



**ENGL 337, Study of a Major Author:  
Thoreau and His Neighbors**  
Fall 2023, 2:30-3:45 TR, 119 Armstrong

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Office hours (213 Colson) TR 1:30-2:30 or by  
appointment

Henry David Thoreau built a tiny house as a writer's retreat at Walden Pond and lived there for two years, during which time he often walked the two miles back to Concord to visit family and friends. While living at the pond, he traveled to Maine and spent a night in jail, among other things. So, we'll read Thoreau in various contexts. We'll follow him through woods and fields, where he found spiritual revelations and recorded observations of plants that scientists today are using as baseline data. We'll follow him into town, where he was

part of a vibrant intellectual circle that included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Margaret Fuller, Bronson Alcott, and Louisa May Alcott. We'll devote most of our time to *Walden*, while also examining Thoreau's work in the light of these other writers. Along the way, we'll read selections from his political writings such as "Civil Disobedience" and his late natural history writings such as "Wild Fruits." We'll come to understand Thoreau as a complex individual, a prescient observer of nature, a socially engaged thinker, and one of the most important American writers.

### Required

*The Portable Thoreau*, ed. Jeffery Cramer (Penguin ISBN 9780143106500)

[Henry David Thoreau in Context](#) (ebook available through WVU libraries)

Texts by members of the Concord circle and others (linked PDF)

Critical articles (linked PDF)

### Graded Assignments

- In-class writing, individually or in groups (total = 30% of final grade)
- Summaries of two secondary sources (100 words each) (5% each = 10% total)
- Close-reading essay (500 words) (10%)
- Natural history essay (300 words) (10%)
- [Research essay project](#), including:
  - Abstract (100 words) & annotated bibliography (5%)
  - Two presentations (5% each = 10% total)
  - Conference draft for peer workshop (not graded)
  - Final draft (2000 words plus bibliography) (25%)



**Useful Resource:** [The Thoreau Society](#)

## Policies

**Attendance.** I will not grade on attendance as such. However, a significant portion of your grade will depend on in-class writing, either individually or in groups. You may miss two of these without affecting your grade. If you have to miss class for an extended period because of illness etc., we will work together to devise an equitable arrangement. Let me know as soon as possible.

**Late work.** If you have to miss a class, you are still responsible for turning in all assignments on time. If you are late turning in an assignment, up to 24 hours late the grade will be reduced by 25%. After 24 hours, the assignment will not be accepted. In cases of seriously debilitating illness, we will work together to devise a schedule for the completion of your work. Let me know as soon as possible.

**Academic standards.** The WVU Catalog contains the full [Undergraduate Academic Standards Policy](#) including the academic dishonesty policy.

**AI.** I expect that the assignments you submit to me will represent your own thinking and your own writing. If you do use a generative AI tool as part of your writing for an assignment (e.g., as a way to brainstorm or as a way to refine a research question), I expect you to cite the tool used. I also expect you to attach a cover memo explaining how and why you used the tool. Failure to do so is an academic integrity violation.

**Inclusivity.** The WVU community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. More information is available at the [WVU's Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#) website (304-293-5600).

**Accessibility.** If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in your classes, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the [Office of Accessibility Services](#) (304-293-6700).

**Sexual misconduct.** West Virginia University does not tolerate sexual misconduct, including harassment, stalking, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or relationship violence [ [BOG Rule 1.6](#)]. It is important for you to know that there are resources available if you or someone you know needs assistance. You may speak to a member of university administration, faculty, or staff; keep in mind that they have an obligation to report the incident to the [Title IX Coordinator](#). If you want to speak to someone who is permitted to keep your disclosure confidential, please seek assistance from the [Carruth Center](#), 304-293-9355 or 304-293-4431 (24-hour hotline), and locally within the community at the [Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center](#) (RDVIC), 304- 292-5100 or 304-292-4431 (24-hour hotline). For more information, please consult [WVU's Title IX Office](#).

**Mental health concerns.** You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus at the Carruth Center for Psychological and Psychiatric Services (CCPPS) [website](#). If you are in need of crisis services, call the CCPPS main number 24/7: 304-293-4431. Crisis services are also available through text: Text WVU to 741741 for support 24/7 from a trained Crisis Counselor.

## Schedule

Date	Reading & discussion topic	Assignment due
R 8/17	Course introduction	
T 8/22	"Ktaadn," <i>PT</i> 45-71 William Cronon, " <a href="#">The Trouble with Wilderness</a> "	
R 8/24	"Civil Disobedience," <i>PT</i> 73-98 Frederick Douglass, " <a href="#">I Have Come to Tell You Something about Slavery</a> ," " <a href="#">The Constitution and Slavery</a> ," " <a href="#">Do Not Send Back the Fugitive: An Address</a> "	
T 8/29	" <a href="#">A Plea for Captain John Brown</a> " "Last Days of John Brown," <i>PT</i> 545-54. Ronald Wesley Hoag, "Odd Man In: Thoreau, the Lyceum Movement, and the Lecture Circuit," chapter 14 in <a href="#">Henry David Thoreau in Context</a>	
R 8/31	Günter Beck, " <a href="#">Mmmm ..., Individualism!</a> "  Workshop: finding secondary sources	100-word summary of Beck article <b>due Wednesday 8/30</b>
T 9/5	<i>Walden</i> , <i>PT</i> 197-262, "Economy"	
R 9/7	Ralph Waldo Emerson, " <a href="#">Self-Reliance</a> " <i>Walden</i> , <i>PT</i> 263-87, "Where I Lived and What I Lived For," "Reading" Leslie Perrin Wilson, "Concord," chapter 1 in <a href="#">Henry David Thoreau in Context</a>	
T 9/12	<i>Walden</i> , <i>PT</i> 288-323, "Sounds," "Solitude," "Visitors" Nathaniel Hawthorne, " <a href="#">Celestial Railroad</a> "	
R 9/14	<i>Walden</i> , <i>PT</i> 324-61, "Bean-Field," "Village," "Ponds" Kent Ryden, "Walden Pond and Walden Woods," chapter 2 in <a href="#">Henry David Thoreau in Context</a>	Close reading essay due <b>Friday 9/15</b>
T 9/19	Emerson, <a href="#">Nature</a>	

R 9/21	Susan Fenimore Cooper, from <i>Rural Hours</i> , <a href="#">March &amp; September</a> Margaret Fuller, from <i>Summer on the Lakes</i> , <a href="#">chapter 3 (43-69)</a>	
T 9/26	<i>Walden</i> , PT 362-91, "Baker Farm," "Higher Laws," "Brute Neighbors"	100-word summary of a peer-reviewed article found through the MLA Bibliography
R 9/28	Class will not meet. Keep up with the reading. <i>Walden</i> , PT 392-426, "House-Warming," "Former Inhabitants; and Winter Visitors," "Winter Animals" Amos Bronson Alcott, " <a href="#">Orphic Sayings</a> ," <i>The Dial</i> , July 1840	
T 10/3	<i>Walden</i> , PT 427-68, "The Pond in Winter," "Spring," "Conclusion"	
R 10/5	Fall break – no class	
T 10/10	<a href="#">Introduction, "Huckleberries," and "Pumpkins"</a> from <i>Wild Fruits</i> <a href="#">"Autumnal Tints,"</a> <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , October 1862	
R 10/12	Thoreau's <i>Kalendar</i> : <a href="#">about</a> and pages <a href="#">Oct1</a> & <a href="#">Oct2</a>	
T 10/17	"Walking," PT 555-89 Journal entry for <a href="#">February 16, 1859</a> (this may take a few seconds to load)	Natural history essay due
R 10/19	Frank Izaguirre, " <a href="#">HDT, American Subversive: Sensory Balance in Walden</a> " (conversation with the author)	One question for Izaguirre
T 10/24	Individual conferences – no class <a href="#">Signup sheet for conferences</a>	Abstract and annotated bibliography due <b>Monday 10/23</b>
R 10/26	Individual conferences – no class <a href="#">Signup sheet for conferences</a>	

T 10/31	<p>First, do internet searches to get some background on 19<sup>th</sup> c. utopian communities, Fruitlands (Alcott) and Brook Farm (Hawthorne), then read:</p> <p>Louisa May Alcott, "<a href="#">Transcendental Wild Oats</a>"  Nathaniel Hawthorne, "<a href="#">Earth's Holocaust</a>"</p>	
R 11/2	Writing and research day – no class	
T 11/7	<p>Preliminary presentation of research topic  <b>Last name starting with A – L</b></p>	Presentation
R 11/9	<p>Preliminary presentation of research topic  <b>Last name starting with M – Sp</b></p>	Presentation
T 11/14	<p>Finish preliminary presentations  <b>Last Name starting with St – W</b></p> <p>Kathryn Schulz, "<a href="#">Pond Scum</a>," <i>New Yorker</i> 10/19/2015  Donovan Hohn, "<a href="#">Everybody Hates Henry</a>," <i>New Republic</i> 10/19/15  John Malesic, "<a href="#">Thoreau's Radical Optimism</a>," <i>New Republic</i> 10/19/2015</p>	Presentation
R 11/16	<p>Watch (in class) <i>Dickinson</i> episode 4</p> <p>Meet your conference group members and exchange email addresses</p>	
11/20-24	Thanksgiving recess	
T 11/28	<p>Exchange drafts with your conference group and submit a copy to me through google classroom site – no class meeting</p>	Draft of research essay due by class time
R 11/30	Peer workshop on draft of research essay	
T 12/5	<p>Presentation of research essay  <b>Last name starting with Mc – W</b></p>	Presentation
R 12/7	<p>Presentation of research essay  <b>Last name starting with A – Ma</b></p>	Presentation
F 12/8		Final draft of research essay due <b>Friday 12/8</b>

