



# 19th century American Literature: transcendentalism



Composante(s)  
UFR Langues et  
Civilisations



Période de  
l'année  
Printemps

## En bref

- > **Mobilité d'études:** Oui
- > **Accessible à distance:** Non

## Présentation

### Description

This seminar will explore the relations between Transcendentalism and various reform movements and utopian projects of the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s, in the areas of religion, education, women's rights, socialism, pacifism, and abolitionism. Special emphasis will be placed on three themes: 1) the religious and philosophical roots of the idea of human perfectibility; 2) the self-image of the age (the nineteenth-century as the Age of Progress), and its critics; 3) the tension between individual and collective ideals of reform.

*N.B. The seminar will be conducted in English.  
International students are welcome.*

## Heures d'enseignement

19th century American Literature: transcendentalism - TD	Travaux Dirigés	12h
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19th century American Literature: transcendentalism - CM	Cours Magistral	12h
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## Contrôle des connaissances

- \* *Étudiants assidus:* final grade: 50% oral participation, 50% final written exam.
- \* *Étudiants en régime spécial:* 50% oral exam, 50% written analysis (5 pp.) of an assigned document from the period

NB: This is a seminar, not a lecture course, which means that *active participation in the discussions is mandatory not optional*—hence the 50% oral participation in the final grade.

## Bibliographie

### Required Reading

- \* Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Emerson's Prose and Poetry*, Norton Critical Edition. ISBN: 0393967921.
- \* Henry David Thoreau, *Walden & Civil Disobedience*, Norton Critical Edition. ISBN: 0393959058.

The Norton Critical Editions contain background documents and criticism essential for seminar work and final exam



questions. Accept no substitutes. The two books will be studied in the order given above: Emerson, weeks 1-5; Thoreau, weeks 6-10. A thematic reading list for specific texts in these volumes, as well as a list of additional readings in the Myerson and Miller anthologies, will be available in September. NB: Students who plan to enroll in the seminar are urged to order their copies of Emerson and Thoreau as soon as possible. Do not wait until the last minute.

## **Background Readings on Transcendentalism (optional)**

- \* Lawrence Buell, *Literary Transcendentalism: Style and Vision in the American Renaissance*, Cornell University Press.
- \* Philip F. Gura, *Transcendentalism: A History*, Hill and Wang
- \* Perry, Miller, ed. *The Transcendentalists: An Anthology*, Harvard University Press.
- \* Joel Myerson, ed., *Transcendentalism: A Reader*, Oxford University Press & *A Historical Guide to Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Oxford University Press. Also edited by Joel Myerson: *The Transcendentalists: A Review of Research and Criticism*, MLA.
- \* Barbara Packer, "The Transcendentalists," *The Cambridge History of American Literature, Vol. 2: Prose Writing, 1820-1865*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch, Cambridge University Press.
- \* Robert D. Richardson, Jr., *Henry Thoreau: A Life of the Mind*. Also by Richardson: *Emerson: The Mind on Fire*, University of California Press.
- \* Joseph Urbas, *Emerson's Metaphysics*, Lexington Books, 2016.
- \* ———, *The Philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Routledge, 2021

## **Highly Useful Background Reading in the History of Ideas (optional)**

- \* Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (Gallimard/Folio Essais) & the Introduction by Jean Starobinski. Available in the BU.

- \* Condorcet, *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* (GF/Flammarion), esp. the "Dixième époque : des progrès futurs de l'esprit humain" & Introduction by Alain Pons.
- \* Benjamin Constant, *Ecrits politiques* (Gallimard/Folio Essais), esp. "Du Développement progressif des idées religieuses," "De la Perfectibilité de l'espèce humaine," & the Introduction by Marcel Gauchet. Also by Benjamin Constant: *De la Religion, considérée dans sa source et ses développements* (Actes Sud), Livre premier [Introduction générale], & the Preface by Tzvetan Todorov. Available in the BU.