

## Philipp Kneis, M.A., Potsdam University, Summer Semester 2010

### Undergraduate Seminar "Literature of the American Renaissance"

The course will provide an overview of American literature during the time of the American Renaissance. The diverse selection of texts touches on subjects such as intellectual independence, transcendentalism, nature, the role of the state, slavery, and gender equality.

**Assessment:** The seminar will conclude with a final presentation session on Friday, July 2, 12-8 pm (approx.). All participants will have to give an oral presentation (15-20 min.) on a topic of their own choice, followed by a 5-page written paper. Surprise quizzes and tests may ensure that participants comply with the reading assignments. Short text introductions may also be assigned. First seminar session: May 6.

**Seminar Details:** 90 minute sessions, Thursdays, 6:15-7:45 PM

#### Seminar Plan:

- 1 5/6/10 **Introduction**  
Historical Context, Literary Overview, Literary Theory Redux
- 2 5/20/10 **Romanticism**  
Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown"  
Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher"  
Hudson River School Paintings
- 3 5/27/10 **America (Re)born**  
Emerson, "Nature," Emerson, "The American Scholar"  
Government and its Discontents I  
Thoreau, *Walden, or: Life in the Woods*
- 4 6/3/10 **Government and its Discontents II**  
Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government"  
**Democracy and Art**  
Whitman, "Song of Myself"
- 5 6/10/10 **Dickinson, select. Poems**  
**Activism and Social Change I**  
Douglass, "The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro"  
Jacobs, "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl"
- 6 6/17/10 **Activism and Social Change II**  
Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*  
**Presentation Brainstorming**
- 7 6/24/10 **Civilization and its Discontents**  
Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit"  
Melville, *Moby-Dick*:  
Chapters "The Mast-Head," "Moby-Dick," "The Whiteness of the Whale"
- 8 7/1/10 **Transcendentalism Revisited**  
Louisa May Alcott, "Transcendental Wild Oats"  
Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener"
- 9 7/2/10 **Student Project Presentations (Friday, 12 AM-5 PM)**
- 10 7/8/10 **Consultation / Papers Brainstorming**

**Bibliography:** Beyond the primary texts (see seminar plan above), no bibliography was provided, as finding research literature was one of the student tasks.