

ENG 770: Seminar in American Literature I
Literature, Technology, and Media in 19th Century America

ENG 770, Spring 2014

Professor: Dr. Craig Carey

Office: Liberal Arts Building 342

Time: Monday 6:30 – 9:15 PM, LAB 346

Email: craig.carey@usm.edu

Office Hours: TTH 2:30-3:30, M 3-4, & by appt.

Course Description

This seminar investigates the relationship between literature and technology in the 19th century. Moving from Emerson to Edison, we'll consider how literature reflects, registers, and responds to changing media conditions and the emergence of modern communications in America. We'll begin by considering the recent technical turn in the humanities and its implications for literary study. How does recent scholarly attention on mediation and the formal technics of knowledge open new possibilities for understanding literature and literary history, specifically in a century marked by unprecedented advances in telegraphy, photography, phonography, cinematography, typography, and other techniques of writing and representation? By situating literary texts in the context of media history, the seminar will be organized around two related questions: first, what is the relationship between literary innovation and media invention in 19th century America; and second, what does it actually mean to approach literature as one medium among others? Related to these questions, we'll also consider how today's digital media continues to throw the past into relief, liberating our reading, as Derrida famously puts it, "for a retrospective exploration of the past resources of paper, for its *previously* multimedia vectors."

Required Texts

- All PDFs and links (PDFs available for download in a shared Google folder)
- Edgar Allan Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of Seven Gables* (Norton Critical Edition)
- Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*
- Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*
- Stephen Crane, *The Monster*
- Henry James, *In the Cage*
- Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*
- Ambrose Bierce, *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*
- *Critical Terms for Media Studies*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell and Mark B.N. Hansen
- *Thomas Edison and Modern America*, ed. Theresa M. Collins and Lisa Gitelman

Grade Breakdown

Attendance/Participation	20%
Reading Responses	20%
In Class Presentation	10%
Final Seminar Paper	50%

Course Requirements

- Active and consistent participation in the seminar discussions
- One short presentation (accompanied by a short handout) that critically synthesizes one of the assigned secondary readings for the week. Copies of the handout should be provided for all participants. Please email me a copy of the handout before class. Handouts should be divided into the following sections:
 - Keywords: A list of the basic terms, concepts, phrases, metaphors, etc.
 - Brief Abstract: A one paragraph description and synthesis of the reading
 - Notes on Argument: A few bullet point, critical observations about the argument
 - Context: Comments on the broader context or conversation in which the reading intervenes (literary, historical, methodological, theoretical, etc.)
 - So What?: A brief synthesis of its critical application. How can it help us read the primary text? What's your critical takeaway from the article?
 - Discussion Questions: A few questions about the text and how it connects to the primary reading for the week (or other readings in the seminar).
- Four reading responses, one of which should to be turned in during our first class meeting on January 27 (you may respond to any of the readings from Week 1-3). These responses should be about 500 to 750 words and should be exploratory, critical responses to one or some combination of the week's readings. While less formal than a paper, they should be sharp, focused, and thesis-driven. You might think of them as experiments where you test out an idea, pursue its implications through analysis and example, and suggest a beginning to a possible argument. One might become the seed to your final paper.
- A short proposal or prospectus (500 words) that works through the direction of your paper. In this proposal, you should try to articulate the central question or problem your paper will try to address; outline the historical, theoretical, or methodological debates in which it will intervene; and indicate some of the types and range of historical/textual sources it will draw on to make that intervention. You should also append a working bibliography of relevant texts. You may also wish to add your own comments and responses to your bibliography, creating an informal *annotated* bibliography. **Due on April 14.**
- An article-length paper (18-25 pages) on some issue or text related to the seminar.

Guidelines and Policies

1. Attendance and promptness are mandatory. Students absent more than 1 time will have their overall course grade lowered by 5 percentage points for each subsequent absence irrespective of the reason for the absences. Students who fail to attend class regularly—for whatever reason—should drop the course by the college's withdrawal deadline of October 5.

2. Plagiarism (failure to cite sources, representing others' material as your own) is not allowed. Any instance of plagiarism, however extensive the amount of material involved, will result in a failing grade for the course.

3. All assignments composed for the course must be original work. Students may not submit work also submitted for another course.
4. Unless special arrangements are made in advance, 5 percentage points will be deducted each calendar day for late assignments. No assignment will be accepted more than one week after the due date.
5. All assignments completed outside of class must be typed or word-processed on white paper, double-spaced, using a 12-point, Times New Roman font. Margins should be 1 inch on all sides. Students must follow either MLA or Chicago guidelines for submitting all papers.
6. Since this class will usually operate as a discussion course, class participation is absolutely essential to its success. Students are expected to come to class prepared, having read **all** of the readings **completely** and given them careful thought. Students are required to bring all major reading assignments to class, arrive on time and stay for the entire class, appear attentive, and demonstrate courtesy to both classmates and the instructor.
7. This course is reading and writing intensive. Grading standards will be rigorous. To receive an A or B for the course, students must demonstrate 1) extensive engagement with the course content through written work and class participation, 2) sophisticated, critical, and creative thinking, 3) a clear proficiency in academic written English, and 4) a growing familiarity and comfort with the concepts and methodologies discussed during the semester.

Statement on Disability Assistance

This course follows all university regulations for students with disabilities. If a student has a disability that qualifies under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and requires accommodations, he/she should contact the Office for Disability Accommodations (ODA) for information on appropriate policies and procedures. Disabilities covered by ADA may include learning, psychiatric, physical disabilities, or chronic health disorders. Students can contact ODA if they are not certain whether a medical condition/disability qualifies.

Address: The University of Southern Mississippi
 Office for Disability Accommodations
 118 College Drive # 8586
 Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Telephone: (601) 266-5024 or (228) 214-3232 *Fax:* (601) 266-6035

Individuals with hearing impairments can contact ODA using the *Mississippi Relay Service* at 1-800-582-2233 (TTY) or email Suzy Hebert at Suzanne.Hebert@usm.edu.

Calendar of Class Meetings and Reading Schedule

Week 1 - Terminology and Keywords

January 13 No class meeting. Participation via discussion board.

Secondary Readings

- OED Definitions of “Technology” and “Medium”
- Marx, Leo. “Technology: The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept.” *Technology and Culture* 51, no. 3 (2010): 561–577.
- Raymond Williams, “Materialism,” “Mechanical,” “Media,” and “Mediation.” In *Keywords: a Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Marshall McLuhan, excerpts from *Understanding Media* (1964) and “Is it Natural that one Medium Should Appropriate and Exploit Another?” (1967)
- W.J.T. Mitchell and Mark B.N. Hansen, “Introduction,” *Critical Terms for Media Studies*

Week 2 - Literature, Materiality, and Methodology

January 20 No class meeting (MLK). Participation via discussion board.
Herman Melville, “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids” (1855)

Secondary Readings

- Bill Brown, “Materiality,” *Critical Terms for Media Studies*
- Kafka, Ben. “From the Desk of Roland Barthes: Putting Mater (and Pater) Back in Materialism.” *West 86th* 18, no. 2 (September 2011): 208–213.
- Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich. “A Farewell to Interpretation.” In *Materialities of Communication*, edited by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Karl Ludwig Pfeiffer, trans. by William Whobrey, 389–402. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.
- Best, Stephen, and Sharon Marcus. “Surface Reading: An Introduction.” *Representations* 108, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 1–21.
- McGill, Meredith L., and Andrew Parker. “The Future of the Literary Past.” *PMLA* 125, no. 4 (October 2010): 959–967.
- Recommended: Heather Love. “Close but Not Deep: Literary Ethics and the Descriptive Turn.” *New Literary History* 41, no. 2 (2010): 371–391.

Week 3 - The Nineteenth Century

January 27 Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*

Secondary Readings

- *Gitelman, Lisa. “Mississippi MSS: Twain, Typing, and the Moving Panorama of Literary Production.” In *Residual Media*, edited by Charles R Acland, 329–343. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

- Colligan, Colette, and Margaret Linley, "Introduction: The Nineteenth-Century Invention of Media." In *Media, Technology, and Literature in the Nineteenth Century (The Nineteenth Century Series)*. Ed. Colette Colligan and Margaret Linley. Burlington: Ashgate, 2011.
- Recommended: Williams, James C. "The American Industrial Revolution." In *A Companion to American Technology*, edited by Carroll W Pursell. Oxford: Blackwell, 2008.

Week 4 - The Technology of Writing

February 3 Edgar Allan Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*

Secondary Readings

- *James Gleick, "The Persistence of the Word" from *The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2011.
- Vilém Flusser, from *Does Writing Have a Future?* Ed. Mark Poster. Translated by Nancy Ann Roth. Electronic Mediations v. 33. University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
- Recommended: Walter Ong, "Writing Restructures Consciousness." *Orality and Literacy*

Week 5 - Haunted Media

February 10 Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of Seven Gables*

Secondary Readings

- *Sconce, Jeffrey. "Mediums and Media." In *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television*. Duke University Press, 2000.
- Excerpts from "Daguerreotype and Other Technologies," pp. 293-303 in *Seven Gables*

Week 6 - Photographic Spirits

February 17 Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of Seven Gables*

Secondary Readings

- *Oliver Wendell Holmes, "[The Stereoscope and the Stereograph](#)"
- John Durham Peters, excerpt from "Phantasms of the Living, Dialogues with the Dead." *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*. U of Chicago, 2001.

Week 7 - Discourse Networks

February 24 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"
Kate Chopin, "The Story of an Hour"

Secondary Readings

- *Wellbery, David E. "Foreword." In *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, by Friedrich A. Kittler, translated by Michael Metteer and Chris Cullens. Stanford University Press, 1990.
- Friedrich A. Kittler, Selections from *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*.

- Sybille Kramer, “The Cultural Techniques of Time Axis Manipulation: On Friedrich Kittler’s Conception of Media,” *Theory, Culture, & Society* 23, no. 7-8, 93-109.
- Wolfgang Schivelbusch, Ch. 8, “The Accident” and Ch. 9 “Railroad Accident, ‘Railway Spine’ and Traumatic Neurosis,” from *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century*

Week 8 - Writing Machines in the Age of Edison

March 3 *Thomas Edison and Modern America*, ed. Theresa M. Collins and Lisa Gitelman
Edward Bellamy, “With the Eyes Shut” (1898)

Secondary Readings

- *Friedrich A. Kittler, “Preface” and “Introduction.” In *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. Trans. by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz. Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Lisa Gitelman, “Introduction: Writing Things Down, Storing Them Up” from *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era*. Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Recommended: Lisa Gitelman, “Automatic Writing” from *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era*.

Week 9 - Spring Break

March 10 No class (Spring Break)

Week 10 - Media Spectacles: Lights, Camera, Action!

March 17 Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*

Secondary Readings

- *Gunning, Tom. “Re-Newing Old Technologies: Astonishment, Second Nature, and the Uncanny in Technology from the Previous Turn-of-the-Century.” In *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, edited by David Thorburn, Henry Jenkins, and Brad Seawell, 39–60. MIT Press, 2004.

Week 11 - Bodies, Affect, and Sensual Media

March 24 Ambrose Bierce, *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*

Secondary Readings

- *Bernadette Wegenstein, “Body,” *Critical Terms for Media Studies*
- Caroline Jones, “Senses,” *Critical Terms for Media Studies*
- Recommended: Carey, Craig. “<A> and : Marks, Maps, Media, and the Materiality of Ambrose Bierce’s Style.” *American Literature* 85, no. 4 (December 1, 2013): 629–660.

Week 12 - Typewriters and Telegraphs

March 31 Henry James, *In the Cage*

Secondary Readings

- Thomas A. Edison, [*The Telegraph in America \(1879\)*](#). Read the first 5 sections.
- *Schilleman, Matthew. "Typewriter Psyche: Henry James's Mechanical Mind." *Journal of Modern Literature* 36, no. 3 (2013): 14–30.
- Recommended: Richard Menke, "'Framed and Wired': Teaching 'In the Cage' at the Intersection of Literature and Media" *The Henry James Review* 25 (2004): 33-43.

Week 13 - The Powers of Electricity

April 7 Frank Baum, *The Master Key: An Electrical Fairy Tale*

Secondary Readings

- Nikola Tesla, [*"On Electricity"*](#)
- *Nye, David E. "What was Electricity?" In *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology, 1880-1940*. MIT Press, 1992.

Week 14 - White Lights, Black Shadows

April 14 Stephen Crane, *The Monster*
Proposal and Working Bibliography Due

Secondary Readings

- *Naito, Jonathan Tadashi. "Cruel and Unusual Light: Electricity and Effacement in Stephen Crane's *The Monster*." *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory* 62, no. 1 (2006): 35–63.
- Recommended: Marvin, Carolyn. "Dazzling the Multitude: Original Media Spectacles." In *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century*. Reprint. Oxford University Press, USA, 1990.

Week 15 - Weaving the New Woman

April 21 Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*

Secondary Readings

- *Plant, Sadie. "Feminisations: Reflections on Women and Virtual Reality" and "The Future Looms: Weaving Women and Cybernetics." In *Clicking in: Hot Links to a Digital Culture*. Seattle: Bay Press, 1996.
- Recommended: Ingold, Tim. "Making Culture and Weaving the World." In *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture*, ed. Paul Graves-Brown, 50–71. Routledge, 2000.

Week 16 - Paper Presentations

April 28 Paper Presentations

May 5 Final Paper Due