

**HY 300-2**  
**Reforming America, 1815-1861**  
**Spring 2013**  
**TR 12:30-1:45**  
**Bidgood 221**

Professor Joshua D. Rothman  
Office: 239-a ten Hoor  
Office phone: 348.3818  
Email: jrothman@bama.ua.edu  
Office hours: T 10-11 and 2-3, and by appointment

This course will provide an overview of the wide-ranging efforts Americans made to reform themselves and their nation in the decades before the Civil War, understanding those efforts largely as reactions to and engagements with the sweeping economic changes of the era that many historians have come to call the “market revolution.” Topics will include the evolution of family and religious life in the first half of the nineteenth century, new religious movements such as Adventism and Mormonism, the founding of experimental utopian communities, transcendentalism, health and diet reforms, prison and school reforms, efforts to “improve” American cities, workingman’s movements, abolitionism, temperance, and feminism. By the end of the semester, students are expected to be able to think and write critically about antebellum reform movements, their leaders, their goals, and their outcomes.

There are no prerequisites for this course, but students would benefit from having taken HY203 (American Civilization to 1865) or an equivalent college-level introductory survey course on the history of the United States through the Civil War.

**Required Readings (available at university bookstore):**

Timothy Arthur, *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room and What I Saw There*  
Richard Francis, *Fruitlands: The Alcott Family and Their Search for Utopia*  
Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias: A Story of Sex and Salvation in Nineteenth-Century America*  
John Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America*  
Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

**Grading:**

Two exams, 20% each: 40%  
Two 5-7 page papers: 40%  
Discussion participation/Blackboard postings: 20%

*Exams:* Exams will be entirely in essay format, and will be based on material covered in lectures. Roughly one week before each exam, a list of questions from which the exam will be drawn will be posted on the Blackboard site for the course. **Any student who fails to take an exam will automatically receive a failing grade for the course.** Barring an emergency, make-up exams must be scheduled prior to the scheduled date of the exam. In other words,

don't wait until the day of the test to ask me if you can schedule an alternate day, and certainly don't wait until the day of the test has already passed.

*Papers:* Paper topics will be posted on the Blackboard site for the course roughly 10 to 14 days prior to the due date, and will ask you to formulate an argument based on assigned reading materials. Any papers submitted after their due dates will be penalized three points for each day late, including weekends and holidays. No paper will be accepted more than two weeks past its due date. **Any student who fails to complete a paper will automatically receive a failing grade for the course.** Please note that “completing” a paper means both submitting it to me either in hard copy or as an email attachment, **and** submitting it to turnitin.com through the Blackboard site for the course, the instructions for which will be provided. Papers will not be graded at all until they have been submitted to turnitin.com.

*Participation:* On days where reading and discussion is indicated, you are expected to come to class ready to participate actively, which means having done the reading and being prepared to talk about it. You are also expected to log in to Blackboard and contribute written assessments of/responses to the readings. In your assessments, you may choose to pose questions about the materials, to respond to comments and observations about them made by other students, or simply to offer your reflections and thoughts. Your assessments must be at least 250 words long, though they may run anywhere from a few paragraphs to a few pages. They will be evaluated for their intellectual substance, which means that you ought to demonstrate in your posts that you have actually done the reading—writing that “the reading was boring” or “the reading was fun,” or parroting what another student has written does not fulfill the spirit of the exercise. Written assessments alone cannot replace active participation during in-class discussions, but they will be treated as one component of your participation grade and can boost or lower your final grade in the class accordingly. For a more detailed description of the relationship between levels of participation and the grade you can expect to receive in this class, please see the document titled “Grading Class Participation” on the Blackboard site for the course.

Posting to Blackboard is relatively easy and straightforward. Go to [ulearn.blackboard.com](http://ulearn.blackboard.com), or access Blackboard through mybama. Log in as instructed and click on the homepage for this class, where you will see a link for “reading responses/discussion board” toward the bottom of the page. Clicking on it will take you to a list of topics, one for each day's discussion. Click on the topic for the appropriate day. If you are the first person to post, click “create thread,” write your response/assessment in the text box, and click submit. If other students have responded before you, you will see and can read their posts. You can begin a new thread of conversation or simply hit “reply” and post your assessment that way.

**Please note:**

- 1. Assessments and assignments must be posted by 9 am on the day class meets. You will not receive credit for late postings.**
- 2. Assessments must be at least 250 words long to receive credit.**
- 3. Bring the reading under discussion with you to class on the appropriate day.**

**4. In-class participation and Blackboard postings count together for one-fifth of your grade in this course. Failure to engage these aspects of the course in a consistent way will likely do serious damage to your final grade.**

*Other rules about grading:*

1. To request disability accommodations, please contact Disability Services (348.4285). After you have made initial arrangements with Disability Services, please contact me privately.
2. Academic misconduct, such as plagiarism or cheating, will be treated extremely seriously. The Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Policy will be followed in the event a student is suspected of such an act, and all effort will be made to fail for the course students found guilty of misconduct. For an explanation of what precisely constitutes academic misconduct, see the university's Code of Academic Conduct on pp. 21-22 of the undergraduate catalog.

**Attendance:**

Attendance is mandatory and will be taken. There are no excused absences in this course. You are permitted to miss up to five regular class meetings for whatever reason with no questions asked and without penalty, although you will be held responsible for the material covered during missed classes. More than five absences will result in a penalty of one-third of a letter grade per absence beyond the fifth one. This policy will be enforced strictly. Exceptions will be made only for lengthy illnesses or other extraordinary circumstances. Should such circumstances present themselves, you are expected to notify me or to have someone else notify me as soon as possible.

**Other course policies:**

1. Please come to class on time. I realize that the parking situation at the university is less than ideal, but repeatedly coming to class ten or fifteen minutes late is unacceptable.
2. When you attend lecture, plan on staying through its completion. If you don't intend to stay, just don't show up at all.
3. If for some reason you arrive a few minutes late or if you must leave a few minutes early, please sit in the back of the room.
4. Please leave your phones and other electronic devices at home or shut them off before class begins. During class, if you toy with your devices or if they ring, sing, dance, shake, bounce, play a movie, or otherwise provide whatever distraction it is that they provide, you will be asked to leave for the day. If they do so repeatedly, you may be asked to leave the course altogether.
5. At the risk of belaboring the point, let me stress especially that phones and other electronic devices are not permitted **for any reason** during examinations. Should you be seen looking at or playing with any kind of electronic device during an exam, you will be asked to leave the room and you will fail the exam.
6. You are welcome to use a laptop for taking notes, but if you do so, you are expected to use it for that purpose alone. You may think that playing games, surfing the web, checking your email, facebooking, and other activities are not noticeable to me or to your classmates, but I assure you that you are wrong, and that your distractedness is very obvious. Should I

see you doing things other than taking notes during class, I will ask you to leave for the day.

## **Section I: The Context for Reform**

### Week 1

January 10 Introduction: The Culture of American Expansion, 1790-1860

### Week 2

January 15 The Market Revolution: Railroads, Industries, and Cities, 1815-1860

January 17 The Emergence of the Sentimental Middle-Class Family

### Week 3

January 22 Reading: *Rudeness and Civility*, pp. 3-111

January 24 Reading: *Rudeness and Civility*, pp. 112-214

## **Section II: Reforming the Self: Spirit, Mind, and Body**

### Week 4

January 29 Evangelicalism and the Second Great Awakening

January 31 Premillennial Alternatives: Adventists and Latter-Day Saints

### Week 5

February 5 Radical Perfectionism: The Quest for Utopia

February 7 Reading: *The Kingdom of Matthias*, pp. 3-90

### Week 6

February 12 Reading: *The Kingdom of Matthias*, pp. 91-179

February 14 American Transcendentalism

### Week 7

February 19 Reading: Francis, *Fruitlands*, pp. 1-154

February 21 Reading: Francis, *Fruitlands*, pp. 155-283

### Week 8

February 26 Sylvester Graham and Bodily Reform

February 28 Hydropathy and Phrenology (**Paper 1 due by end of day**)

### Week 9

March 5 **Midterm Exam**

## **Section III: Reforming the Nation**

March 7 Reforming Antebellum Cities

### Week 10

March 12 Building Institutions: Penitentiaries, Asylums, and Schools

March 14 Stopping the Drunkard's Progress

Week 11

March 19 Workers and Unions  
March 21 Reading: *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room*

Week 12

March 26 No class; spring break  
March 28 No class; spring break

Week 13

April 2 Toward the Abolition of Slavery  
April 4 A Movement and a Nation Fracture (**Paper 2 due by end of day**)

Week 14

April 9 The Rights of Women  
April 11 Reading: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, pp. 1-79, 202-251 (chapters 1-9, and 20-26)

Week 15

April 16 No class  
April 18 No class

Week 16

April 23 Reading: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, pp. 251-312, 351-371 (chapters 27-34, and 41-44)  
April 25 Assessing Antebellum Reform

**Final Exam, Monday, April 29, 11:30 am**