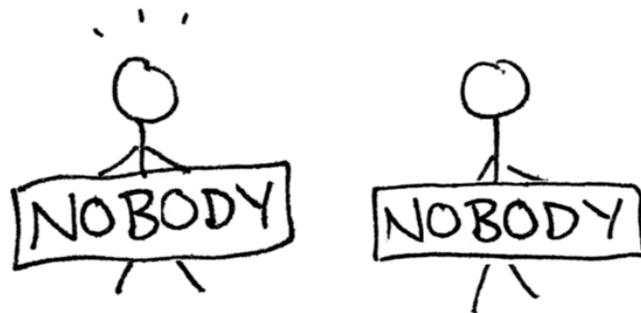


Dr. Shari Goldberg  
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Office: Keiper 304  
Office hours: M 1:45-2:45, W 4:30-5:30 and by appointment

English 207, Fall 2017  
MW, 11:00-12:20  
Shad-Fac 304

## American Literature 2: American Nobodies



*image from BetsiePieBaker*

### Course description

The antebellum era of American literature (1820-1860) is generally thought to produce strong, solitary individuals. One imagines Ralph Waldo Emerson exhorting self-reliance, Henry David Thoreau praising solitude at Walden Pond, and Frederick Douglass refusing a master other than himself. Yet alongside such famous images, writers of the period also experimented with, as Emily Dickinson puts it, being nobody. Being nobody could mean slipping out of one's life to watch it from the outside, or finding oneself mysteriously doubled, or conceiving of the self as a deeply passive structure, created by external forces and events. We will study both traditions—the production of somebody and the production of nobody—with emphasis on the less familiar latter strain. We will concentrate on closely reading quotations in order to discover how literary texts propose unusual models for selves in general and American selves in particular.

### Required texts

*The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 8th edition, volume B.  
ISBN 978-0-393-93477-9

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Dover, ISBN 978-0-486-41931-2)

## Core expectations

1. Come to each class session prepared to thoughtfully discuss the assigned text. Being prepared means: you have read carefully by annotating the text (annotations include underlining, margin remarks, and/or written notes), you have thought about questions the text raises or you would like to raise about it, and you have composed a generous and serious mindset. Bring your book to every class; if we are reading a handout via Canvas, bring a printed, annotated copy.
2. Use writing assignments as opportunities to refine your understanding of texts we have read. Write with care, deliberation, and a sincere desire to understand your ideas fully and to present them clearly. Make an appointment at the writing center or come to my office hours for help with this process.
3. Act respectfully toward me, toward your classmates, and toward our readings. Do not come to class late; do not use your phone during class; do not interrupt. Do listen attentively; do try to figure out what is valuable in what you hear and read; do bring concerns or confusions to the table. Do your own work and do it on time.
4. Visit me, during office hours, if you have questions about texts, discussions, assignments, grades, or policies.

## Evaluation criteria

Contribution	10%	Paper 1	15%
Quote diary	20%	Paper 2	15%
In-class essay 1	10%	Paper 3	20%
In-class essay 2	10%		

## Policies

**Attendance:** I expect you to attend all class sessions. More than two absences will result in your semester grade being lowered (three points per additional session missed). In case of family emergency or serious illness, bring me a note from the Office of the Dean of the College. When you are absent, it is your responsibility to contact a classmate to find out what you missed.

**Technology:** In general, books, papers, and pens or pencils will be our preferred classroom technologies. I will let you know if others are permitted for a certain session.

**Accommodations:** Bring me documentation from the Office of Disability Services within the first two weeks of the semester if you need extra time or other support to complete the work of the course.

**Academic Citation:** Assignments containing plagiarism will be sent to the Office of the Dean of the College and may result in failure of the course.

**Communication:** Feel free to email me with questions or concerns. You may expect a reply within 24 hours on weekdays and 48 on weekends. I will post announcements and handouts on Canvas.

## Schedule of readings\* and assignments, due on the date listed

\*All readings are in the required books unless marked with [C], in which case they may be found in Canvas.

### *Misplaced identities*

- W 8/30 Introduction  
M 9/4 Irving, "Rip Van Winkle"  
W 9/6 Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown" \**Quotation diaries begin*  
M 9/11 Poe, "William Wilson"  
W 9/13 Poe, "The Man in the Crowd"  
*In-class essay 1*

### *Passive selves*

- M 9/18 Emerson, *Nature*, chapter 1 & "The American Scholar"  
W 9/20 Emerson, "Self-Reliance"  
*Paper 1 assigned*  
M 9/25 Emerson, "Self-Reliance"  
W 9/27 Emerson, "Spiritual Laws" [C]

### *Friends & neighbors*

- M 10/2 Thoreau, *Walden*, "Economy" (first section only: pages 981-986)  
*Paper 1 due*  
W 10/4 Thoreau, *Walden*, "Economy" & "Where I Lived..."  
M 10/9 Fall break [no class]  
W 10/11 Thoreau, *Walden*, "Sounds," "Solitude," & "Visitors"  
*In-class essay 2*  
M 10/16 Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government"

### *Seeing difference*

- W 10/18 Melville, *Benito Cereno*  
M 10/23 Melville, *Benito Cereno*

W 10/25 Douglass, *Narrative*, preface & chs. 1-8 or Jacobs, *Incidents* chs. 1-10  
M 10/30 Douglass, *Narrative*, chs. 9-11 or Jacobs, *Incidents* chs. 21 & 30-41  
W 11/1 Jacobs, *Incidents* chs. 1-10 or Douglass, *Narrative*, chs. 1-8  
M 11/6 Jacobs, *Incidents* chs. 21 & 30-41 or Douglass, *Narrative*, chs. 9-11  
*Paper 2 assigned*  
W 11/8 Fern, selected columns  
M 11/13 Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit"  
W 11/15 Alcott, *Little Women*, Part 2, chapters 3-5 [C]

*Nobody and everybody*

M 11/20 Dickinson, selected poems  
*Paper 2 due*  
W 11/22 Thanksgiving [no class]  
M 11/27 Dickinson, selected poems  
W 11/29 Whitman, *Song of Myself*  
*Paper 3 assigned*  
M 12/4 Whitman, *Song of Myself*  
W 12/6 Paper 3 workshop  
  
W 12/13 *Paper 3 due*