monday and Wednesday; 9-11 and 1-3 on Tuesday and Thursday; 9-11 on Friday – but note some irregularities in the schedule below.
- Assigned readings are listed on the days they are due.
- This schedule is subject to change; if you miss class, it is your responsibility to find out about any scheduling changes announced in class.

WEEK ONE

M 4/11

1:00 Course Introduction: historical, literary, and theoretical contexts

T 4/12

9:00 Reading time

1:00 Freeman, “A Mistaken Charity” (M) and Melville, *Bartleby*

W 4/13

1:00 Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: Introduction (5-31) and chs. I-VIII

Th 4/14

9:00 Stowe, chs. XL-XLV and Bracher (M)

1:00 Stowe and Bracher, cont.

F 4/15

9:00 Davis, *Life in the Iron Mills* (39-74); Introduction (3-25); “Work and Class” (77-83); Lowell (146-147);

“Factory Life—Romance and Reality” (169-172) “My Experience as a Factory Operative” (172-174);

Turner (174-176); “Social Reform and the Promise of the Dawn” (203-208); Beecher (221-226)

Due: drafts of first papers to Moodle by 9 a.m. Sunday 4/17. Drafts should be as complete as you can make them – i.e. the arc of your argument should be clear. Include a note with questions or areas you’d specifically like feedback on. I will respond via email by Monday morning. *Please note: if you do not turn in a draft by the deadline, you will not receive written feedback before the final version is due.*

WEEK TWO

M 4/18

1:00 Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (40-59); Mitchell (133-150); “Cultural and Historical Background” (3-27);

Barker (180-188); Beard (214-229); Veblen (311-316); Gilman (317-344); “Literary Responses and Literary Culture” (345-347); Gilman (347-351); Howells (352-362)

Recommended: English and Creative Writing Awards Night and Release Party for *Open Field* (7:30 p.m. in Hall-Perrine, with readings, food, and live music)

T 4/19

9:00 Screening of Henry James's *The Bostonians*; Discussion questions (M)

1:00 Discuss *The Bostonians*

Due: first papers to Moodle by 7 p.m.

W 4/20

1:00 Wells-Barnett, Introduction (1-41); *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All its Phases* (49-72)

Th 4/21

9:00 Wells-Barnett, *A Red Record* (73-157); Civic Engagement Assignment (M)

1:00 Time to work on assignment

F 4/22

Reading TBA (M); Groups meet with Katie Wilson, Civic Engagement (in Katie's office in the Commons)

WEEK THREE

M 4/25

1:00 Group pitches for Civic Engagement Assignment

T 4/26

9:00 Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*, pp. TBA

1:00 Guest Speaker: Anne Dugger, Immigrant and Refugee Coordinator at the Catherine McAuley Center

W 4/27

1:00 Riis, pp. TBA and Weinstein (M)

Th 4/28

Research meetings with Jen Rouse/Work on research panels

F 4/29

Panel meetings with Rebecca/Work on research panels

WEEK FOUR

M 5/2

9:00-12:00 Research panels on the effects of reform literature

Due to Moodle by 1:00: annotated bibliography from each panel member

T 5/3

Writing day/office hours

W 5/4

Due: final exams to Moodle by 11 a.m.

Course Policies

Read carefully: you will be held responsible for all policies and requirements. Ask questions if you have them.

Grace Period Policy: Once during the block you are allowed to turn in a written assignment up to 12 hours past the due date. Late work will only be accepted once, so use your grace period wisely. Please let me know if you are using your grace period for an assignment. You may NOT use your grace period for the take-home final exam or for in-class presentations.

Preparation, Participation, Class Etiquette, and Attendance: This class requires faithful preparation, attention, and participation from all of its members. The more you contribute and listen to one another, the more you will learn. Effective participation requires thoughtful preparation: you should be reading and re-reading carefully, taking notes, and formulating ideas and questions about the readings *before* you come to class for discussion. Discussions will be text-based, not opinion-based. Please speak with me during office hours if you are having any trouble preparing for discussion or participating in class.

Make sure your cell phones are turned off and put away and that you eliminate any other distractions that may detract from the class atmosphere. Laptops, tablets, and other devices are not permitted in class unless you have a documented learning disability that requires you to use one. Do not disrupt the class by arriving late.

If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate, to make up assigned work, and to turn in anything that was due that day. Being late to class or not being prepared and engaged may all constitute absences; students falling asleep in class will be asked to leave. You are allowed one “free” absence, for any reason, during the block. Missing two classes will result in a lowered participation grade, regardless of class performance. Missing more than two classes will result in failure of the course. If an illness causes you to fall behind, be in touch with me so we can determine whether you will be able to catch up or whether you will need to take a health withdrawal. Fifteen-day Drops will only be granted according to College policy, which specifies the student has completed all assignments and made a good-faith effort to pass the course.

Email is considered an official mode of communication at Cornell; you are expected to check your email at least once a day and to be attentive to any email you receive about our course. Not responding to emails will affect your grade and missing scheduled appointments – with me, Katie Wilson, or Jen Rouse – will count as absences. If you are having any problems with the course, I strongly encourage you to come talk to me. Please make use of office hours.

Learning Disabilities: Cornell College is committed to providing equal educational opportunities to all students. If you have a documented learning disability and will need any accommodation in this course, you must request the accommodation(s) from me as early as possible and no later than the end of week one. Additional information about the policies and procedures for accommodation of learning disabilities is available at: http://cornellcollege.edu/academic_affairs/disabilities/.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the act of taking the work of another and presenting it as one’s own, without acknowledgement of the original source. This course assumes utmost academic honesty; plagiarism will not be tolerated. Acts of plagiarism will be reported to the College. If you have any questions about your use of others’ work this term, please ask me about citation guidelines and proper use of sources. Our librarians and Writing Consultants are also wonderful resources for questions about the use of sources.

Assignments and Grading

First Paper (1250-1500 words):

Papers must offer a clear thesis supported by close textual analysis, including direct quotations. You do not need to do additional research for this assignment; it focuses on the course texts from week one. Papers should be formatted using MLA in-text parenthetical citation and should include a Works Cited list in MLA format. Please use a standard (easily readable) font and double-space your paper.

Choose one of the following prompts. These prompts are intentionally open-ended; I am happy to offer more guidance as you work. I also encourage you to make use of the Writing Studio.

- Apply Mark Bracher's model for how fiction enables social justice to a fictional text other than *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. How and where do you see the model in action? Does the text depart in any way from the model? How so and what difference does that make in relation to its intended effects on readers? Be specific and precise in your discussion of and application of the model.
- Choose two texts of different genres (nonfiction, fiction, poetry) and compare their approaches to reform. For your two primary texts you may choose two course texts or you may compare one course text to a text of your choice from the volumes we are reading. How do the two models compare and what does each say about the author's view of the purpose(s) of the genre? What aims does each genre seem to propose in addressing reform? Be sure you are analyzing form as well as content.
- Choose one of the following primary texts from the Davis volume and compare its claims about labor to those in *Life in the Iron Mills*: Longfellow (83-85); Glazier (92-97); Weihe and Layton, Senate Testimonies (103-131); Whitman (136-143); Gordon (255-259); Story (312-315); "Art and Artists" (293-299); "The Greek Slave" (319-320); Fields (424-427).

Civic Engagement Component:

Project Pitch for the Civic Engagement Office: See guidelines on assignment sheet (M).

Research Panel Presentation and Annotated Bibliography:

In addition to discussing the ways authors made rhetorical choices to affect social change, you will research whether their texts actually brought about the changes they sought. This research will focus on Davis, Gilman, Riis, or Wells-Barnett. Each of you will read at least 2 scholarly secondary sources, and you will write an annotated bibliography about your sources. (Additional sources are encouraged, and you certainly may have some overlap among your group members.)

You will present your findings in a panel with other students who have researched the same author, just as professors present their work on panels with other scholars working in the same field. We will discuss further the format for the panels, but here are some general guidelines: Your panel presentation should last about 30 minutes, and there will be a 5-minute Question-and-Answer period. You will need to practice your presentation to ensure it is well-organized and that it meets the time requirement; shorter presentations will not exhibit sufficient depth but presentations that exceed the time limit will be cut off to preserve adequate time for all groups. Each member of the group should participate substantially.

Some sources that may serve as starting points will be available on Moodle and on reserve at Cole. You will also have an opportunity to meet with our librarian Jen Rouse for further research guidance. I will provide more information about the requirements for the annotated bibliographies.

The following questions are meant to guide your preparation. As a panel, you will need to make some decisions about the focus of your presentation; for example, you may choose to focus on all of the questions, one, or some – and such decisions may develop in correlation with the fruits of your research. No matter your focus, you will need to give some background on the social ill your work was seeking to redress.

- Did your author succeed in changing society? Research the effects of the literature on the social ill it intended to redress.
- Did the literature have any other consequences beyond (or in addition to) its intended aim? Research the history of the literature – in relation to its social moment and/or its publication history.
- Does your author propose a new way of understanding the relationship between literature and social problems? Research the relationship between the literature and other ways of addressing the relevant social ill (e.g., a presentation on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* might analyze Stowe's novel in relation to the larger antislavery movement).

Take-home final exam:

The exam will require you to bring together readings and class discussions from the entire block, showing mastery of the material and analytical skill in dealing with the material. We will talk more about the expectations for and format of the exam, and I will provide the questions well ahead of the deadline.

Grading:

Civic engagement component: 15%

Participation and contributions to course: 15%

First paper: 25%

Research panel and annotated bibliography: 20%

Take-home final exam: 25%