

English 219  
Melville  
Professor Michael Drexler  
MWF 12 – 12:52  
Office: 202 VL  
[mdrexler@bucknell.edu](mailto:mdrexler@bucknell.edu)

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19th-century Americans were fueled with ambition. They were also fueled by whale oil, the first indispensable industrial product that the United States came to dominate. But toward mid-century, America had also become tension-plagued and increasingly sectionalized over slavery. And despite the spread of evangelical Christianity and the birth of new, rapidly growing sects (like the Mormons), faith ran head square into humankind's will and power to alter and even remake the world. This was Herman Melville's world, and few were as well positioned to witness, respond, and reimagine as he. Having sailed the S. Pacific on a whaler in his 20s, Melville had begun to appreciate how the hunt for leviathan might shake the foundations of creation. With a capacious imagination and a drive to be the greatest of American writers, Melville courageously plumbed the depths of the sea, gauged the strength of the American people, and tested it all in the cauldron of being. He knew he had undertaken a Herculean task: "Give me a condor's quill! Give me Vesuvius' crater for an inkstand!" Melville did not stand outside his times, but few were as conscious of living its contradictions. In this course, we explore the art of Herman Melville from his earliest sea narratives, through his masterpiece (unappreciated in his lifetime) *Moby-Dick*, and to his epic poetry and heart-rending swan-song, "Billy Budd."

#### Humanities--Textual Analysis and Interpretation

Students will interpret texts with awareness of the texts' basic orientation in the world and will be able to construct arguments about the genre using evidence and tools of critical analysis current in English Studies. Students will be encouraged to respond creatively and personally to course materials.

#### Learning Goals and Requirements Fulfilled:

English 284 counts toward the English Major as a general credit.<sup>1</sup> It fulfills the Arts and Humanities Learning Goal (AHLG) for the CCC.<sup>2</sup> For students in the College of Engineering, this course counts toward the humanities requirement (EGHU). English 220 is also a W2.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In this course, we pursue all four of the English department's learning goals. Students will learn:

- (1) to analyze a variety of texts and respond to their aesthetic and cultural value,
- (2) to respond to a wide range of literary texts and understand their historical and cultural contexts,
- (3) to articulate ideas effectively in discussion and in oral presentations, and
- (4) to write gracefully, coherently, imaginatively, and persuasively, with proper attention to effective organization.

<sup>2</sup>AHLG courses focus on disciplinary perspectives in the arts and humanities. In this type of AHLG course, the emphasis is on textual interpretation (rather than creation of literary texts). Such courses deepen students' skills in (1) interpreting texts with awareness of the texts' basic orientation in the world (historical, philosophical, religious, linguistic, etc.), (2) constructing arguments and evaluating canons using appropriate evidence and tools of critical analysis, and (3) developing an appreciation of the fundamental ambiguities and complexities involved in all human attempts to answer questions about knowledge, values, and life.

<sup>3</sup>The Writing Program aims to develop students' mastery of written language. As a W2 course, English 220 will include: 1. Writing instruction; 2. Support of the writing process; 3. Teaching of the techniques of writing needed or expected in the discipline; 4. Frequent and substantial writing; and 5. The use of writing assignments to teach the subject matter.

Participation: Participation will be evaluated continuously. Engaging in class discussion both in the whole and in groups is mandatory. You will be called on frequently to discuss your views. 20% of the final grade.

#### Attendance Policy

Miss more than 6 classes for any reason and fail the course. At my discretion, I will issue a warning about

your attendance. After that warning, all future absences will lower your final grade 1/3 of a letter.

### Assignments

Daily response or close reading journals. Two short papers, 3-5 pages. One research bibliography. One final paper, 8-10 pages. Frequent in class, low stakes writing assignments and/or homework. Ad hoc oral presentations. Everyone will be expected to revise his or her work.

### Grades

I will assign grades to each of your assignments only after the revision process is complete. You will make an appointment with me to discuss your work after each major assignment. You will also meet with me to plan, outline, and work on your final writing project. My GA, Stephanie Scherer, will also be available to meet with you to work on your writing. Please use the Writing Center or BALL (English graduate student writing center). Grammatical errors must be corrected before a grade will be assigned.

### Course Materials

Please purchase the assigned editions of Melville's works. These are listed at the bookstore. I don't care if you buy them there or online.

Delbanco, *Herman Melville and His World*

Philbrick, *Why Read Moby-Dick?*

Melville, Library of America edition

**Plagiarism:** plagiarism is the unauthorized use of someone else's words or ideas. Calling someone else's work your own is a serious academic offense that will result in referral to the Board of Review on Academic Responsibility.

**Student Work:** assignments must be completed and submitted in the format indicated for the individual assignment on the syllabus.

**Class Cancellation Policy:** In the unlikely event due to emergency, I will contact you via email. In addition, I will contact you as soon as possible following the cancellation to let you know what will be expected of you for our next class meeting.

**Course Communication:** I can be contacted best through email, and I respond to emails from 9am to 5pm. I will do my best to respond to emails within 36 hours, i.e. no later than the next business day, but this is not always possible.

### Access Statement

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss the specific needs. Please contact Heather Fowler, Director of the Office of Accessibility Resources at [570-577-1188](tel:570-577-1188) or [hf007@bucknell.edu](mailto:hf007@bucknell.edu) who will help coordinate reasonable accommodations for those students with documented disabilities.

	date	To be Completed before Class	Deadlines
Wed	14-Jan	Intro—Melville and Evidence	
Fri	16-Jan	Hawthorne, " <a href="#">Young Goodman Brown</a> " Delbanco 3-36	
Mon	19-Jan	Melville, " <a href="#">Hawthorne and his Mosses</a> " Poe, " <a href="#">The Black Cat</a> " Delbanco, 37-58	

Wed	21-Jan	Melville, " <a href="#">Hawthorne and his Mosses</a> " Poe, " <a href="#">The Black Cat</a> " Delbanco, 59-86	
Fri	23-Jan	<i>Typee</i>	
Mon	26-Jan	<i>Typee</i>	
Wed	28-Jan	<i>Typee</i>	Short Essay #1 Due in Class
Fri	30-Jan	<i>Typee</i>	
Mon	2-Feb	Workshop	
Wed	4-Feb	<i>Moby-Dick</i> , all prefatory material and chs 1-5 Freud, from <a href="#">Civilization and Its Discontents</a> , 33-69	
Fri	6-Feb	<i>Moby-Dick</i> , chs 6-8 Philbrick	
Mon	9-Feb	<i>Moby-Dick</i> , chs 9 Philbrick, continues	
Wed	11-Feb	<i>Moby-Dick</i> , chs 10-15 Delbanco, 87-121	
Fri	13-Feb	<i>Moby-Dick</i> , chs 16-25	
Mon	16-Feb	<i>Moby-Dick</i> , 26-42 Delbanco, 122-148	
Wed	18-Feb	<i>Moby-Dick</i> , chs 43-53	
Fri	20-Feb	<i>Moby-Dick</i> , ch 54	
Mon	23-Feb	Workshop	
Wed	25-Feb	<i>Moby-Dick</i> , chs 55-69 (esp 61, 64, 66) Delbanco, 179-236	
Fri	27-Feb	<i>Moby-Dick</i> , chs 70-90	
Mon	2-Mar	<i>Moby-Dick</i> , chs 91-109 Delbanco, 237-314	
Wed	4-Mar	<i>Moby-Dick</i> , chs, 110-119	
Fri	6-Mar	<i>Moby-Dick</i> , chs 120-135 Delbanco, 149-175	Short Essay #2 Due in Class
Mon	9-Mar		
Wed	11-Mar		
Fri	13-Mar		
Mon	16-Mar	Selections from <i>Pierre</i>	

Wed	18-Mar	Selections from <i>Israel Potter</i>	
Fri	20-Mar	<i>Bartleby, the Scrivener</i>	
Mon	23-Mar	<i>Benito Cereno</i>	
Wed	25-Mar	<i>Benito Cereno</i>	
Fri	27-Mar	<i>Benito Cereno</i>	
Mon	30-Mar	Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"	
Wed	1-Apr	Poe, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"	
Fri	3-Apr	Meet in Library Computer Lab	
Mon	6-Apr		Final Paper Proposal
Wed	8-Apr	<i>Billy Budd, Sailor</i>	
Fri	10-Apr	<i>Billy Budd, Sailor</i>	
Mon	13-Apr	<i>Billy Budd, Sailor</i>	Final Paper Outline with Bibliography
Wed	15-Apr	Civil War poetry, selections from <i>Battle Pieces</i>	
Fri	17-Apr	<i>The Confidence Man, His Masquerade</i>	
Mon	20-Apr	<i>The Confidence Man, His Masquerade</i>	Final Paper Draft Due
Wed	22-Apr	<i>The Confidence Man, His Masquerade</i>	
Fri	24-Apr	<i>The Confidence Man, His Masquerade</i>	
Mon	27-Apr	Workshop	Final Paper Due next Monday