

American Manhood

EN 4903 / 6903: American Literature 1800-1860

Dr. Bonnie Carr O'Neill

Fall, 2018

“Is not a man better than a town?” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

“You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man.”

– Frederick Douglass

“Go west, young man, go west and grow up with the country.” – Horace Greeley



What does it mean to be a man in America—an American man—at a time of both increasing nationalism and social transformation? This course will explore representations of masculinity in American literature in the first half of the nineteenth century. Reading works by both white and non-white as well as male and female authors, we will consider how representations of masculinity figure into larger discussions of national identity, Manifest Destiny, individualism, and social reform (including abolitionism and women’s rights).

Representative literary works:

Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography* (1771-90)*

James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826)

Henry Ward Beecher, *Lectures to Young Men* (1844)

Ralph Waldo Emerson, selected essays

Emily Dickinson, selected poems

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851)

Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself* (1855)*

Ellen and William Craft, *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom* (1860)

Louisa May Alcott, *Civil War Hospital Sketches* (1862)

* *Graduate students should note that these two works are included on the MA exam list.*

Requirements: Students will lead class discussion at least once and write two essays. There will be a midterm and a final exam.