

Office Hours: Fridays, right after the seminar, Room 314

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This seminar will take a look at the historical, social, and cultural background, from which the period referred to as «American Renaissance» could emerge. Far from being alienated from their context, authors such as Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, and Whitman were also, in large part, created *by* it.

The seminar is divided into three parts: First, it will investigate to what extent canonized authors in the era from 1830 to 1860 utilized modes of stereotyping and how they infused their works with dominant or subversive patterns of aestheticization. The emergence of a «national literature» in this period will be linked to changes in the rhetorical strategies of popular discourse. Second, the course will discuss works written by authors *not* enumerated by Matthiessen (for example, Douglass, Dickinson, and Poe) to explore the interrelationships between these and other texts as far as subversive themes (abolitionism, women's rights, secularity, urbanization, the conservation of nature) are concerned. Third, we will delve into the broad field of popular art and culture to examine the role of painting (The Hudson River School) and mass entertainment (P. T. Barnum's sensational culture).

**Credit requirements:** Regular attendance and thoughtful participation in class (30%), an oral presentation as part of an expert group (25%), and a final paper (45%).

**Required reading:** A course reader is available in the copy-shop at Königin-Luise-Str. Additional texts can be found in Handapparat 24 in the library.

**Seminar papers:** The seminar paper will be 17 to 20 pages long. It will make an original argument about one or more of the «texts» we've been reading, present this argument coherently and logically, and use both close readings and secondary sources to support it. Every paper should include a «works cited» list of at least six secondary sources. **The paper is due September 30, 2006.**

***! Note: There is no extension of this deadline. Late essays will not be accepted!***

## **Syllabus:**

### **21. April 2006**

#### **Introduction: What's Beneath the American Renaissance?**

Introductory texts: David Reynolds, Introduction to *Beneath the American Renaissance* (1989): 3-11.  
Jonathan Arac, «F.O. Matthiessen: Authorizing an American Renaissance» (1985): 90-112.

### **28. April 2006**

#### **Fashionable Science: Thomas Cole (Hudson River School Pt I)**

Read and prepare: Rebecca B. Bedell, «Thomas Cole and the Fashionable Science» (2001): 17-45.

### **05. May 2006**

#### **Emerson and the Discovery of the Self**

Read and prepare: Ralph Waldo Emerson, «Self-Reliance» (1841): 1160-1176.  
Secondary text: Jay Grossman, «Re-reading Emerson» xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

### **12. May 2006**

#### **Poe's Literary Journeys into the Dark**

Read and prepare: Edgar Allan Poe, «The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym» (1838): Ch. I-II, XXIII-XXV.  
Secondary text: Jared Gardner, «Poe's 'Incredible Adventures and Discoveries Still Farther South' » (1998): 125-159.

### **19. May 2006**

#### **Hawthorne's Negative Romanticism**

Read and prepare: Nathaniel Hawthorne, «Rappaccini's Daughter» (1844): 1313-1333.  
Secondary texts: David S. Reynolds, «Hawthorne's Heroines» (1989): 369-386.  
H. Melville, «Hawthorne and His Mosses» (1850): 2714-2726.

### **26. May 2006**

#### **Slavery and the Rewriting of Race**

Read and prepare: Frederick Douglass, «Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass» (1845): Ch.1-II, IX-XI.  
Secondary text: Jared Gardner, «Douglass and the Rewriting of American Race» (1998): 160-185.

### **02. June 2006** **Double Session**

#### **Sensational Designs: Commercialism and Subversion** **2 p.m. – 6 p.m. !!**

Pt I:  
Read and prepare: Susan Warner, *The Wide, Wide World* (1850): Ch. III, LII.  
Secondary text: Jane Tompkins, «The Other American renaissance» (1985): 34-57.

Pt II:  
Read and prepare: Robert Bogdan, «Step Right Up: The World of Popular Entertainment» (1988): 69-93.

Secondary text: David S. Reynolds, «The Sensational Press and the Rise of Subversive Literature» (1989): 169-211.

**16. June 2006**

**Whitman's Vision of American Democracy**

Read and prepare: Walt Whitman, «Calamus» (from *Leaves of Grass*) (1892): 92-109.

Secondary text: Allen Grossman, «The Poetics of Unionin Whitman and Lincoln: An Inquiry toward the Relationship of Art and Policy» (1985): 183-208.

**23. June 2006**

**Transcendental Utopias**

Read and prepare: George Ripley, «Introductory Statement to the Revised Constitution of Brook Farm» (1844): 392-396.

Secondary text: Richard Francis, «Brook Farm: The Law of Groups and Series» (1997): 67-99.

**30. June 2006**

**Therapeutic Landscape (A. Durand, Hudson River School Pt II)**

Read and prepare: Rebecca Bailey Bedell, «Asher Durand and the Therapeutic Landscape» (2001): 47-65.

**07. July 2006**  
**Double session**

**Educational Enterprise: Frederic Church and Emily Dickinson**  
**2 p.m. – 6 p.m. !!**

Pt I:  
Read and prepare: Rebecca Bailey Bedell, «Frederic Church and the Educational Experience» (2001): 67-83.

Pt II:  
Read and prepare: Emily Dickinson, Poems (1862/1863): 2516-2525.

Secondary text: David S. Reynolds, «The American Women's Renaissance and Emily Dickinson» (1989): 387-437.

**21. July 2006**

**Final discussion: After the American Renaissance**

Read and prepare: Herman Melville, «Billy Budd, Sailor» (1891/1921): Ch. 1-3, 24-30.  
Secondary text: Michael Paul Rogin, «The Somers Mutiny and *Billy Budd*: Melville in the Penal Colony» (1983): 288-316.

— **Final Paper due September 30, 2006** —

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