



## Melville and Monotheism

Professor Michael Drexler  
MW 3 – 4:22p  
Coleman 150

Office: 233 Vaughan Lit  
Office Hours: TBA

19<sup>th</sup>-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 headsquare 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 an 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.

### **Disciplinary Depth**

Melville and Monotheism is an approved W2 writing course.

### **For English Majors/Minors**

Melville and Monotheism fulfills the English Department Enlightenment and 19<sup>th</sup> Century requirement. Under the old major, the course fulfills the 19<sup>th</sup> Century requirement.

### **Graded Work**

Four short papers (2-4 pages). Topics will be discussed and/or assigned in class at least a week before the assignment is due. Each paper will count toward 10% of the final grade (total=40%).

Two substantial essays (6-8 pages). Topics to be determined between students and professor and based on work done on the shorter paper assignments and writing exercises. Each essay is worth 25% of the final grade (total=50%). Students will revise their work after individual appointments or in-class peer editing sessions. Revised grades will count double the initial grade. (Grade on first draft + Grade on revised draft x 2) divided by 3.

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. 10% 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.

### **Course Materials**

Works by Herman Melville, it is important that you get the correct edition of these texts (all available at the Bookstore)

*Typee*, Penguin

*Moby Dick*, Longman

Melville's Short Novels, W. W. Norton

*Clarel*, Northwestern UP

Delbanco, *Herman Melville and His World*

Philbrick, *The Loss of the Ship Essex*, Penguin

Reserve Readings and Supplemental Handouts

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Written work</b>
Wed	22-Aug	Loomings	
Mon	27-Aug	Film Delbanco, 3-36	
Wed	29-Aug	Film	

		Delbanco, 37-58	
Mon	3-Sep	<i>Essex</i> , Introduction thru 9 Delbanco, 59-86	Short essay #1 Due in Class
Wed	5-Sep	<i>Essex</i> , Chase's Narrative, 13-72	
Mon	10-Sep	<i>Typee</i> , 1-122	
Wed	12-Sep	<i>Typee</i> , 123-152	
Mon	17-Sep	<i>Typee</i> , 153-199 Freud, from <a href="#"><u>Civilization and Its Discontents</u></a> , 33-69	Short Essay #2 Due in Class
Wed	19-Sep	<i>Typee</i> , 199-258 Delbanco, 87-121	
Mon	24-Sep	<a href="#"><u>"Hawthorne and His Mosses"</u></a> <i>Moby Dick</i> , 7-44	
Wed	26-Sep	<i>Moby Dick</i> , 45-100	
Mon	1-Oct	<i>Moby Dick</i> , 101-178 Delbanco, 122-148	
Wed	3-Oct	<i>Moby Dick</i> , 179-236	
Mon	8-Oct	<b>FALL BREAK</b>	
Wed	10-Oct	<i>Moby Dick</i> , 237-314	Paper #1 Due in Class
Mon	15-Oct	<i>Moby Dick</i> , 315-370 Delbanco, 149-175	
Wed	17-Oct	<i>Moby Dick</i> , 371-462	
Mon	22-Oct	<i>Moby Dick</i> , 463-500	
Wed	24-Oct	<i>Bartleby, the Scrivener</i>	Short Essay #3 Due in Class
Mon	29-Oct	<i>Benito Cereno</i>	
Wed	31-Oct		
Mon	5-Nov	<i>Clarel</i> , Book 1 Delbanco, 244-287	
Wed	7-Nov		

Mon 12-Nov *Clarel*, Book 2

Wed 14-Nov *Clarel*, Book 3

Mon 19-Nov *Clarel*, Book 4

Paper #2 Due in Class

Wed 21-Nov  
Fri 23-Nov Thanksgiving Vacation

Mon 26-Nov *Billy Budd*

Wed 28-Nov *Billy Budd*

Mon 3-Dec *Conclusion*

Short Essay #4 Due in Class