

# American Studies Seminar

# The Death of Satan

## Have Americans Lost their Sense of Evil?

Reed College  
Spring 2007  
Prof. Laura Leibman

### Am Stud/English 303

Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:30-11:50  
Library 387

Class-email: [Eng303-archive@lists.reed.edu](mailto:Eng303-archive@lists.reed.edu)

My Group # is: \_\_\_\_\_

Other people in my group:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

L= Literary Text Annotation  
CA= Cultural Artifact  
R= Religious Artifact  
C = Comparison  
FP = Final Project  
X = See syllabus for that day



*The New-England Primer Improved, 1762*



Axis of Evil Cartoon, 2003

## Course Description

Early Americans viewed their history as an epic struggle against Satan; yet, today Americans' sense of evil is weaker and more uncertain. How and why did Americans lose their sense of evil? This course offers an introduction to the methods of American Studies: we will look at literature in the context of American history and material culture. We will cover major American authors from the colonial period through postmodernism.

Webpage: <http://moodle.reed.edu>

## Required Readings

- *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Shorter Sixth Edition, ed. Nina Baym (NAAL)
- *In the Shadow of No Towers*, Art Spiegelman

## Recommended

- *Religions of the United States in Practice, Vol. I & II*. Ed. Colleen McDannell
- *The Death of Satan*, Andrew Delbanco

## When Assignments are Due

- GROUP 1: 2.1 (L), 2.20 (CA), 3.13 (R), 4.5 (C), 5.7 (FP)  
GROUP 2: 2.6 (CA), 2.22 (RA), 3.15 (C), 4.17 (L), 5.7 (FP)  
GROUP 3: 2.8 (R), 2.27 (C), 3.22 (L), 4.19 (CA), 5.7 (FP)  
GROUP 4: 1.30 (X), 3.6 (L), 3.27 (CA), 4.24 (R), 5.7 (FP)  
GROUP 5: 2.15 (L), 3.8 (CA), 3.29 (R), 4.26 (C), 5.7 (FP)

## Schedule of Readings

### Week 1-3: INTRODUCTION & COLONIAL AMERICA (1492-1776)

#### L.23 WHAT IS EVIL?

Readings: "Introduction," *The Death of Satan*, Andrew Delbanco (3-19) PS169.G66 D45 1995  
 Charles T. Mathewes, "A Tale of Two Judgments: Bonhoeffer and Arendt on Evil, Understanding, and Limits, and the Limits of Understanding Evil," *The Journal of Religion*, 80(3) (Jul., 2000), pp. 375-404.  
<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00224189%28200007%2980%3A3%3C375%3AATOTJB%3E2.o.CO%3B2-6>

#### R 1.25 SATAN ENTERS AMERICA

Andrew Delbanco, *Death of Satan* (Chapter 1 : 23-56) PS169.G66 D45 1995  
 Introduction to Moodle in Class.

#### T 1.30 SATAN IN COLONIAL AMERICA, cont.: Group 4

NAAL Introduction, "Literature to 1700" (NAAL 10-14)

Wigglesworth, *Day of Doom* (MOODLE)

Rowlandson, *A Narrative of the Captivity & Restoration* (NAAL 135-52)

**Everyone:** Please have updated your profile and create a personal and group page.

**Group 4.** This assignment is not listed on the assignment sheet, but your job is to write a summary of Delbanco's argument about evil in colonial America from the readings from Thursday (one paragraph) and in a second paragraph argue whether Wigglesworth **or** Rowlandson's literary texts support, refute, or complicate his argument. Please post at least 24 hours before class.

**Group 1:** Please let class know what text (written between 1700-1800) to read from the NAAL for Thursday. The text should illuminate our understanding of evil during this era.

#### R 2.1 LITERARY TEXT: Group 1

Andrew Delbanco, *Death of Satan*, (Chapter 2: 57-89) PS169.G66 D45 1995

Readings to be chosen by **Group 1** from NAAL: any text written between 1700-1800 that illuminates our understanding of evil during this era.

All members of **Group 1** to post "literary text annotation" assignment at least 24 hours before class.

#### T 2.6 CULTURAL ARTIFACT – GRAVESTONES: Group 2

Readings: James Deetz and Edwin S. Dethlefsen, "Death's Head, Cherub, Urn and Willow,"

(<http://etext.virginia.edu/users/deetz/Plymouth/deathshhead.html>)

Jules Prown, "Mind in Matter," *Art as Evidence*, 69-95 (N6507 .P745 2001)

All members of **Group 2** to post "cultural artifact" assignment at least 24 hours before class. EACH person should pick one gravestone made before 1700 AND one made between 1700-1800.

**Group 3:** Let class know what is the Second Reading from Volume I of *Religions of the United States* (any religious artifact from before 1776) to read for Thursday.

#### R 2.8 RELIGIOUS ARTIFACT: Group 3

Readings: Kenneth Minkema, "Possession, Witchcraft, and the Demonic in Puritan Religious Culture,"

*Religions of the United States*, 1,366-401. BL2525 .R4688 2001

Second Reading to be chosen by **Group 3** from Volume I of *Religions of the United States* (any religious artifact from before 1776).

All members of **Group 3** to post "religious artifact assignment" at least 24 hours before class.

### Weeks 4-6: ROMANTICISM (1820-1865)

#### T 2.13 THE BIRTH OF THE SELF

Andrew Delbanco, *Death of Satan* (Chapter 3 : 91-123) PS169.G66 D45 1995

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (NAAL 812-34)

Henry Ward Beecher, Selections from "The Strange Woman" (*Lectures to Young Men, on Various Important Subjects* 1844: **HANDOUT**)

**Group 5: Let class know what readings (1825-1865) you have chosen from NAAL for Thursday.**

R 2.15 LITERARY TEXT: Group 5

Readings to be chosen by Group four from NAAL: any text before written between 1825-1865 that illuminates our understanding of evil during this era.

**Group 5** to post "literary text annotation" assignment at least 24 hours before class.

T 2.20 CULTURAL ARTIFACT- DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE: Group 1

Readings: Clifford Clark, Domestic Architecture as an Index to Social History: the Romantic Revival and the Cult of Domesticity in America, 1840-70," *Material Life in America 1600-1860*, ed. Robert Blair St. George (535-49). (E161 .M36 1988 and folders)

All members of **Group 1** to post "cultural artifact" assignment at least 24 hours before class. Please remember that your artifact must be work of domestic architecture built between 1820-1870.

**Group 2: Announce readings for Thursday.**

R 2.22 RELIGIOUS ARTIFACT: GROUP 2

Michael McClymond, "John Humphrey Noyes, the Oneida Community," *Religions of the United States*, I.218-33, BL2525 .R4688 2001.

Second Reading to be chosen by **Group 2** from Volume I of *Religions of the United States* (any religious artifact from between 1820-1865).

All members of **Group 2** to post "religious artifact assignment" at least 24 hours before class.

T 2.27 COMPARISON: Group 3

**Group 3** to post comparison assignment 24 hour before class. Please compare the notion of evil during the age of Romanticism (1825-65) to the notion of evil in Colonial America (1492-1776).

NAAL Introduction, "Literature 1820-1865" (NAAL 425-44). The only other assigned readings for the day are the comparisons written by group 3.

## **Weeks 6-8: REALISM (1865-1914)**

R 3.1 THE LOSS OF PROVIDENCE & THE AGE OF BLAME

Andrew Delbanco, *Death of Satan* (Chapters 4 & 5: 125-183) PS169.G66 D45 1995

Henry James, *The Beast in the Jungle* (NAAL 1556-86)

**Group 4: Announce readings for Thursday.**

T 3.6 LITERARY TEXT: Group 4

Readings to be chosen by **Group 4** from NAAL: any text before written between 1865-1914 that illuminates our understanding of evil during this era.

All **Group 4** members to post assignment "literary text annotation" assignment at least hours before class.

R 3.8 CULTURAL ARTIFACT- DRESS: Group 5

Readings: Leslie Shannon Miller, "The Many Figures of Eve," *American Artifacts*, ed. Prown & Haltman (129-148: E161 .A35 2000) & Cunningham, "Introduction: Fashion, Health, and Beauty," *Reforming Women's Fashion, 1850-1920* (Oversize GT 610 C85 2002), 1-30.

All members of **Group 5** to post "cultural artifact" assignment at least 24 hours before class. Please remember that your artifact must be a piece of clothing (or a depiction of a piece of clothing) made between 1865-1914.

**Group 1: Announce readings for Tuesday after Spring Break**

3.10-3.18 **SPRING BREAK!**

## T 3.13 RELIGIOUS ARTIFACT: Group 1

Readings: Paul Jerome Croce, "Is Life Worth Living," *Religions of the United States*, I.234-52.

Second Reading to be chosen by Group 1 from Volume I of *Religions of the United States* (any religious artifact from between 1865-1914) BL2525 .R4688 2001

All members of **Group 1** to post "religious artifact assignment" at least 24 hours before class.

## R 3.15 COMPARISON: Group 2

**Group 2** to post comparison assignment 24 hour before class. Please compare the notion of evil during the age of Realism (1865-1914) to either the notion of evil in the age of Romanticism (1825-65) **OR** Colonial America (1492-1776).

NAAL Introduction, "Literature to 1865-1914" (NAAL 1223-34). The only other assigned readings for the day are the comparisons written by group 2.

**Weeks 9-11: MODERNISM (1914-1945)**

## T 3.20 CULTURE OF IRONY?

Andrew Delbanco, *Death of Satan* (Chapter 6: 185-217) PS169.G66 D45 1995

Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath* (NAAL 2232-44)

Claude McKay, "Lynching" (NAAL 2084-85)

**Group 3: Announce readings for Thursday**

## R 3.22 LITERARY TEXTS: GROUP 3

Readings to be chosen by **Group 3** from NAAL: any text before written between 1914-1945 that illuminates our understanding of evil during this era.

All members of **Group 3** post "literary text annotation" assignment at least 24 hours before class.

## T 3.27 CULTURAL ARTIFACTS-DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY: GROUP 4

Lily Corbus Bezner, "Introduction: What is Documentary Photography?" *Photography and Politics in America* (1-15). TR23 .B48 1999 and folders.

All members of **Group 4** to post "cultural artifact" assignment at least 24 hours before class. Please remember that your artifact must be a photograph taken between 1914-1945.

**Group 5: Announce readings for Thursday**

## R 3.29 RELIGIOUS ARTIFACT: GROUP 5

Readings: Judith Weisenfeld, "Teaching Morality in Race Movies," *Religions of the United States*, II. 131-40. BL2525 .R4688 2001.

Second Reading to be chosen by **Group 5** from Volume 2 of *Religions of the United States* (any religious artifact from between 1914-1945).

All members of **Group 5** to post "religious artifact assignment" at least 24 hours before class.

## T 4.3 NO CLASS PASSOVER

## R 4.5 COMPARISON Group 1

**Group 1** to post comparison assignment 24 hour before class. Please compare the notion of evil during Modernism (1914-1945) to the notion of evil in ONE of the following: the age of Realism (1865-1914), the age of Romanticism (1825-65) **OR** Colonial America (1492-1776).

NAAL Introduction, "American Literature between the Wars 1914-1945" (NAAL 1807-1821)

The only other assigned readings for the day are the comparisons written by group 1.

**Weeks 12-13: POST-MODERNISM (1945-present)**

## T 4.10 NO CLASS PASSOVER

## R 4.12 THE RETURN OF EVIL?

Andrew Delbanco, *Death of Satan* (Chapter 7: 219-36) PS169.G66 D45 1995.  
Spiegelman, *In the Shadow of No Towers* (PN6727.S6 I5 2004).

**Group 2: Announce readings for Tuesday**

## T 4.17 LITERARY TEXTS: GROUP 2

Readings to be chosen by **Group 2** from NAAL: any text after 1945 that illuminates our understanding of evil during this era.

All members of **Group 2** to post “literary text annotation” assignment at least 24 hours before class.

## R 4.19 CULTURAL ARTIFACTS-MEMORIALS: GROUP 3

Readings: James B. Gardner; Sarah M. Henry, “September 11 and the Mourning after: Reflections on Collecting and Interpreting the History of Tragedy,” *The Public Historian*, Vol. 24, No. 3. (Summer, 2002), pp. 37-52. JSTOR:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=02723433%28200222%2924%3A3%3C37%3AS1ATMA%3E2.o.CO%3B2-%23>  
Marita Sturken, “The Wall, the Screen, and the Image: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial,” 35 (Summer, 1991), pp. 118-142 JSTOR:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=07346018%28199122%290%3A35%3C118%3ATWTSAT%3E2.o.CO%3B2-Y>

All members of **Group 3** to post “cultural artifact” assignment at least 24 hours before class. Please remember that your artifact must be a memorial built in America after 1945.

**Group 4: Announce readings for Thursday**

## T 4.24 RELIGIOUS ARTIFACTS: GROUP 4

Readings: Tazim Kassam, “The Daily prayer (*Du'a*) of Shi'a Isma'ili Muslims,” *Religions of the United States*, II, 32-43. BL2525 .R4688 2001.

Second Reading to be chosen by **Group 4** from Volume 2 of *Religions of the United States* (any religious artifact from between 1945-present).

All members of **Group 4** to post “religious artifact assignment” at least 24 hours before class.

## R 4.26 COMPARISON Group 5

**Group 5** to post comparison assignment 24 hour before class. Please compare the notion of evil during the Postmodern era (1945 to present) to the notion of evil in ONE of the following: Modernism (1914-1945), Realism (1865-1914), Romanticism (1825-65) **OR** Colonial America (1492-1776).

NAAL Introduction, “American Prose since 1945” (NAAL 2275-2285) **OR** American Poetry since 1945 (2609-21) The only other assigned readings for the day are the comparisons written by group 5.

## FINAL PROJECTS

5.7.07 Final Projects need to be posted on your WebPages on the Moodle.

## Assignments

### E-PORTFOLIO

All of your work for this semester will be posted online in an electronic portfolio on Moodle. You will be responsible for creating and maintaining your personal pages as well as a group webpage. On Thursday 1.25 we will meet in our usual room to learn how to use the technology you will need to complete the course assignments, and to create your homepage. If you have any questions after this session, though please feel to ask me, Tony Palomino, or Blake Arnold.

Five items need to be posted on your Webpage Portfolio throughout the semester: (1) your literary text annotation(s) (2) your annotated cultural artifact(s); (3) your religious artifact assignment; (4) your era comparison assignment(s) and (5) your final project. There are no other papers or exams in this course.

Please note: web projects must be posted by the dates listed below. You may, however, continue to update them throughout the semester.

## 1. LITERARY TEXT ANNOTATION

Overview: Compose a hypertext to explain one of the literary documents and to connect it to the other readings, artifacts, discussions, and classmates presentations. Your audience is other members of the class as well as friends who are interested in the class but were unable to take it this semester. (I.e. do not assume prior knowledge when you build the page.)

Detailed Instructions: First, your group will need to agree on which literary text you would like to use (feel free to consult with me). **The literary text needs to be from the era you are assigned** and should help us understand the notion of evil in that era. Once you have determined the literary text, each person should choose a paragraph, illustration, or stanza to annotate as a hypertext. You may break this text down into sections, illustrate it with relevant visual images, or connect it to whatever other materials you deem useful. One goal of this hypertext is to provide other members of the class with information they would need to know in order to understand the literary text. You may want to include links to relevant allusions, other parts of the text, other literary texts we have studied, critical articles, prior postings by your classmates, or ideas covered in class discussion. Since your goal is to unpack these connections, you will need to explain your links so that outsiders will know why they are relevant and important. Your links should include two connections to other postings by your classmates (either from this section of the course, or from earlier ones). You may also include a brief introduction to the passage if you find that helpful. Your annotation should be posted on your WebPages and should be linked to on your group's WebPages at least 24 hours before you are schedule to lead discussion.

## 2. CULTURAL ARTIFACTS

For each of the eras we are covering, we will focus on one particular kind of artifact (e.g. gravestones, domestic architecture, dress, photographs, or memorials). This assignment is to be posted the day before your group is scheduled to lead discussion on the cultural artifact s. Each member of the group should identify one cultural artifact on the web that relates to the discussion from the preceding days. Please choose a specific artifact that falls within this category and is from the appropriate era. E.g. if you artifact is on the colonial segment and is a gravestone, please choose a gravestone from colonial America (not a house from 20<sup>th</sup> century America, etc.). You may either locate an artifact online using the archives I have listed on the moodle, or you can upload an image of your own. Provide a brief description of the artifact (who made it? Where? When? About what?) and one larger paragraph of analysis of that artifact that links it to (1) the argument made by Delbanco (does your artifact support or refute his claims?) (2) the literary texts; and (3) the critical articles for the day. You may find Jules Prown's "Mind in Matter," (*Art as Evidence*, 69-95) to be a useful starting point for analyzing your object. Your artifact and analysis should be posted on your WebPages and should be linked to on your group's WebPages at least 24 hours before you are schedule to lead discussion.

## 3. RELIGIOUS ARTIFACTS

You will notice on the days listed for "religious artifacts" that I have chosen one artifact/article from *Religions of the United States in Practice*. In addition to this article I have asked your group to choose an artifact/article that is from the same time period. Although you should as a group collectively nominate an article for the rest of the class to read, each member of the group should annotate a different religious artifact, one of which can be the one I chose and one of which should be the one your group chose. You will need to coordinate who is covering which artifacts. THE ARTIFACTS MUST BE FROM THE

**CORRECT ERA.** The day before your group is scheduled to lead discussion on a religious artifact, you will be responsible for posting a close reading of the religious text. Once you have determined the artifact you will annotate, choose a paragraph, illustration, or short section to annotate as a hypertext. You should also include a brief introduction to the passage: what is the overall purpose of the piece? Who is the audience? How does it compare to other things we have read? How does the author understand evil? In your annotation of the passage, you illustrate it with relevant visual images, or connect it to whatever other materials you deem useful. One goal of this hypertext is to provide other members of the class with information they would need to know in order to understand the religious text. You may want to include links to relevant allusions, other parts of the text, the literary texts we have studied, artifact articles, prior postings by your classmates, or ideas covered in class discussion. Since your goal is to unpack these connections, you will need to explain your links so that outsiders will know why they are relevant and important. Your links should include two connections to other postings by your classmates (either from this section of the course, or from earlier ones). Your annotation should be posted on your WebPages and should be linked to on your group's WebPages at least 24 hours before you are schedule to lead discussion.

#### 4. COMPARISON

The purpose of the comparison page is to provide an overview of the notion of evil in the era and to compare it to the notion of evil in a previous era that we have studied. You will want to answer the following questions

- (1) What is the notion of evil as seen in this era? Do you agree with Delbanco's assessment? Is there anything you would add or subtract from his argument?
- (2) How does it compare to the notion of evil as defined by our class for **one** of the earlier eras? Use one of your classmates' summaries as the basis for this comparison (though you may also add information). Make sure you include a link to the page that has the summary you are using as the basis of a comparison.
- (3) Ground your argument with evidence from **one** literary text **or** cultural artifact, **or** religious text from each era. If you are comparing cultural artifacts please compare apples to apples (e.g. a colonial gravestone to a nineteenth-century one)

Your comparison should be posted on your WebPages and should be linked to on your group's WebPages at least 24 hours before you are schedule to lead discussion.

#### 5. FINAL PROJECT

The final assignment for this course is to write an on-line critical edition for one of the literary texts for this semester. Your edition should include

1. A critical introduction that positions the work in the context of the notion of evil in the era (about one page text).
2. A sample page from the text that is annotated with links that help the reader understand the text as a whole and its relationship to the ideas covered in this course.
3. A Cultural Contexts section that includes at least 3 related cultural artifacts and a brief explanation (one paragraph) of the relevance of each to the literary text
4. A Religious Context section that includes annotations of at least two religious artifacts from the era and a brief explanation of the relevance of each to the literary text.
5. A conclusion that explains how the text supports, refutes, or complicates Delbanco's theory (1-2 paragraphs).

Your final project is intended to build off of the work you and your classmates have been doing all semester. You should feel free to use some of the materials you have written in your earlier assignments and you should link your page to the work of at least three other students in the course (e.g. prior assignments, course discussion, annotations). All final projects must be posted by Monday of Finals week (5.7.07).