

**English 564.03: Major American Author:  
Edgar Allan Poe**

Spring 2009

T, R, 1:30-3:18; Central Classroom 222

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Office hours: T,R 3:30-4:30  
and by appointment

**Course Description:**

Poe was a writer of tremendous versatility and perplexing contradictions: He was a genius and a hoaxer; an elitist who was nevertheless among our most popular writers. A poet, short story writer, essayist, critic, and magazine editor, Poe was essential to the development of both the detective story and the gothic horror story, as well as a comic writer and a satirist, yet he regarded poetry as the highest and purest literary form. He was both celebrated and misunderstood; desperate for public approval, yet an acerbic, jealous, and self-destructive critic of his contemporaries.

In this course we will engage with these various dimensions of Poe's work and career by reading as wide a range of his fiction, poetry, and criticism as we can squeeze into one quarter. You will be expected to go beyond our textbook's selections in this course: Your first paper will require you to explore some aspect of the magazines in which Poe published and/or which he helped edit; and for your research paper you will be expected to read and use some of the voluminous scholarship on Poe (we will review basic research strategies and conventions).

**Text:**

*Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe.* Ed. G. R. Thompson. NY: Norton (Critical Edition), 2004.

(You will also be asked to do some reading in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century magazines that Poe edited and/or in which his work was first published. Information on accessing these materials will be provided separately)

For both primary texts and the magazine assignment, very useful materials are available at the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore web site:

<http://www.eapoe.org>

**Course Requirements:**

- You are expected to read *all* of the works listed on the calendar of readings below.
- There will be four quizzes throughout the quarter, consisting of short answer and short essay responses to questions about our readings and discussions.
- one paper (5 page minimum length) on Poe in the context of the magazines; more detailed guidelines provided separately.
- and one longer research paper (8-10 pages) on a topic you develop in consultation with me. This paper will constitute your Final Exam.
- Last, but not least, I expect regular attendance and active class participation. More than 3 absences (15% of our class meetings) will result in progressively lower course grades or failure for the course. You should come to every class with notes and questions about the readings for that day.

*All Due Dates are listed and highlighted on the Calendar. All assignments must be completed to earn credit for this course; late papers will not be accepted for credit unless I grant you an extension in advance of the due date (which I will only do on very rare occasions, when exceptional circumstances warrant it). If you have questions about reading or writing assignments, I encourage you to consult with me, well in advance, during my office hours or by e-mail.*

*Note: As stated in the OSU Course Offerings Bulletin, the prerequisite for 500-level courses in English is "10 credit hours of English courses at the 200 or 300 level or permission of instructor." If you have not met this prerequisite, please see me immediately.*

### Grading:

Quizzes, 10% each x 4	= 40%
Paper #1: Poe and the magazines essay	= 20%
Paper #2: 8-10 page research paper	= 30%
class participation	= 10%
TOTAL	= 100%

**Plagiarism Policy:** Plagiarism is the representation of another's writing or ideas as one's own. It includes the unacknowledged word-for-word use or the paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate, unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct, in accordance with University rules.



**Disability Accommodations:** The Office for Disability Services, located in 150 Pomerene Hall, offers services for students with documented disabilities. I will gladly collaborate with the Office of Disability Services to accommodate any special needs you may have. You can contact the ODS at 292-3307.

# Calendar

[May be subject to slight revisions as the quarter progresses]

## Week 1:

March 31 (T): **Introduction; Background** [Read the biographical introduction in our text, “Edgar A. Poe: An American Life (1809-1849)” (pp. xiii-lii)]

April 2 (R): **Poetry** [suggested: for the poetry unit, read *all* the poems in the Norton text] “Sonnet—To Science”; “Israfel”; “Fairy Land [1]” and “Fairy Land [2]”; [suggested criticism: skim selection from Floyd Stovall, “Poe’s Debt to Coleridge” (789ff.)]

## Week 2:

April 7 (T): **Poetry, cont’d.** “The Sleeper” (two versions; alternate version on hand-out); “Dream-Land”; “Sonnet—Silence”; Poe as critic: *from* “Longfellow” (636ff.) and *from* “The Poetic Principle” (698ff.).

April 9 (R): **Poetry, cont’d.** “To Helen”; “The City in the Sea”; “The Raven”; “The Philosophy of Composition”; selections from Emerson, “The Poet” (on hand-out).

## Week 3:

April 14 (T): **Poetry, cont’d.** “Ulalume”; “The Bells”; “A Dream Within a Dream”; “For Annie”; “El Dorado”; “Annabel Lee”. **QUIZ #1**

April 16 (R): **Tales, Grotesque and Arabesque** [note: while I have clustered the tales under various sub-headings, these categories are not entirely distinct and frequently overlap—therefore, you should think about both the distinctions and the blurring of distinctions]: Read the tales from *Blackwood’s Magazine* (754-766); “Metzengerstein”; “Berenice”; “MS Found in a Bottle.”

## Week 4:

April 21 (T): **grotesque comedy, parody, and satire:** “How To Write a Blackwood’s Article/ A Predicament”; “Loss of Breath”; “The Man That was Used Up”; “Never Bet the Devil Your Head.”

April 23 (R): **hoaxes and pseudo-science, comic and grotesque:** “Words with a Mummy”; “Premature Burial”; “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar.”

**Week 5:**

April 28 (T): **Poe as critic:** “Nathaniel Hawthorne [Review of Twice-Told Tales] (643-650); **gothic fables, parables, allegories:** “The Oval Portrait”; “The Masque of Red Death”; “William Wilson”; “The Man of the Crowd.”

April 30 (R): **the “perverse”:** “The Imp of the Perverse”; “The Black Cat”; “The Tell-Tale Heart.”

**Week 6:**

May 5 (T): **revenge tales:** “Hop Frog”; “The Cask of Amontillado.” **QUIZ #2**

May 7 (R): **Poe’s favorites:** “Ligeia”; “The Fall of the House of Usher”

**Week 7:**

May 12 (T): **Detection and ratiocination:** “Murders in the Rue Morgue”; “Descent into the Maelstrom”; “The Pit and the Pendulum.”

**MAGAZINE PAPER DUE**

May 14 (R): **detection and ratiocination, cont’d:** “The Gold Bug”; “The Purloined Letter.” **QUIZ #3**

**Week 8:**

May 19 (T): **Poe as novelist:** *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*.

May 21 (R): *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, cont’d.

**Week 9:**

May 26 (T): *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, cont’d.

May 28 (R): **QUIZ #4. gothic metaphysics:** “Shadow—A Parable”; “Silence—A Fable”; “The Colloquy of Monos and Una.”

**Week 10:**

June 2 (T): from *Eureka: An Essay on the Spiritual and Material Universe*

June 4 (R): **FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE.** Concluding discussion; course evaluations.

**Finals Week:**

**No exam during finals week: your research paper will be your final exam.**

