The antebellum period in America was rife with contradictions. Rather than seek neat resolutions to them, writers of the period took the era's paradoxes as their subjects and lent them form in meaningful—and sometimes revolutionary—ways. As we navigate these antinomies, we will pay especial attention to the periodicals in which many of the authors we will study published their most important work. In the decades immediately preceding the American Civil War, the evolution of the literary marketplace was inseparable from the proliferation of periodicals and the development of networks for their distribution. Consequently, much of the research we will conduct over the course of the semester will be in American periodicals.