Since the appearance of *The Feminization of American Culture* in 1977, feminist scholars have been engaged in what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has described as a "conscious rehabilitation of the category of the sentimental." This rehabilitation has taken a number of strategies: The first has involved challenging the absolute binary represented by the ideology of the separate spheres and perpetuated in criticism by "bring[ing] female subjects and the representation of gender into the center of a social history of the public" (Ryan ix) and providing evidence of women's involvement in the public sphere as political, commercial, and moral agents. Other works, especially Jane Tompkins' *Sensational Designs* (1985) and Fisher's *Hard Facts: Form and Setting in the American Novel* (1985), have focused more particularly on the political value of the cult of sentiment by validating the popular mode of sentiment for its reformist implications. For some feminist scholars, sentimentality can be interpreted as part of a popular feminist counter-politics. Jean Fagin Yellin, Hazel Carby, Lori Ginzberg, and Dana Nelson have all explored the politics of sentiment in terms of identificatory strategies between women and racial others, seeing sentiment as an index of white women's political engagement in reform movements such as abolition, protests to Indian removal, etc..

Although the debate about the political value of sentimental culture has been largely shaped by the extreme positions represented by Ann Douglas and Tompkins, work on sentimentality since 1985 has, regardless of its view of the political value of sentimental culture, largely accepted the gendering of sentiment as female. Virtually all of the critical work which responds to Douglas and sentimentality's other detractors has continued to assume that sentimentality is a fundamentally feminine affective structure of feeling; its literature is presumed to be centered on an identification with a suffering female protagonist, a sympathy extended to other subordinated groups in novels such as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Contemporary feminist literary criticism has continued to perpetuate this "gendering" of sentiment by constructing what amounts to an alternative canon of popular but critically marginalized texts written for, by, and about women, thereby ignoring the ways in which canonical male writers, such as Emerson, Melville, Hawthorne, Whitman, and Dreiser, have all deployed the discourse of sentiment in their works. In the midst of these recuperations, critics have tended to reinforce rather than question the gender binary to such an extent that the origins of American sentimentality in the "man of feeling" have been all but lost.

The goal of this course is twofold: to build on the important work done by the scholars mentioned above, by taking the next crucial step in reclaiming the sentimental for American masculinity by challenging studies that accept an uncomplicated gendering of sentiment as feminine and presume that the ideology of separate spheres was uncontested and uncomplicated by race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality, and to continue the analysis of the political work performed by sentiment.
Primary Readings
Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*
Charles Brockden Brown, *Ormond*
Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of A Slave Girl*
Emerson, “Threnody” and “Experience”
Hawthorne, *Blithedale Romance*
Melville, “I and My Chimney” and “Lightning Rod Man” [optional: *Pierre*]
James, *The Bostonians*
Elizabeth Jordan, *The Sturdy Oak*

All asterisked critical essays (non-asterisked essays are optional). Readings are available in the Reading Room OR on-line through the library website.

Bibliography of Secondary Sources
Barnes, Elizabeth. *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel*
Burgett, Bruce. *Sentimental Bodies: Sex, Gender and Literature in the Early Republic*
Brodhead, Richard. *Cultures of Letters*
Chapman, Mary and Glenn Hendler, ed. *Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in America.* (BuTo)
Ellis, Markman. *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel*
Kaplan, Amy. *Domestic Imperialism*
Kete, Mary Louise. *Sentimental Collaborations: Mourning and Middle-class Identity in 19th-century America.*
Otter, Sam. *Melville’s Anatomies.*
Phillips, Mark. *Society and Sentiment.*


Course requirements:

*Participation 20%*

*Seminar: If you have signed up to do a seminar, you should suggest questions/topics via email two days before class and give a 30-minute presentation about the literary and/or critical texts of the week. (30%)*

*20-25 pp. revised essay due April 10th (50%)*

January 8: Introduction

January 15: June Howard, “What Is Sentimentality?”**


Chapman and Hendler, "Introduction" to *Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture*, 1-16. (BuTo)**

Evan Carton, “What Feels An American? Evident Selves and Inalienable Emotions in the New Man’s World” (BuTo)

January 22: The Paradigmatic Sentimental Text: Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*


Jane Tompkins, "Sentimental Power: Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Power of Literary History” 122-146 (BuTo) **

(These two classic readings construct a debate over the value/meaning of sentimentality)

SEMINAR PRESENTATION

Jan 29: Beyond Domesticity: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* continued

Amy Kaplan "Manifest Domesticity" (BuTo)**


SEMINAR PRESENTATION
Feb 5: The Man of Feeling, Sentiment, and its Gothic Underside:  
Charles Brockden Brown’s *Ormond*  
Julia Stern, Chapters 1 and 4 from *The Plight Of Feeling: Sympathy and Dissent in the Early American Novel*. (BuTo) **  
Julie Ellison, "Introduction" to *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* 1-22. (BuTo)  
SEMINAR PRESENTATION

Feb 12: Canonical Sentiments I: Emerson  
Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Experience" (BuTo) and  
Karen Sanchez-Eppler, "Then When We Clutch Hardest: On the Death of a Child and the Replication of an Image" in *Sentimental Men* 64-85. (BuTo)**  
Eric Haralson, “Manly Tears: Men’s Elegies for Children in 19th-century American Culture” (BuTo) **  
SEMINAR PRESENTATION

Feb 26: Canonical Sentiments II: Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Blithedale Romance*  
Lori Merish, "Sentimental Consumption" from *Sentimental Materialism* 165-190. (BuTo)  
Stacey Margolis, “The Blithedale Romance and Other Tales of Association”  
SEMINAR PRESENTATION

March 5: *Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl*  
Karen Sanchez-Eppler, "Righting Slavery and Writing Sex" from *Touching Liberty* 83-104. (BuTo)  
Saidiya Hartman, from *Scenes of Subjection* Introduction and Chapter One (BuTo)  
SEMINAR PRESENTATION

March 12: Canonical Sentiments III:  
Melville "I and My Chimney"  
"The Lightning Rod Man" [http://www.melville.org/lrman.htm](http://www.melville.org/lrman.htm)  
Vincent J. Bertolini, "Fireside Chastity: The Erotics of Sentimental Bachelorhood in the 1850s" in *Sentimental Men* 19-42. (BuTo)  
SEMINAR PRESENTATION

March 19: Whitman, “The Child and the Profligate” (BuTo)  
Glenn Hendler, "Bloated Bodies and Sober Sentiments" in *Sentimental Men* 125-148. (BuTo)  
Michael Millner, “The Fear Passing the Love of Women: Sodomy and male Sentimental Citizenship in the Antebellum City” (BuTo)  
SEMINAR PRESENTATION
March 26: James’ *The Bostonians*
SEMINAR PRESENTATION

April 2: Uncoupling Gender and Authorship
   Elizabeth Jordan et. al *The Sturdy Oak: A Novel of American Politics*
   Selections from *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (BuTo)
   McCann, “Connecting Links” (BuTo)**
   Suzanne Clark, intro to *Sentimental Modernism* (BuTo) **
SEMINAR PRESENTATION