

**The Alternative American Renaissance
Senior Seminar**

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Course Description:

The American Renaissance (1830 – 1865) is widely considered the birth of American Literature, constructed by such canonical authors such as Cooper, Melville, and Hawthorne, but it was primarily a time of revolt. Also known as the Era of Social Reform, this immensely important period in history witnessed the uprisings of (Unit 1) Native Americans, (Unit 2) slaves, and (Unit 3) women who demanded greater civil rights. This class, which I'm calling the Alternative American Renaissance, explores those revolts and the writers behind them. To explore these subjects, we will read stories about a slave insurrection; a free Black citizen kidnapped into slavery and sold South; a romance involving a young colonist who "goes native" after her family is attacked by Indians; and the autobiography of a Native American minister. Some of the questions these texts will raise include: What is "American" about the American renaissance? How can literature inspire political change? How has the myth of American exceptionalism and the idealization of the frontier permeated our culture today?

Learning Objectives:

- Demonstrate ability to discuss, present, and write about themes surrounding the American Renaissance
- Demonstrate ability to evaluate key concepts in early American studies, including: gender, race, class, nationality, genre, and context.
- Engage in the professional scholarly process of researching and writing a critical research essay
- Demonstrate proficiency in a digital literacy project that relates to this course

Texts:

1. *Norton Anthology of American Literature, 1820-1865* (volume B)
2. Crafts, Hannah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Bondswoman's Narrative*. New York: Warner Books, 2003.
3. Northup, Solomon and Sue Eakin. *Twelve Years a Slave*. The Woodlands, TX: Telemachus P, 2013.
4. Apess, William. *A Son of the Forest and Other Writings*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1997.
5. Sedgwick, Catharine Maria. *Hope Leslie*. New York: Penguin, 1998.
6. Fern, Fanny. *Ruth Hall*. New York: Penguin, 1997.

Grades:

- Daily Grades (Quizzes & Reading Responses): 15%
- Research Paper: 35%
- Digital Humanities Project: 15%
- Exams: 30%
- Participation: 5%

Digital Humanities (DH) Project & Paper:

The DH Project will provide students the opportunity to research a text from one of the three units of the course and annotate it via a digital platform using peer-reviewed research. The research and the construction of the annotations will provide the foundation for the final research paper, a 15 to 20 page assignment that allows the students to formulate an argument concerning literature of the American Renaissance.