The American Tradition II Autumn Tutorial
Moby-Dick

INSTRUCTOR
Amy Thomas Elder

DATES AND TIMES
COURSE LENGTH: 10 WEEKS
DATES: Oct. 1-Dec. 10
no class Nov. 26
TIMES: 9:30-11:00

LOCATION:
Gleacher Center
450 N. Cityfront Plaza Drive
Chicago, IL 60611

PREREQUISITES:
At least 2 years in the Basic Program Core Curriculum.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
In this the bicentennial of Herman Melville’s birth, it’s hard to get through a week without seeing some reference to Melville and his Whale. Having now been more or less canonized as our American epic, Moby-Dick has been understood and misunderstood in more ways than anyone can count, and over the next 10 weeks we will generate our own. The method will be “selective close reading”—attention to particular passages—along with, in the later weeks, literary analysis seeking a comprehensive understanding of the whole.

REQUIRED TEXTS
Melville, Moby-Dick

ATTENDANCE POLICY
Students should register before the course begins.
### WEEKLY READING SCHEDULE

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In a sense, one will never be done with reading Moby-Dick; it is one of those books that continually call into question everything that is best and worst about our culture.... (David Kirby, Herman Melville, p. 107)

I am willing to ride Melville’s image of man, whale and ocean to find in him prophecies, lessons he himself would not have spelled out. A hundred years gives us an advantage. For Melville was as much larger than himself as Ahab’s hate. He was a plunger. He knew how to take a chance . . . . Melville took an awful beating. He was bound to. He was an original, aboriginal. A beginner. (Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael, p. 13)

Moby-Dick is at once the most startling and the most characteristic product of the American imagination. (Richard Chase, “Melville and Moby-Dick,” in Critical Essays, p. 61)

Moby-Dick is America’s most unparochial great book, less delivered over to time and place than the work of even our freest minds, Emerson and Whitman. It is conceived on a vast scale, it shakes hands with prairie seas and great distances, it invades with its conquistador prose ‘the remotest secret drawers and lockers of the world.’ It has towering faults of taste, it is often willful and obscure, but it will remain America’s unarguable contribution to world literature, so multilayered is it, so wide-ranging in that nether world which is the defiant but secretly terror-stricken soul of man, alone, and appalled by his aloneness. (Clifton Fadiman, Lifetime Reading Plan, p. 191)

There is nothing to be discovered behind the White Whale. Its fearful significance lies precisely in the fact that it signifies a void, nothing, a brute force, or an unknowable agent (which comes to the same thing). (Cesare Pavese, “Preface to Moby-Dick,” in American Literature, p. 73)

“It’s the father.” (C. G. Jung, reported, “Damned in Paradise”)

### DISABILITY INFORMATION

Student Disability Services (SDS) works to provide resources, support and accommodations for all students with disabilities and works to remove physical and attitudinal barriers, which may prevent their full participation in the University community. Students that would like to request accommodations should contact SDS in advance of the first class meeting at 773.702.6000 or disabilities@uchicago.edu.