

# ENGL 427

## 19th-Century American Prose and Poetry

**Instructor:** Luke Carson  
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"The Superintendent as a Teacher" (Twain, *Roughing It*, ch. 6)

### Course description:

This course will focus on literary non-fiction and poetic responses to the United States as an emerging nation already with a history of ethnic and racial division and violence that perhaps fatally endangers its future. Travel writing will feature prominently as we examine Margaret Fuller's tour of the Great Lakes region in 1843, Henry David Thoreau's exploration of New England in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849), and Mark Twain's 1861–1867 excursions into the Western Territories, Nevada, California and Hawai'i in *Roughing It* (1872). These texts will be read in connection with the visionary propositions of Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay *Nature* (1836) and his call for the individual's comprehensive self-reliance, a notion exemplified for his contemporaries in the emancipatory vision of Frederick Douglass's narrative of his escape from slavery (1845). The class will culminate with the legacy of Emersonian vision in Walt Whitman's Civil War collections *Drum-Taps* and *Sequel to Drum-Taps* (1865).

## Assignments:

2 four-five page papers*	55%
in-class essay	15%
three-hour final exam	30%
5 to 8 quizzes	±5%

## Texts:

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature* (Coursepack)  
Margaret Fuller, *Summer on the Lakes in 1843* (Coursepack)  
Henry David Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (Penguin)  
Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Broadview)  
Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (Signet)  
Walt Whitman, *Drum-Taps* and *Sequel to Drum-Taps* (Coursepack)