**DRAFT COURSE SYLLABUS**
(4/6/18)

**EMERSON AND THOREAU: THE LIFE FULLY LIVED**

This seminar will take students on a personal exploration of the lives and thought of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, two of the most inspiring figures in American history and letters. Emerson was intensely engaged with society, ever committed to close friendships and community. Thoreau in contrast was reclusive and austere, so alone in his beloved nature that he seemed to lack human warmth. Still, despite growing contentiousness between them, Thoreau considered Emerson his most important mentor, and the older sage considered Thoreau his closest friend. Emerson was at the center of the most searchingly brilliant, progressive, and creative community in 19th century America. His friends kept diaries, wrote letters to one another, explored alternative lifestyles, and served as public intellectuals. And they strove to live fully engaged lives—“to find the journey’s end in every step of the road, to live the greatest number of good hours,” as Emerson once exclaimed. Thoreau preferred his life alone in the outdoors and yet he too sought the fully engaged life. In his masterpiece, *Walden*, he implored his readers to abandon lives of “quiet desperation” and to come alive in new ways—to dare to “suck all the marrow out of life.” This course, offered in the bicentennial year of Thoreau’s birth, will involve intensive reading, personal and expository writing, and active participation in transformative conversation.

**COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

Students will be evaluated on their attendance at classes, completion of assigned readings, participation in classroom discussion, and writing of a series of brief response papers and a midterm and final paper. In addition to intensive and at times quite personal group discussion we will also pay attention to the visual record of Emerson’s and Thoreau’s lives and times.

**Written work and presentations**

All work will be the student’s own, and follow NYU guidelines. Extensions ordinarily will not be granted. Two papers and one shorter piece of writing will explore questions of the student’s choice from the life and work of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. These papers will be evaluated on a demonstration of student mastery of course content, originality, clarity of writing, personal style, and general acumen. All work will be the student’s own, and follow NYU guidelines. Extensions ordinarily will not be

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granted. In addition all students will keep a personal journal during the duration of this course.

While grading involves judgment and insight into a student’s overall engagement with the course, the following schema may be helpful to those interested in knowing how their efforts will be evaluated and final grades arrived at.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student presentations and personal writing</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short first paper (2-3 pages)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid term paper (5 pages)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper (10 pages)</td>
<td>40%</td>
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**REQUIRED TEXTS**

The following books will be available at the NYU Bookstore for purchase in early September:


Richardson, Robert, *Henry David Thoreau, A Life of the Mind*, Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1986 (“HDT”)


**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**

---Week 1---

9/06 Welcome, and Introduction to the study of Emerson

---Week 2---

9/13 “Writing What We Know”

**Assigned Reading:** Mind, 3-72

---Week 3---

9/20 “Kindling the Mind”

**Assigned Reading:** Mind, 72-156

**Paper #1** due in class (3 pages)
--- Week 4 ---

9/27  Concord Days  
Assigned Reading: Mind, 157-217; HDT, 5-18  

6:00pm Special evening presentation by Thoreau author Laura Dassow Walls to be attended by class members.

--- Week 5 ---

10/04  Transcendental Community  
Assigned Reading: Mind, 218-259; Emerson, “Nature”; HDT, 18-42  

--- Week 6 ---

10/11  Emersonian Fire  
Assigned Reading: Mind, 260-300; Emerson, “The American Scholar” and “The Divinity School Address”

--- Week 7 ---

10/18  Concord’s Sage and His Disciple  
Assigned Reading: Mind, 301-360; Emerson, “Self-Reliance”; HDT, 47-116  

--- Week 8 ---

10/25  “Experience”  
Assigned Reading: Mind, 363-428; Emerson, “Experience”; HDT 116-159

--- Week 9 ---

11/01  Field Trip:  
Second Paper due in class (5-7 pages)

--- Week 10 ---

11/08  Emerson and Thoreau…and Margaret Fuller  

--- Week 11 ---

11/15  Writing Walden  

--- 11/22  THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS

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---Week 12---
11/29 **Thoreau and Emerson**
**Assigned Reading:** HDT, 293-368; Thoreau: “Civil Disobedience” and other assigned readings

---Week 13---
12/06 **On Fire Against Slavery**
**Assigned Reading:** Mind, 490-540; Emerson, “Fate,” “Fugitive Slave Law”; HDT, 368-384
**Final Paper** due in class (10-12 pages)

---Week 14---
12/13 **Endings**
**Assigned Reading:** Mind, 543-573; HDT, 385-389; “Eulogy on Thoreau”; Emerson and Thoreau poems to be assigned

PHILIP KUNHARDT is Distinguished Scholar in Residence in the Humanities, and teaches history and biography in the College of Arts and Science. He focuses on the lives of transformative figures and has co-authored six books, including *The Photographs of Abraham Lincoln* (2015), *Looking for Lincoln* (2008), and *The American President* (1999). He was also writer and co-producer of more than a dozen documentary films for PBS, ABC, HBO, Discovery, and others, including the ten-part PBS series *The American President* (2000), and the sixteen part *Freedom: A History of US*. Before coming to NYU in 2010 he was a Bard Center Fellow at Bard College in Annandale, New York.