COURSE OVERVIEW
This course surveys novels written and published in the United States through the first half of the nineteenth century. We will study the novel as part of a field of literary production in dialogue with European models, expressive of changes in national culture, and engaged with the increasingly imperialist tendency of the United States itself. Throughout our reading, we will trace the ways these novels both reflect and participate in the historical development of the United States during a period that spans state formation, the consolidation of northern capitalism and an exacerbated North/South division, expansion into Mexico and the Pacific, and civil war. Through close attention to literary form, we will continually pose the question, What is the relationship between literary culture and historical change? We will examine who was writing, for whom they wrote, and the situation—political, commercial—in which “the American novel” was produced and consumed.

REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES
Reading. Complete the reading assignments before each session, and arrive with a handful of points for discussion. For sessions in which only secondary reading is assigned, please selectively reread the main text: the point of the secondary reading is not to provide a break from the novels, but rather to lend fresh energy to our readings. Similarly, take advantage of lulls in the schedule to read ahead: each week’s reading assignments should not be overwhelming, but they are substantial, and you will want to plan your time. Read the introductions to the novels before our first session on each book, even though I have explicitly noted only one (for Wieland) as a topic of discussion on the reading schedule. “Recommended” secondary readings are not required, but it will be much to your advantage to read them (or, if pressed for time, to skim them).

Writing. Weekly memos (1-2pp.) providing a close reading of a passage from the week’s novel. These serve several purposes: first, they will spur you to engage closely with the language of the novels, and to pay attention to syntax, style, and the microdynamics of plotting and characterization; second, they will supply you with fodder for our discussions (and “data” with which to support your in-class claims about the books); third, and least interestingly, they will constitute a portion of your grade: the thirteen memos, adequately written, will amount to an “A” for 25% of your grade.

In addition, you will write either two short essays (5-7pp.) or one longer essay (12-15pp.) on a subject to be determined in consultation with me. This assignment will constitute 75% of your grade (so, if you choose to write two essays, each will be worth 37.5% of the total grade). These essays may develop in various directions, but they should be based on close analysis of the text(s) at hand. I will provide some general bibliographical guides for further reading that may prove useful.

Attendance, participation, deadlines. I assume that you will arrive to class on time and prepared to actively participate in our discussions, and therefore “class participation” is not a formal part of the grade for this course. More than three absences will be grounds for failing the course. All due dates are firm.
**Students with disabilities.** It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services and making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible (during the second week of the semester) so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at [www.wesleyan.edu/deans/disability-students.html](http://www.wesleyan.edu/deans/disability-students.html).

**TEXTS (available at Broad Street Books):**

- Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte Temple* (London, 1791; Philadelphia, 1794)
- Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland* (1798)
- James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pioneers* (1823)
- Fanny Fern, *Ruth Hall* (1855)
- Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851)
- Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (1851)
- Martin Delany, *Blake; or, The Huts of America* (1861-62)

A course reader, available from Pip Printing, 344 Main St. **Order the reader online at [www.pipmid.com](http://www.pipmid.com).** Click on the course-book icon, and complete the order form. You can save your username and password for future orders. Course readers will be ready for pickup one workday after you place your order.**

**SCHEDULE**

**Week 1**

WEDNESDAY, 9/3 – Introduction: Genre and history  

**Week 2 – The Power of Sympathy**

MONDAY, 9/8 – Read the entire novel for this session.

WEDNESDAY, 9/10 – Secondary reading: Cathy N. Davidson, from *Revolution and the Word*

**Week 3 – Charlotte Temple**

MONDAY, 9/15 – Read the entire novel for this session.
WEDNESDAY, 9/17 – Secondary reading: Julia Stern, from *The Plight of Feeling*

**Week 4 – Wieland 1**
MONDAY, 9/22 – Read through p.136 for this session.

WEDNESDAY, 9/24 – Finish the novel (*Wieland* only) for this session.

**Week 5 – Wieland 2**
MONDAY, 9/29 – Secondary reading: Jay Fliegelman, introduction

WEDNESDAY, 10/1 – Secondary reading: Nancy Ruttenburg, from *Democratic Personality*

**Week 6 – *The Pioneers* 1 (if you are writing two short papers, MEET WITH ME this week)**
MONDAY, 10/6 – Read through p.178 for this session.

WEDNESDAY, 10/8 – Read through p.250 for this session.

**Week 7 – *The Pioneers* 2**
MONDAY, 10/13 – Finish the novel for this session. Secondary reading: Georg Lukács, from *The Historical Novel*; Ian Duncan, “*Waverley*”

WEDNESDAY, 10/15 – Secondary reading: George Dekker, from *The American Historical Romance*; Richard Slotkin, from *Regeneration through Violence*

FRIDAY, 10/17 – (for students writing two essays) FIRST ESSAY DUE IN BOX OUTSIDE MY OFFICE.

**Week 8 – *Ruth Hall***
MONDAY, 10/20 – Read the entire novel for this session.

WEDNESDAY, 10/22 – Secondary reading: Lauren Berlant, “*The Female Woman: Fanny Fern and the Form of Sentiment*”

**Week 9 – *The House of the Seven Gables***
MONDAY, 10/27 – FALL BREAK; NO CLASS

WEDNESDAY, 10/29 – Read the entire novel for this session. Secondary reading: Meredith McGill, from *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853*
**Week 10 – *Moby-Dick* 1**
MONDAY, 11/3 – Read through p.112 (Chapter 24) for this session.

WEDNESDAY, 11/5 – Read pp.113-228 (through Chapter 49) for this session. Recommended secondary reading: John Bryant, “*Moby-Dick as Revolution*”

**Week 11 – *Moby-Dick* 2**
MONDAY, 11/10 – Read pp.229-369 (through Chapter 84) for this session.

WEDNESDAY, 11/12 – Read pp.370-458 (through Chapter 104) for this session. Secondary reading: Franco Moretti, from *Modern Epic*

**Week 12 – *Moby-Dick* 3 (MEET WITH ME this week to discuss final essays)**
MONDAY, 11/17 – Finish the novel for this session (pp.459-573).

WEDNESDAY, 11/19 – Secondary reading: Samuel Otter, from *Melville’s Anatomies*, recommended: Michael Paul Rogin, from *Subversive Genealogy*

**Week 13 – *Blake* 1**
MONDAY, 11/24 – Read through p.159 (Part I) for this session.

WEDNESDAY, 11/26 – THANKSGIVING BREAK; NO CLASS

**Week 14 – *Blake* 2**
MONDAY, 12/1 – Finish the book for this session. Secondary reading: Eric J. Sundquist, from *To Wake the Nations*

WEDNESDAY, 12/3 – Reflections, returns, re-readings. We borrow our slogan for this session from the great critic Roland Barthes: “those who fail to reread are obliged to read the same story everywhere.”

MONDAY, 12/8 – FINAL ESSAY DUE IN BOX OUTSIDE MY OFFICE.