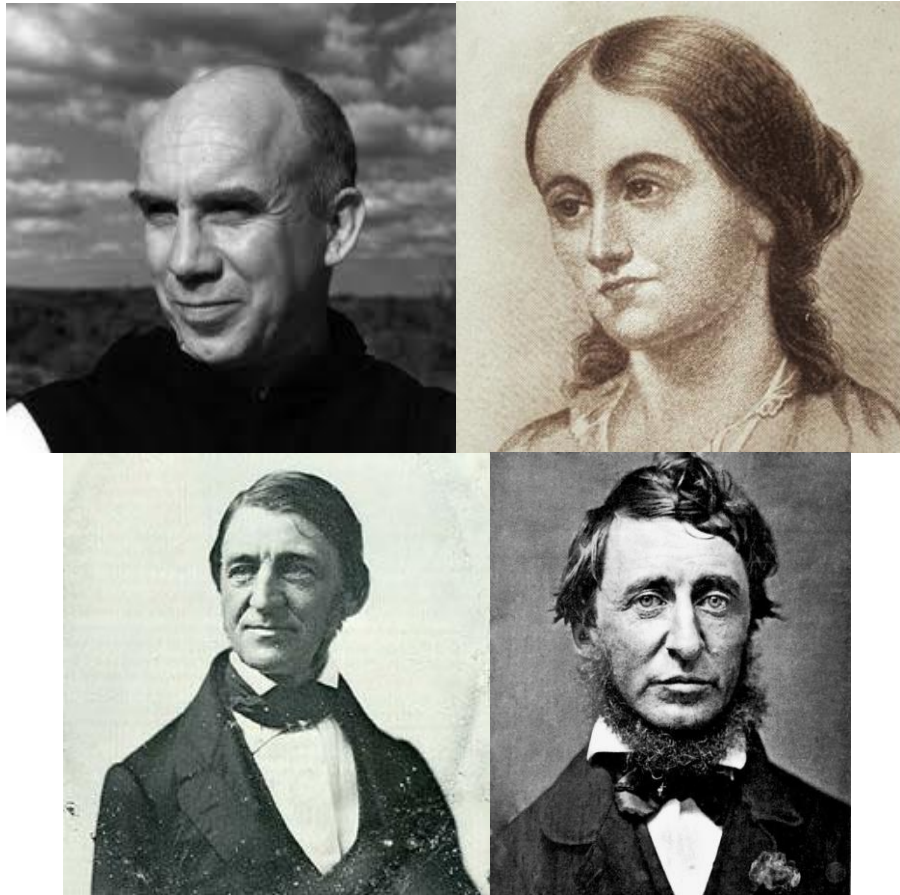


Thomas Merton and the Transcendentalists



IDC 200-09 (LWLC*)
Fall 2015
TR 9:25-10:40
Room: Horrigan 003
Prerequisite: IDC 101 or HONR 150

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Office Hours: Monday 10:45am-11:45am
Tuesday 8:15am-9:15am
Wednesday 1:30pm-2:30pm
Thursday 1:45pm-2:40pm
(and by appointment)

***NOTE:** This course is part of the Little Way Learning Community, an interrelated set of courses inspired in part by the “Little Way,” the idea, articulated by St. Therese of Liseux and embraced by Catholic activist Dorothy Day, that we can make a positive difference in and through even the seemingly small moments of our everyday lives. Students do not need to have taken another class in the LWLC to be enrolled in this course.

IDC PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Introduced in 1997 as a key component of the reformed general education curriculum, the IDC program is designed to provide a coherent, integrated, and developmental sequence of courses for undergraduate students. Many of the requirements of general education are discipline-specific, asking students to build a base of knowledge and skills in such individual areas as mathematics, the natural and social sciences, philosophy, theology, English, and the arts. Therefore, the IDC program, interdisciplinary in nature, offers a unique learning experience for Bellarmine students.

The IDC sequence of four courses is IDC. 101 – Freshman seminar, IDC. 200 – U.S. Experience, IDC. 301 – Transcultural (non-U.S.) Experience, and IDC. 401 – Senior Seminar. The IDC program is highly developmental in nature and each course in the sequence builds on the skills addressed in preceding course(s); therefore, students are not allowed to take the courses out of sequence. The program is designed to help students cultivate and master a set of skills essential to meaningful education: strong analytical reading and writing skills, effective oral communication skills, high-level critical thinking, and a truly participatory and self-reflective approach to learning.

IDC 200 CATALOG DESCRIPTION

IDC 200 courses are designed to focus on an important issue connected with the history and nature of U.S. culture. Each course offering is studied through approaches provided by more than one discipline of thought. For example, a course on the American Family might involve working from a combination of sociological, psychological, and literary perspectives; a course on the U.S. Constitution might include the philosophical, political, and historical factors that have contributed to its writing and character; and a course on the American space program might combine scientific and historical approaches. This course builds on and further develops the set of skills/abilities introduced in IDC.101, in part by culminating with a final project that combines research and critical analysis.

IDC 200-09 COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course draws connections between Transcendentalism, a nineteenth-century American literary and philosophical movement, and the writings of Thomas Merton, the twentieth-century Catholic theologian whose work and life are central to our distinctive intellectual history and institutional identity at Bellarmine. Although they lived and wrote a century apart, Merton and the Transcendentalists have a great deal in common, including similar ideas about social justice, the relationship between the individual and the community, and the importance of our natural environment. Merton also shares Transcendentalism's deep engagement with Asian religious and philosophical traditions: Transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau were among the first American writers to draw heavily on Hindu and Buddhist texts, helping to begin an intercultural dialogue that Merton would later take up and extend in his important works on Taoism and Zen Buddhism.

Over the course of the semester, we will explore these and other key points of contact between Merton and the Transcendentalists, with a special emphasis on interdisciplinary scholarly investigation—i.e., the way in which looking at these writers through different disciplinary lenses (e.g., literary study, philosophy, theology, history, etc.) might open up new and productive lines of inquiry. Students will have an opportunity to visit and learn from the Merton Center here at Bellarmine, as well as to take a day trip to the Abbey of Gethsemani in Bardstown, Kentucky, the monastic community of which Merton was a part from 1941 until his death in 1968. Work for the course will include a series of short papers, along with a semester-length research project in which students apply some of the ideas of Merton and the Transcendentalists to a contemporary social justice issue of their choosing.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. Thomas Merton, *A Thomas Merton Reader* (ISBN: 978-0385032926)
2. Thomas Merton, *Mystics and Zen Masters* (ISBN: 978-0374520014)
3. *The American Transcendentalists*, ed. Lawrence Buell (ISBN: 978-0812975093)
4. Paul Quenon, *Unquiet Vigil* (ISBN: 978-1612615608)

Note: Because it’s important that we’re all literally on the same page during our class discussions, please make sure that you purchase the editions of the text indicated above by their ISBNs.

MOODLE:

In addition to the four texts listed above, there will be a number of required readings posted on Moodle. Please print out these readings and bring them to class on the assigned days so that we can refer to and revisit specific passages during our discussions. The syllabus, assignment sheets, grades, and any important announcements related to the course will also be posted there, so make sure that you check our Moodle site regularly for updates.

LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES:

Learning Outcomes for This Course	Applicable Bellarmine General Education Outcomes	Applicable Bellarmine Geography Standards	Applicable IDC Skills	How Outcomes Will Be Assessed
Students will develop the ability to read, understand, and make connections between texts by key U.S. authors from different historical periods, tracing the evolution of important ideas about the nature of the self and its relationship to our social and natural environments.	4. Comparative understanding of the world’s peoples, places and cultures (focus on U.S.) 9. Critical thinking skills 10. Facility in oral and written communication	ii. Awareness of how culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions. vi. Knowledge of how economic, political and social relations among people influence the division and control of Earth's surface.	Writing /Critical Thinking /Information Literacy Skills Reading Skills Oral Communication Skills	Class discussion of readings Summary Synthesis Paper (specifically meets geography standards in its focus on how Merton and the Transcendentalists address environmental concerns)
Students will apply and integrate ideas from Thomas Merton and the Transcendentalists in order to advance their thinking about contemporary issues and problems that they research.	4. Comparative understanding of the world’s peoples, places and cultures (focus on U.S.) 9. Critical thinking skills 10. Facility in oral and written communication	N/A (although potentially applicable if students choose to research an issue or problem related to geography for their annotated bibliography, research presentation, and research-based argument paper	Writing /Critical Thinking /Information Literacy Skills Reading Skills Oral Communication Skills	Annotated Bibliography Research Presentation Research-Based Argument Paper

GRADED WORK AND GRADE BREAKDOWN:

1. **Summary:** The true test of whether you understand a difficult text is if you can identify its main ideas, explain the relationship between those ideas, and translate them into your own words without changing their meaning or tone. With that mind, we'll begin the semester by honing our skills as active, critical readers, a process that will culminate with a formal summary of one of the readings from the first part of the course, worth up to a possible **100 points** and **due on Tuesday, 9/22**. I will post a detailed assignment sheet on Moodle well in advance of the due date, and we will spend time in class learning how to compose an effective summary and looking at examples.
2. **Synthesis:** In academic writing, before you can contribute your own thoughts on a subject, it's important to get a clear sense of the existing scholarly conversation. What have others already said? What are the key similarities and differences between the major texts on the subject? What, if anything, hasn't been addressed in the literature so far? To help us practice this crucial academic writing skill, you'll compose a synthesis of two texts—one by Thomas Merton, and one by the Transcendentalist author Henry David Thoreau—that address issues related to the natural environment. Your synthesis will be worth up to a possible **200 points**, and will be due on **Thursday, 10/15**. As with the summary, I will post a assignment sheet for the synthesis on Moodle, and we will devote class time to learning about and practicing this skill. NOTE: The synthesis paper fulfills Bellarmine geography standards required of an IDC 200 course (see the "Learning Outcomes and Assessment Strategies" grid above).
3. **Research-based Argument:** One of the goals of the IDC program is to give students the opportunity to think in an interdisciplinary way, integrating and applying ideas and methods from different fields of study. In keeping with this goal, we'll conclude our semester together with a project in which you'll apply ideas from Thomas Merton and the Transcendentalists to a contemporary issue or problem that you research. How might the insights and perspectives of the authors we've studied speak to this issue or change our thinking about it? To guide you through the process, I have broken this project down into three steps. First, you'll assemble an **annotated bibliography** of relevant sources, worth up to a possible **200 points** and due on **Thursday, 11/19**. You will also share with your classmates some of what you learned in a 10-minute **research presentation**, also worth up to a possible **200 points**. These presentations will take place during the class meetings before and after Thanksgiving Break and during our scheduled final exam period (**Tuesday, 11/24, Tuesday, 12/1, and Thursday, 12/10**). Lastly, you'll put all of the pieces together in a **research-based argument paper**, due at the beginning of our scheduled final exam period, at **8:00 am on Thursday, 12/10**. I have set aside significant class time to help prepare you for success on this sequence of assignments.

There are 1000 possible points for the semester, and your final grade will be a sum of the points you receive, converted to a letter. The point breakdown is as follows:

Assignment	Summary	100
	Synthesis	200
	Annotated Bibliography	200
	Research Presentation	200
	Research-Based Argument Paper	<u>300</u>
		1000 Total Points

The Grading Scale: 990-1000 (A+), 930-989 (A), 900-929 (A-), 880-899 (B+), 830-879 (B), 800-829 (B-), 780-799 (C+), 730-779 (C), 700-729 (C-), 680-699 (D+), 630-679 (D), 600-629 (D-), 0-599 (F).

ATTENDANCE AND TARDINESS:

Because coming to class each day having read the material is so crucial to your success, this course adheres to a strict attendance policy: You are allowed two absences for the semester (a week's worth of classes), no questions asked; **every class you miss after the second will result in your final grade being lowered by a third of a letter (e.g., from a B to a B-)**. You are an adult, and I assume you will only miss class in the case of a legitimate emergency, so you do not need to provide me with documentation if you are absent. Coming to class tardy is disruptive and therefore unacceptable. I take roll at the beginning of class, and, although you are welcome to join us if you do arrive late for whatever reason, I will not interrupt class to mark you present. Religious holidays are the *only* excused absences, but you must inform me *in advance*. Also, please note that any time you miss class or are late to class, **it is your responsibility to see me about class activities, handouts, papers to be handed in, or papers I have returned.** Being absent or late is also not a valid excuse for not being aware of any syllabus changes, etc. It is your responsibility to make sure you have all up-to-date information pertaining to the class.

NOTE: The University requires students who will be absent from class while representing the University to inform their instructors in two steps. During the first week of the course, students must meet with each instructor to discuss the attendance policy and arrangements for absences related to University-sponsored events. Student-athletes must pick up their forms from the Athletics Office in Knights Hall and have them signed by one of the Assistant Athletic Directors before providing them to the instructor. Students participating in university events not sponsored by the Athletics Department must provide the instructor with a signed Student Absentee Notification Form, available via the student portal on the University intranet, at the earliest possible opportunity, but not later than the week prior to the anticipated absence. The Student Absentee Notification Form does not serve as an excused absence from class. Your instructor has the final say about excused and unexcused absences and it is the student's responsibility to know and abide by the instructor's policy.

ELECTRONICS:

As a courtesy to me and to your classmates, please turn off and put away all cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices before class. Thoreau didn't tweet his followers from Walden Pond, and Merton didn't even own a television. All kidding aside, unless you have special needs that require you to use an electronic device in class, we'll minimize potential distractions by limiting ourselves to tried-and-true technologies that were available during Merton's and the Transcendentalists' own lifetimes: pen, paper, and face-to-face discussion.

PAPER FORMAT:

Your papers should be typed, double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins, and stapled (this is different than the default setting for Word on many computers, so make adjustments where needed). They should also include a heading (with your name, the course number, my name, and the date), a title, and proper documentation, according to MLA citation style. Please be sure to proofread everything carefully; excessive spelling, typographical, or mechanical errors will lower your grade.

WRITING CENTER:

You are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the Writing Center, located in the ARC, for additional assistance on your written work in this class. A writing consultant will discuss your current writing project with you at any stage of your writing process and assist you in deciding what your next step should be. Schedule your visit to the Writing Center and view available hours at <http://www.bellarmino.edu/arc/writingcenter.aspx>.

LATE WORK POLICY:

The due dates for the different assignments are listed both above under “Graded Work and Grade Breakdown” and below on our course calendar. **If you do not have these assignments typed and ready to hand in at the beginning of class, your grade will be reduced by a full letter grade for every day late (calendar day, not class meeting).** Also, please note that **I will not accept papers sent to me through email or left in my mailbox.** You should have your paper printed out (and stapled!) on the day that it is due. Computer problems are not an acceptable excuse for not having your work, so complete your essay ahead of time in order to preempt any last-minute technological crises.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

Bellarmino University is an academic community. It exists for the sake of the advancement of knowledge; the pursuit of truth; the intellectual, ethical, and social development of students; and the general wellbeing of society. All members of our community have an obligation to themselves, to their peers, and to the institution to uphold the integrity of Bellarmino University. In the area of academic honesty, this means that one’s work should be one’s own and that the instructor’s evaluation should be based on the student’s own efforts and understanding. When the standards of academic honesty are breached, mutual trust is undermined, the ideals of personal responsibility and autonomy are violated, teaching and learning are severely compromised, and other goals of the academic community cannot be realized. For a thorough description of the University’s policy, including penalties for acts of academic dishonesty and breaches of integrity, please refer to the *Course Catalog*:

https://catalog.bellarmino.edu/2015-2016/undergraduate-academic-policies#Academic_Honesty

ACADEMIC RESOURCE CENTER (ARC):

Bellarmino University is committed to providing services and programs that assist all students in further developing their learning and study skills and in reaching their academic goals. Students needing or wanting additional and/or specialized assistance related to study techniques, writing, time management, tutoring, test-taking strategies, etc., should seek out the resources of the ARC, located on the B-level of the W.L. Lyons Brown Library. Call 272-7400 or visit the ARC website (<http://www.bellarmino.edu/arc/>) for more information.

DISABILITY SERVICES:

Bellarmino University is committed to providing equal educational opportunities and full participation for persons with disabilities. It is the University’s policy that no otherwise qualified person be excluded from participating in any University program or activities, be denied the benefits of any University program or activity, or otherwise be subject to discrimination with regard to any University program or activity.

Students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact Disability Services, located in the ARC, on the B-level of the W.L. Lyons Brown Library (call 502-272-7400 or email rpurdy@bellarmino.edu to schedule an appointment). Students are encouraged to make these arrangements with the Director of Disability Services as early in the semester as possible so that a student and his/her course instructor can collaborate for a successful course experience.

FIELD TRIP POLICY:

We'll be taking a field trip on Saturday, 11/7 to the Abbey of Gethsemani, which is located a short drive away near Bardstown, Kentucky. You'll have the opportunity to see where Merton lived, worshipped, and wrote, as well as to meet with Brother Paul Quenon, a novice under and friend of Merton whose most recent collection of poems, *Unquiet Vigil*, we'll be reading and discussing for class.

This field trip is an essential component of the course and is noted on the calendar below. It is thus important to make arrangements as soon as possible around work, class, and extracurricular schedules in order to participate in this opportunity. Bellarmine University requires that all students sign a waiver and release form to participate in any field trip. The refusal to sign off on the waiver means no participation in a field trip. Students have the right to not sign, but not the right to be granted a precedent-setting exception to something that exists to help protect the University and its community of students, faculty, and staff.

A student driver who volunteers to drive other students in his or her private vehicle on a field trip must hold a current valid driver's license and private vehicle insurance coverage. The student driver's private vehicle insurance is primary coverage for any injuries to passengers and/or any vehicle damage.

Course Calendar

TMR = Thomas Merton Reader
TAT = The American Transcendentalists
M = Moodle

FOUNDATIONS

Week One:

Thurs 8/20 Introductions

Week Two:

Tues 8/25 Lawrence Buell, "Introduction" (*TAT* xi-xxviii); Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar" (*TAT* 82-99)

Thurs 8/27 Thomas Merton, "Prisoner's Base" (*TMR* 27-38); "Passage" (*TMR* 39-42); "Children in the Market Place" (*TMR* 51-64); "In the Face of Death" (*TMR* 67-70); "Our Lady of Cobre" (*TMR* 76-84)

LOOKING INWARD: THE TRUE SELF

Week Three:

- Tues 9/1 Emerson, "Self-Reliance" (*TAT* 208-31); **Summary Assigned**
- Thurs 9/3 Merton, "With a Great Price" (*TMR* 87-94); "Magnetic North" (*TMR* 95-101); "The Baroness" (*TMR* 102-03); "The Sleeping Volcano" (*TMR* 104-06); "The Grove and Beyond" (*TMR* 127-33); "To the Monastery" (*TMR* 140-44); "To Become a Monk" (*TMR* 152-54); "Our Lady of Sorrows" (*TMR* 159-69); "Meditatio Pauperus in Solitudine" (*TMR* 513-16)

Week Four:

- Tues 9/8 How to Write a Summary
- Thurs 9/10 Merton, "A Body of Broken Bones" (*TMR* 319-24); "Seeds of Contemplation" (*TMR* 426-30); "The Wisdom of the Desert" (*TMR* 475-80)

Week Five:

- Tues 9/15 Merton, "Philosophy of Solitude" (*M*)
- Thurs 9/17 Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself" (*M*)

LOOKING OUTWARD: SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE NATURAL WORLD

Week Six:

- Tues 9/22 **Summary Due; Synthesis Assigned**
- Thurs 9/24 Henry David Thoreau, "Resistance to Civil Government" (*TAT* 257-77); Theodore Parker, from "The Function of Conscience" and "The Fugitive Slave Law" (*TAT* 357-71); Merton, "A Signed Confession of Crimes Against the State" (*TMR* 116-19)

Week Seven:

- Tues 9/29 Thoreau, from *Walden* (*M*); from "Walking" (*TAT* 329-35); "Two Proposals for Land Preservation" (*TAT* 336-37)
- Thurs 10/1 Merton, Letters to Rachel Carson and Barbara Hubbard (*M*); How to Write a Synthesis

Week Eight:

Tues 10/6 Merton, “A Member of the Human Race” (*TMR* 345-47); “The Good Samaritan” (*TMR* 348-56); “Chant to Be Used in Processions Around a Site With Furnaces” (*TMR* 357-59); “War and the Prayer for Peace” (*TMR* 276-84)

Thurs 10/8 Margaret Fuller, from “The Great Lawsuit” (*TAT* 301-20)

Week Nine:

Tues 10/13 No class (mid-term break)

Thurs 10/15 **Synthesis Due; Research Bibliography, Paper, and Presentation Assigned**

LOOKING EAST: ASIAN PHILOSOPHIES AND RELIGIONS

Week Ten:

Tues 10/20 Thoreau, “Christianity and Hinduism Compared” (*TAT* 178-81); from “Sayings of Confucius” (*TAT* 427-28); Thomas Wentworth Higginson, from “The Sympathy of Religions” (*TAT* 182-87)

Thurs 10/22 Merton, *Mystics and Zen Masters* (45-80, 213-34, 281-88)

LOOKING AHEAD: INFLUENCE, APPLICATION, INTEGRATION

Week Eleven:

Tues 10/27 Merton, “Poetry and Contemplation: A Reappraisal” (*TMR* 399-415); “Aubade—Harlem” (*TMR* 107); “For My Brother: Reported Missing in Action, 1943” (*TMR* 170-71); “The Trappist Abbey: Matins” (*TMR* 173); “A Practical Program for Monks” (*TMR* 179-81); “A Psalm” (*TMR* 334); “Why Some Look Up to Planets and Heroes” (*TMR* 416-17); “The Heavenly City” (*TMR* 498-99)

Thurs 10/29 Emily Dickinson, selected poems (*M*)

Week Twelve:

Tues 11/3 Paul Quenon, selections from *Unquiet Vigil: New and Collected Poems*—“Lark Ascending” (18); “Sad Possum” (33); “My Mad Life as a Bat” (35); “Merton’s Novices: Late 1950s” (56-57); “Bells of the Hours” (69-74); “1 July” (88); “Fading Meditation” (95); “The Missing Pebble” (98); “The Cowl” (105); “Monk’s Cassock” (112); “Primal Prayer” (113); “The Hood” (114-15); “Straw Mattress” (128-29); “Ultimate Morality” (151); “Unquiet Vigil” (155)

Thurs 11/5 No class (field trip to Gethsemani on Saturday)

Sat 11/7 Gethsemani Field Trip

Week Thirteen:

Tues 11/10 Library Day

Thurs 11/12 How to Write a Research-based Argument (and how not to!); How to Plan an Effective Oral Presentation

Week Fourteen:

Tues 11/17 Merton Center Visit

Thurs 11/19 **Annotated Bibliography Due**

Week Fifteen:

Tues 11/24 Research Presentations, Day One

Thurs 11/26 No class (Thanksgiving Holiday)

Week Sixteen:

Tues 12/1 Research Presentations, Day Two

Week Seventeen:

Final Day of Presentations and Research-Based Argument Paper Due on Thursday, 12/10 at 8:00am (our scheduled final exam time)