

American Philosophy as a Way of Life: A Course in Self-Culture

ALEXANDER V. STEHN
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Abstract: This essay fills in some historical, conceptual, and pedagogical gaps that appear in the most visible and recent professional efforts to “revive” Philosophy as a Way of Life (PWOL). I present “American Philosophy and Self-Culture” as an advanced undergraduate seminar that broadens who counts in and what counts as philosophy by immersing us in the lives, writings, and practices of seven representative U.S.-American philosophers of self-culture, community-building, and world-changing: Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790), Frederick Douglass (1818–1895), William Ellery Channing (1780–1842), Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), Margaret Fuller (1810–1850), Henry Bugbee (1915–1999), and Gloria Anzaldúa (1942–2004). Students enter the class with preconceptions about who philosophers are, what they do, how they write, and the languages in which they write. Students walk out with new senses of self, place, and language that emerge through new ways of seeing, doing, and writing philosophy.

Self-culture [is] the care which every man owes to himself, to the unfolding and perfecting of his nature . . . Little is to be gained simply by coming to this place once a week, and giving up the mind for an hour to be wrought upon by a teacher. Unless we are roused to act upon ourselves, unless we engage in the work of self-improvement, unless we purpose strenuously to form and elevate our own minds . . . very little permanent good is received.

—William Ellery Channing, *Self-Culture* (1838)

Because I must keep the spirit of my revolt and myself alive . . . I write to record what others erase when I speak, to rewrite the stories others have miswritten about me, about you. To become more intimate with myself and you. To discover myself, to make myself, to achieve self-autonomy.

—Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back* (1983)

Fresh out of graduate school, I got a tenure-track job to teach in my two areas of specialization: American Philosophy and Latin American Philosophy. Even better, the vast majority of my students would be bicultural and bilingual

Mexican Americans in the South Texas borderlands at the alma mater of one of my philosophical heroes: Gloria Anzaldúa. I'd be three hours south of where I grew up in rural South Texas as a monolingual English speaker of mixed "white" heritages (German, English, Scotch-Irish, and Ukrainian Jewish). The child of middle-class professionals who worked all day, I was raised during after-school hours by my nana, a Mexican American woman named Francis who spoke Spanish with her own children but only English with me and my brother. I didn't read *Borderlands/La Frontera* until graduate school, but Anzaldúa pierced my heart by criticizing the unspoken background assumptions of the place and culture I had grown up in, and she pierced my mind by developing a liberatory philosophical consciousness that I am still working to understand, embody, and teach as a bicultural, bilingual, and biliterate person, not by heritage but by choice.¹ I couldn't wait to offer students the philosophies of the Americas in both English and Spanish.²

When I first taught a senior-level seminar on "American Philosophy" in Spring 2011, we began with classical pragmatism—Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, Josiah Royce, and John Dewey—then spent more than half of the semester on critical works by Native American philosophers Laura Cornelius Kellogg, Viola Cordova, and Ward Churchill; African American philosophers David Walker, W.E.B. DuBois, and Martin Luther King Jr.; and feminist philosophers Margaret Fuller and Jane Addams. Whether discussing Peirce's "Fixation of Belief"³ or King's *Where Do We Go From Here?*,⁴ students participated vigorously and wrote insightful papers as we pushed the boundaries of American Philosophy. But after the class rounded third—the American Civil Rights Movement—and we approached home plate—Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*—my dream turned into a nightmare.

Over the first twelve weeks, students had never questioned whether any of the previous figures we read were "real philosophers." But as we started discussing Anzaldúa's work, Selena said that she just couldn't understand why we were reading *literature* in a philosophy class.⁵ Other students piled on, suggesting that Anzaldúa's intimately personal and poetic ways of writing were interesting, they just weren't philosophy. Arturo surprised us all by singing the Sesame Street song:

*One of these things is not like the others,
One of these things just doesn't belong,
Can you tell which thing is not like the others
By the time I finish my song?*

By the time Arturo's song finished, the Philosophical Border Patrol had successfully detained Anzaldúa, although a few students made last-ditch efforts to plead her case for asylum, in part by raising previously discussed philosophical themes. I tried to steer the argument in a productive direction by asking the two unbalanced sides to articulate their definitional criteria for philosophy, but the civility of the discussion evaporated. Students began to verbally assault one another. In nearly

twenty years of teaching, this is the only time that I have ever completely lost control of a classroom. Thoroughly rattled, I dismissed the class.

By deporting Anzaldúa—not for failing to be an *American*, but for failing to be a *philosopher*—my students were reinforcing a longstanding border wall between themselves and the academic discipline of philosophy.⁶ Anyone from *anywhere* could be a philosopher, but not them, not here in the borderlands, not in Spanglish.

In response to what felt like a spectacular failure as a teacher, I started over again the next semester. Everything was out, except for Anzaldúa. I created “American Philosophy and Self-Culture” from the ashes, teaching evolving variations in 2013, 2016, 2018, and 2020. Like the failed version, it’s still an American Philosophy seminar that ends with Anzaldúa,⁷ but by using principles of backwards course design, she now gets past the Philosophical Border Patrol—and my students feel like they too are American philosophers—because we encounter Anzaldúa’s life and work only after: 1) reading three centuries of U.S.-American philosophers who wrote in deeply personal and literary ways about self-transformation, community-building, and world-changing; 2) practicing American Philosophy as a Way of Life; and 3) keeping a philosophical journal and engaging in other forms of what Anzaldúa theorized as self-writing.⁸

My course is designed to broaden who counts in and what counts as philosophy by immersing us in the lives, writings, and practices of seven representative U.S.-American philosophers of self-culture, community-building, and world-changing across three centuries: Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790), Frederick Douglass (1818–1895), William Ellery Channing (1780–1842), Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), Margaret Fuller (1810–1850), Henry Bugbee (1915–1999), and Gloria Anzaldúa (1942–2004). On the first day of class, I introduce the course’s overarching heuristic. We study how each figure answers the question—“How should we live?”—by presenting an archetypal way of being a *philosopher* alongside an archetypal way of being an *American*.

My overarching aim is to orchestrate a transformative encounter with what John Lysaker calls “a living conception self-culture,” or “a studied, even labored attempt to cultivate one’s life.”⁹ Lysaker’s attempt to “take Emerson personally,” resonates with other recent personal yet scholarly works in American philosophy that provide a historical and theoretical foundation for my course.¹⁰ Going back another century, there is a clear link between Philosophy as a Way of Life (PWOL) and what John Dewey called for in “The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy.”¹¹ For all of these thinkers, we are also doers, and our efforts to know ourselves and each other while practicing self-culture are at the heart of education as well as philosophy. I therefore evaluate the success of my course in terms of how nourishing, transformative, or liberating it proves for me and my students at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV), nearly 90% of whom are Mexican American, and the majority of whom are first-generation college students.¹²

To counteract the fact that philosophy as typically conceived and taught can feel somewhere between irrelevant and oppressive to students with these demographic characteristics,¹³ my course builds upon “the resistance tradition of American philosophy,” which “placed the issue of boundaries at the center of questions of identity and community” while engaging in pluralistic experiments of personal and political freedom.¹⁴ We begin with the eighteenth century independence struggles but repeatedly return to the ideas that personal and political freedom remain elusive, that freedom movements continue to be necessary, and that the practice of self-culture can function as a “philosophy for freedom” with “an emphasis on place and embodiment.”¹⁵ Indeed, all the philosophers we read link their versions of self-culture to practices of freedom.¹⁶

Whereas most contemporary PWOL has harkened back to the Ancient West or Ancient East, my course is steeped in the history of American Philosophy.¹⁷ Layered upon the even older pre-revolutionary aim of “self-improvement,” *self-culture* peaked in popularity in the Antebellum United States as an attempt to develop the German *Bildung* tradition that presented philosophy and education as ongoing processes of personal and cultural growth.¹⁸ The philosophical center of my course, however, is Transcendentalism, which held the philosophical stage and interacted with various freedom movements in the mid-19th century. During this period, “Philosophy had not yet become a formal field of study in America,” but “when it was taught as a separate subject matter in colleges and universities, it usually took the form of moral philosophy.”¹⁹ Long before the “Analytic-Continental Divide” was institutionalized in 1962 when some APA members broke off to establish SPEP,²⁰ American Philosophy took place not only in schools and universities but also in public lectures, lyceums, and conversation groups hosted in living rooms.²¹ By immersing ourselves in this tradition, we can think, practice, and revive PWOL as something with deep roots in American history, so that it might continue growing not just in us, but in our families, among our friends, and across our communities. This is especially important at my commuter campus where fewer than five percent of students live in on-campus housing.

To help develop a shared sense of philosophical life and purpose, at least thirty minutes of each hour and fifteen-minute class consists of a student-led dialogue about the meaning, value, relevance, and truth of the assigned reading. We call this the “Provocation,” a nod to Emerson’s claim that “Truth cannot be received at second hand. Truly speaking, it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul.”²² Most students choose to facilitate dialogue in pairs, but they may also decide to shoulder the responsibility individually. The living aims and dialogical format of the course are also inspired by the innovative series of Conversations that Fuller hosted for women in the early 1840s,²³ explaining that she was “not here to teach” but “to provoke the thought of others.”²⁴

The aim of any PWOL course is not only to seek truth but also to encourage personal and social transformation. Or as Fuller put it in a letter that first outlined her plan to Sophia Ripley, an eminent tutor of Harvard undergraduates who was not permitted to attend Harvard herself, we function as a community of inquiry to “systematize thought” and work collectively to “ascertain what pursuits are best suited to us in our time and state of society, and how we may make the best use of our means of building up the life of thought upon the life of action.”²⁵ Like Fuller, I convene a philosophical circle to integrate thought and action through “the questions,—What were we born to do? How shall we do it?”²⁶ As we work to discover and/or create our vocations as human beings in dialogue with one another and the lives and writings of seven representative American philosophers, we conduct “existential experiments” like practicing a virtue using Benjamin Franklin’s and Frederick Douglass’ methods for two weeks. Finally, writing regularly in a philosophical journal—like reading, dialoguing, and living experimentally—serves as a “spiritual exercise” that all the philosophers we study linked to their practices of self-culture.²⁷

Since it is impossible to give a simple and exhaustive definition of *self-culture*, I offer two snapshots by the authors of this essay’s epigraphs: Channing and Anzaldúa. Channing popularized the term in his 1838 lectures addressed to working-class men in Boston, published that same year as *Self-Culture*.²⁸ Channing’s preliminary definition was “the care which every man owes to himself, to the unfolding and perfecting of his nature.”²⁹ Like the later Transcendentalists, Channing explored self-culture’s roots in the metaphor of agricultural cultivation. It was the intentional practice of growth across various fields: moral, spiritual, intellectual, social, practical, aesthetic, and communicative. Rejecting the dominant narratives about his audience that stripped them of agency while measuring their worth in terms of the work they could do for others, Channing said we should all “fasten on [self-] culture as our Great End.”³⁰ The greatness of this end led to his further claim that the lecture format would fail to accomplish any “permanent good” if Channing, his listeners, and his readers were not “roused to act upon ourselves.” In a similar way, if my course is to achieve any permanent good in me and my students, it must rouse us to “engage in the work of self-improvement” and to “strenuously form and elevate our own minds.”³¹

Nearly a century and a half later, Gloria Anzaldúa published “Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers” in the groundbreaking anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*.³² Against the dominant narratives that saw Mexican Americans and other people of color as workers serving white people, women as subservient to men, and queers as sexual deviants, Anzaldúa articulated her reasons for philosophizing and writing, which she considered “the quest for the self” and the practice of “making soul.”³³ By addressing working-class white men and women of color, Channing and

Anzaldúa theorized, practiced, and advocated for self-culture as a form of resistance, refusing to bow to the dominant culture's demands that oppressed persons should experience themselves as defined by others and remain in the lesser places they have been unjustly assigned.

If philosophy courses are considered unnecessary luxury goods even at elite private colleges and universities, they are presumed to be even less crucial for my students. Through the “deficit lens” of “subtractive schooling” frequently employed by politicians and educational bureaucrats, local varieties of Spanish and Mexican American culture are not honored and cultivated as assets to be leveraged against the real challenges faced by working-class families and first-generation college students in the Rio Grande Valley.³⁴ The resulting emphasis tends to be on graduating students as quickly as possible or training them to enter the workforce *without* fostering their critical capacities to transform it, a twenty-first century spin on the nineteenth-century ideology “that the mass of the people need no other culture than is necessary than to fit them for their various trades.”³⁵ In contrast, Anzaldúa's radical conceptions and practices of self- and world-transformation developed embodied forms of living, writing, and philosophizing grounded in the personal experiences of *los atrevidos*, the border-crossing people that colleges and universities were originally designed to keep out.

To foster a sense that we are investigating and practicing self-culture as part of a longer, evolving tradition of PWOL in the USA, the seminar proceeds chronologically. The historical background from the mid-1700s to mid-1800s comes from Daniel Walker Howe's *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*.³⁶ Howe compellingly argues that people like Benjamin Franklin, Frederick Douglass, Henry David Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller “postulated not only the existence of a self as the consequence of an individual's personal and social history, but also the capacity of the individual for critical reflection upon that self, with the power to modify it through conscious effort.”³⁷ Of course, Howe also notes that socially-dominant groups took for granted that “some persons would be excluded from participation in this process and even sacrificed to the development of others.”³⁸ His book therefore examines the “progressive democratization of the model, as it is extended to include poor men [e.g., Franklin], women [e.g., Fuller], and people of color [e.g., Douglass].”³⁹ Bridging Howe's work with that of McKenna and Pratt, my course fosters personal and social transformations through self-culture as developed by “the resistance tradition of American philosophy” from Benjamin Franklin to Gloria Anzaldúa.

The first of three major course units begins with Benjamin Franklin as a “founding father” of the United States, an archetype for self-making in America, and “America's first philosopher” according to David Hume.⁴⁰ As we read Franklin's *Autobiography* as a Socratic attempt to give an account of himself and, in some sense, invent himself, I ask students what it means for them to “make something of

themselves” today. We reflect upon the historical transition from medieval society where identities and roles were assigned at birth versus the “American Dream” of discerning our own vocations and writing our own stories.

Since Franklin’s complex version of the American Dream was later reduced to a narrow conception of individualistic economic achievement,⁴¹ students are surprised to learn that Franklin’s pre-revolutionary and post-colonial ideas about self-making focused on moral and intellectual growth in the service of the commonwealth or community.⁴² Indeed, Franklin founded a club for mutual improvement known as the Junto in 1727, which later branched into the American Philosophical Society in 1743, demonstrating that “projects of self-discipline or self-improvement can be undertaken collectively.”⁴³

Franklin’s *Autobiography* describes thirteen virtues: temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity, and humility. Franklin’s method was to practice each virtue in order for one week at a time, four cycles per year. Each day began with a plan—“What good shall I do this day?”—and ended with what he called a Pythagorean practice of self-examination, “What good have I done today?” Franklin recorded both his successes and his failures in his journal, literally making a black mark for “every fault I found upon examination to have been committed respecting that virtue upon that day.”⁴⁴ After following this method for years, Franklin wrote, “Tho’ I never arrived at the perfection I had been so ambitious of obtaining, but fell far short of it, yet I was, by the endeavor, a better and happier man than I otherwise should have been if I had not attempted it.”⁴⁵

From a PWOL perspective, one of the most striking characteristics of Franklin’s moral philosophy is the fact that he is less concerned with the question “What is virtue?” and more concerned with the practical question of how we may cultivate virtue. This leads to our first existential experiment. For one week, each of us practices Franklin’s Art of Virtue, i.e., the method of self-improvement that he designed to become a better and happier person, by selecting a virtue and following his method for cultivating it.⁴⁶

As we practice *self-making* with Franklin, we also begin keeping a philosophical journal to practice *self-writing*.⁴⁷ In colonial and early postcolonial America, Franklin’s transformative practices of self-making and self-writing were innovative and important. His *Autobiography* presents us with “the first citizen in literature who lives in a democratic, secular, mobile society [and] has the opportunity of choosing . . . what he is going to *do* in life and what he is going to *be* in life.”⁴⁸ Presenting Franklin as a distant American philosophical ancestor also sets up the course’s final suggestion that Anzaldúa might be our closest philosophical relative, whose creative practices of self-making and self-writing are especially innovative and important in anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, anti-xenophobic, and decolonial struggles. In any case, self-making and self-writing need to be part of

what PWOL offers students and teachers alike, which is why we write at least thirty philosophical journal entries over the course of the semester (two entries per week for fifteen weeks).

Throughout the course, I try to draw these sorts of broad connections without suggesting a false equivalence across difference subject positions. Our second philosophical autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*,⁴⁹ amplifies but also challenges Franklin as America's archetypal self-made man.⁵⁰ Like Franklin, Douglass emphasized themes of personal freedom, of moving from impotence to importance through hard work, but he outdoes Franklin by becoming a "self-made man" after being born into a system of slavery that legally defined him as chattel. As Douglass explained in an extremely popular speech:

Self-made men . . . are the men who owe little or nothing to birth, relationship, friendly surroundings; to wealth inherited or to early approved means of education; who are what they are, without the aid of any of the favoring conditions by which other men usually rise in the world.⁵¹

Douglass captures students' imaginations because "If any person could count himself as having owed 'little or nothing to birth, relationship, or friendly surroundings,' it was the American Slave."⁵² Again, the moral and pedagogical aims in traversing the space and time from Franklin/Douglass to Anzaldúa—who would point out the erasure of women in the myth of the self-made man—is to help students think through their own nascent ideas that the task of their lives may be to make themselves who they want to become after sustained personal reflection and experimental practice rather than whatever society has told them they must be. I do not tell students the meaning of their lives, but rather invite them into dialogue with a living philosophical tradition that is still relevant, "To be self-made was to have made, not money, but a self."⁵³ Or as Ana put it on our discussion board:

Making something of myself is being able to set aside the ideals and social rules conditioned into me since birth by my parents, Catholicism, school, my heritage, my color of skin, my gender, the media, and economic status. And then deciding for myself who I will be after I decide what I think is right. Otherwise, I would just be what other people made me.⁵⁴

Having been born a slave, Douglass effectively reframes self-making as the lifelong process of "becoming one's own master," thereby highlighting self-culture's rebellious, countercultural, or revolutionary potential, especially for people who do not enter the American system on equal terms.⁵⁵ Since Douglass was born in a nation that had already betrayed him, one of the chief virtues he had to develop was a rebellious spirit. A student poignantly brought this point home while leading our class dialogue about Douglass' famous oration "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"⁵⁶ Walking up to the white board, Javier wrote the title of his Provocation, "What to the Undocumented Student is a College Degree?" Statistically, at least

one student in each of my classes is undocumented although they may prefer not to disclose their status, so this Provocation really struck a nerve and gave birth to a painful, rich, and real conversation.⁵⁷

Today, most students take it for granted that each person has an equal right to self-culture, but this does not mean that we all begin from the same position or that we can or even should all follow the same path. I therefore ask my students to reconsider the virtue they've chosen from Franklin's list of thirteen, its definition, and the method they have adopted for cultivating it. Reviewing some passages where Douglass recasts as wisdom, faithfulness, and virtue what white slave-owners saw as foolishness, rebellion, and vice, I ask students to reflect upon the social factors that shaped *their* definition of their virtue, focusing on whether it applies in the same way to all people across contexts, or whether it is more like what Douglass talks about when describing the "Sabbath school," where he helped other slaves learn to read:

It was understood, among all who came, that there must be as little display about it as possible . . . for [our religious masters] had much rather see us engaged in those degrading sports [wrestling, boxing, and drinking whisky], than to see us behaving like intellectual, moral, and accountable beings.⁵⁸

Franklin's virtue of *sincerity* may have been called for among all the slaves who came to Douglass' Sabbath school, but *deception* might have simultaneously been the virtue called for in relation to their masters.⁵⁹ Referencing Javier's Provocation from a previous class, Gerardo speculated that perhaps his parents were *morally right* to cross the border illegally, and Arlet wondered out loud if people who deliberately pay undocumented persons a living wage are like station masters on the underground railroad. Of course, not everyone was convinced, but the students trying to show how the analogies break down are every bit as engaged and committed to some idea of justice or virtue that they must now struggle to articulate for themselves.

To conclude the first unit, I guide students through processes of: 1) modifying their conceptions and practices of the Franklinian virtue they previously chose in dialogue with Douglass' philosophical interventions, 2) practicing the modified virtue for another week while reflecting in their journals on its relation to maintaining or challenging the social/political status quo, and 3) writing up their two-week existential experiment. Characterizing this assignment as a lab report, students are encouraged to take the qualitative "data" from their experiences practicing a virtue (already recorded and partially interpreted in their journals) and to make new sense of it using the "theories" from the readings and dialogues. In other words, their essays present the most important things they have learned about: 1) Franklin/Douglass and their philosophies, 2) themselves and their own philosophies, and 3) self-culture and world-transformation.

The second unit covers Transcendentalism, from Channing's *Self-Culture* to Thoreau's *Walden* to Fuller's *Women in the Nineteenth Century*.⁶⁰ From Channing, we get not only the most straightforward definition of self-culture but more importantly, a statement of American philosophy as a way of life that summarizes the course ethos:

Little is to be gained simply by coming to this place once a week, and giving up the mind for an hour to be wrought upon by a teacher.⁶¹

Having already practiced two weeks of PWOL by cultivating a virtue with Franklin and Douglass, students are better prepared to understand and evaluate Channing's point.

Pierre Hadot was fond of quoting Thoreau's statement that "There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers," and he read *Walden* as Thoreau's attempt to "devote himself to a certain mode of philosophical life."⁶² Like Thoreau (and Socrates), I require from students "a simple and sincere account of [their] own life," which I encourage them to view as an experiment or work in progress.⁶³ *Walden* lays the groundwork as Thoreau's own attempt to give an account of his life while practicing self-culture.⁶⁴ Inspired by the "ancient philosophers, Chinese, Hindoo, Persian, and Greek," Thoreau went to the woods to live a simple life in the midst of a foolish civilization, to "solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically."⁶⁵ He recognized that we have trouble distinguishing between needs and wants, leading us to make poor decisions about how to spend our time. Defining self-culture as "the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor," Thoreau claimed that anyone who fails to at least attempt this has in fact "despaired of life, and is pursuing a descending and darkening way," no matter how awake or alive they might otherwise appear.⁶⁶

Thoreau challenges us to ask the ancient but nevertheless living philosophical questions, "How should I live?" and "What should I live for?" Unlike Franklin, Thoreau questions industriousness as a self-standing virtue, "I wish to suggest that a man may be very industrious, and yet not spend his time well."⁶⁷ Like Douglass, Thoreau raises questions about the essence of true freedom, arguing that many who are not technically slaves in America are still "slaves to King Prejudice" and are lacking in self-culture because they are "warped and narrowed by an exclusive devotion to trade and commerce and manufactures and agriculture and the like, which are but means, and not the end."⁶⁸ But what is the end? My aim is never to give students the answer, but I do more than merely raise the question by introducing practices, techniques, spiritual exercises, habits, or experiments that enable students to work out tentative answers *for themselves*.

Since I cannot expect each student to write a *Walden*, we scale things back to a second existential experiment and essay in response to Thoreau's "Walking," which brings "How should I live?" and "What should I live for?" into relation with "Where do I live?" and "When do I live?" Thoreau's thought-provoking claim is that

for walking to constitute a soul-nourishing activity or practice, it should at least sometimes serve as an opportunity to practice presence and self-directedness rather than mindless, senseless productivity.

In my afternoon walk I would fain forget all my morning occupations and my obligations to Society. But it sometimes happens that I cannot easily shake off the village. The thought of some work will run in my head and I am not where my body is—I am out of my senses. In my walks I would fain return to my senses.⁶⁹

In an age when we have become increasingly rootless “tools of our tools,” especially smart phones, self-culture is usually the furthest thing from our minds.⁷⁰ We are “not where our bodies are” and few of us mindfully walk our own neighborhoods or nearby environments.

The genius of Thoreau’s essay and walking practice provides an embodied, experimental method of foregrounding the question of our life’s direction and opens the possibility of philosophically reorienting ourselves. Over Spring Break, students read “Walking,” attempt at least one Thoreauvian walk, and write. Across a wide variety of experiences, their essays with titles like “Walking My Way to Self-Culture” or “Freedom Walks with Thoreau” are overflowing with philosophical insights into where they live, what they live for, and how they need to reject or re-learn things they thought they already knew. After exchanging their essays with a partner, one of the most striking things to emerge in class dialogue the first semester we did this was the way that gender shaped where, when, and how students decided to walk. Few men considered questions of personal safety or time of day when choosing where to walk, but many women did. I can still vividly recall Yasmín saying, “Thoreau wrote that to truly walk we need to set out ‘in the spirit of undying adventure.’ He obviously never worried about his own safety around the neighborhood.” Across our gendered experiences of walking, it was eye-opening for everyone, including me, to reflect upon how our basic considerations and orientations could be so different.

So, the next time I taught the class in 2016, I improved it by pairing Thoreau and Fuller. Our discussion of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*—especially the semi-autobiographical section where Fuller presents many of her own experiences as a debate between herself and the fictional character “Miranda”—brings to light a world of striking differences in the opportunities available to men versus women and what was expected of them in the Victorian Era.⁷¹ While Fuller never tried to erase sexual difference, she presented a vision of self-culture in which human beings ought to respect themselves and each other in ways that cut across gender, “Male and female represent the two sides of the great radical dualism. But, in fact, they are perpetually passing into one another . . . There is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman.”⁷² For this reason, “We would have every arbitrary barrier thrown down. We would have every path laid open to woman as to man.”⁷³ And yet, as students point out, we are not so far from the world of 1845 (when both *Woman*

in the *Nineteenth Century* and *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* were published) insofar as gender and race—no matter how changing and fluid—continue to exert a great deal of force on how we live. By examining the connections Fuller made between the freedom struggles of American women and African Americans, we continue to deepen our conception of self-culture as a practice of freedom and gain insight into how the arguments of these American philosophers are rooted in their biographies and praxis. Fuller's *life* and *Conversations*, not just her book, demonstrated the intellectual power of women, just as Douglass's *life* and orations, not just his book, provided powerful testimony to the American public concerning the humanity of slaves.

After reading Fuller, some relevant selections from biographies, and Rebecca Solnit's "Walking After Midnight: Women, Sex, and Public Space," we return to the existential experiment, which now lasts two weeks (like the Franklin-Douglass virtue exercise).⁷⁴ Having already read, walked, and journaled with Thoreau, we take another walk and journal about it with Fuller and/or Solnit, newly cognizant of the way that gender and other social identities shape not just how, when, and where we walk but also who we are and how we live with one another. To conclude this second course unit, we write and exchange our essays on walking to facilitate a class dialogue about what we've learned about social restrictions and self-culture from the Transcendentalists.

Our final unit begins with Henry Bugbee's *The Inward Morning: A Philosophical Exploration in Journal Form*, which bridges philosophy as many students previously understood it—i.e., as a kind of arguing about the arguments of canonical figures like Plato, Kant, or Quine—with philosophy as self-culture experimentally practiced and recorded in a philosophical journal as a kind of transformative self-writing. Bugbee believed that "the life we lead and the philosophy we believe in our hearts cannot be independent of one another" and was "concerned with the works of philosophers not in themselves, but as helps to the understanding of experience."⁷⁵ Like all the American philosophers we read, Bugbee shows us philosophy as a way to better understand and articulate our own experiences, a way to find our own vocations, and a way to not just study the truth but also to live it. Many students like Maggie report that Bugbee's *The Inward Morning: Philosophical Exploration in Journal Form*, which models a new way to think and write as we read the works of philosophers while reflecting on our own experiences of nature and the social world, was what made the course's semester-long journaling exercises "finally click."

Bugbee's book also opens the hearts and minds of some of the more traditional philosophy students who might otherwise come to believe that Anzaldúa's *autohistoria* [self-history] is the opposite of *teoría* [theory] rather than something she and other philosophers of self-culture can weave together as *autohistoria-teoría* or "a personal essay that theorizes."⁷⁶ But by preemptively making the work of Bugbee—a white, heterosexual, Princeton-educated, upper-middle class, World

War II veteran—stick out as radically different from many mainstream twentieth century philosophers (he was denied tenure at Harvard in 1952 before teaching into retirement at the University of Montana), students who bring with them an artificially narrow and historically blinkered conception of philosophy are more likely to walk away from the course interested in “finding that anthem that would be native to our own tongue, and which alone can be the true answer for each of us.”⁷⁷ It also helps to tell these students that Quine called Bugbee “the ultimate exemplar of the examined life.”⁷⁸

After reading Bugbee and discussing both the philosophical themes he raises and the unique role of a philosophical journal in practicing PWOL, we turn to Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* as an exemplar of the American enterprise of self-culture, rendered now in what for many of my students is their native tongue: the wild, forked tongue of the borderlands, “neither *español ni inglés*, but both.”⁷⁹ Or as Aurora exclaimed during our first day on Anzaldúa, “No sabía que the philosophers could write the way I talk!” Sergio added, “Yeah, Spanglish is part of who we are, whether you like it or not.”

Anzaldúa’s opening chapter titled “The Homeland, Aztlán: *El otro México*” shifts the geography and language of reason to make the U.S.-Mexico borderlands center rather than periphery, much like the Transcendentalists tried to convince American scholars to embrace their own lands, traditions, and experiences (as Bugbee did in Montana) instead of believing that Europe (or Harvard) was the only source of real culture and philosophy. As Anzaldúa explains:

Culture forms our beliefs. We perceive the version of reality that it communicates. Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through the culture. Culture is made by those in power—men.⁸⁰

In contrast to this cultural tradition whereby “women are subservient to males,” Anzaldúa’s “entering the world by way of education and career and becoming [a] self-autonomous person” extends the philosophical lineage of self-culture in a way that resonates with many students, especially Mexican and/or Mexican American women, who typically comprise the largest group of students. The course’s framework of self-culture coupled with Bugbee’s extended reflections on vocation also gives new force to Anzaldúa’s claim that “indoctrinated as straight, I made the choice to be queer.”⁸¹ Like Thoreau constructing his own cabin on Walden Pond, Anzaldúa reconstructs herself “with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar, and my own feminist architecture.”⁸²

What I want is an accounting with all three cultures—white, Mexican, Indian. I want the freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails. And if going home is denied me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture—*una cultura mestiza*.⁸³

To make this new culture, Anzaldúa must also make a new self, a new community, and a new world in response to her calling as a poet and philosopher with exceptional insight into the unconscious and bodily aspects of self-making. As the writing of *Borderlands/La Frontera* transforms Anzaldúa, the white, Mexican, and Indian aspects of her new culture come to voice, “I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white. I will have my serpent’s tongue—my woman’s voice, my sexual voice, my poet’s voice.”⁸⁴ While theorizing “the ability of story (prose and poetry) to transform the storyteller and the listener into something or someone else,”⁸⁵ Anzaldúa transforms herself before our eyes, potentially transforming us by offering us a path to make ourselves. As she famously puts it, “I change myself, I change the world.”⁸⁶

Like the radical women of color Anzaldúa addresses in “Speaking in Tongues,” many philosophy students must defy the myth that their race, class, language, gender, religion, sexuality, or immigration status prevents them from “making something of themselves” or from writing and philosophizing. Anzaldúa’s works are published in defiance of these myths as works of insurrection, but they are simultaneously works of love, “We wield a pen as a tool, a weapon, a means of survival, a magic wand that will attract power, that will draw self-love into our bodies.”⁸⁷ As part of the much longer resistance tradition of American philosophy, Anzaldúa can help us overcome the fact that philosophy is one of the least diverse disciplines in the humanities and social sciences.⁸⁸ In countless ways, the dominant modes of philosophy require students to “stop speaking in tongues” or to “scrape the dark off [their] face,” but Anzaldúa offers us resources for thinking about how to rebel against this injustice and redefine the discipline. Recall this essay’s epigraph, where Anzaldúa’s answers the question of why she writes:

Because I must keep the spirit of my revolt and myself alive . . . I write to record what others erase when I speak, to rewrite the stories others have miswritten about me, about you. To become more intimate with myself and you. To discover myself, to make myself, to achieve self-autonomy.⁸⁹

Anzaldúa later clarifies, “*Autonomy*, however, is *not* separatism.”⁹⁰ Like the other American philosophers we read, she helps us connect across and through our differences by teaching us that the practice of philosophy demands “fusing our personal experience and world view with the social reality we live in.”⁹¹ I want my students to treasure the wildness of their tongues and pens (just as Thoreau and Bugbee treasure the wildness in the world and in themselves), so I encourage them to write in English or Spanish or Tex-Mex, to “use what is important to [them] to get to the writing. No topic is too trivial. The danger is in being too universal and humanitarian and invoking the eternal to the sacrifice of the particular and the feminine and the specific historical moment.”⁹²

It has become second nature for most philosophy professors to spend a great deal of time teaching students to internalize disciplinary norms and manifest

them in their writing, but Anzaldúa has convinced me that it is *also* worth doing the opposite, to encourage rebellious writing. Here I find the poetry of Anzaldúa especially helpful, especially when I show a video of her reading the titular poem from *Borderlands/La Frontera*, “To live in the Borderlands means you.”⁹³ Too few philosophy students or teachers think of poetry as a vehicle for philosophy, but all of the American philosophers in our course also wrote poetry, and writing poetry in a philosophy class undoubtedly helps us “throw away abstraction and the academic learning, the rules, the map and the compass” to truly learn, create new rules, redraw the map, and re-orient ourselves and our readers. As Anzaldúa explained, philosophers are “often driven by the impulse to write something down, by the desire and urgency to communicate, to make meaning, to make sense of things, to create [ourselves] through this knowledge-producing act.”⁹⁴ But rebellious impulses, desires, and urgency are difficult to express, at least initially, within the boundaries of the traditional academic rules of writing philosophy. In contrast, writing poetry, like writing in a journal, can help us bypass these rules and evade both our inner and outer censors. Then, if we like, we can transform our journal or poetry into philosophy, as Bugbee and Anzaldúa did.⁹⁵

In sum, Anzaldúa teaches us new ways to theorize and practice self-culture, “I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet.”⁹⁶ She also teaches us new ways to theorize and practice philosophy as a way of life, “By creating a new mythos—that is, a change in the way we see the world, the way we see reality, and the ways we behave—*la mestiza* creates a new consciousness.”⁹⁷ Since this quote provides an excellent definition of philosophy as a way of life—a back and forth attempt to change how we see the world, how we see each other, and how we live—I end our last class on *Borderlands/La Frontera* by having students share their answers to two questions they’ve already written about in their journals: What new way(s) of perceiving yourself, others, or the world have you gained by reading Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera*? How does it make you want to change the way(s) you live? This also serves as the pre-writing for their final project: to creatively convey how the course has helped them become their own self-cultivating experimental subject engaged in American philosophy as a way of life that involves reading and writing, doing and reflecting, and speaking and listening.⁹⁸

What is the most important thing I’ve learned by redesigning the course that failed and teaching it as “American Philosophy and Self-Culture?” I’ve learned that what I most want for my students is what I most want for myself: a transformative encounter with American Philosophy as a Way of Life. So, the truest measure of

the course's value is the extent to which we—here and throughout this essay I deliberately include myself with my students, since I complete all the course assignments with them—can say:

My work is about questioning, affecting, and changing the paradigms that govern prevailing notions of reality, identity, creativity, activism, spirituality, race, gender, class, and sexuality . . . Soy la que escribe y se escribe / I am the one who writes and who is being written. Últimamente es el escribir que me escribe / It is the writing that “writes” me. I “read” and “speak” myself into being.⁹⁹

Even in the most traditional non-PWOL philosophy courses, professors read and speak themselves into being, perhaps even regardless of whether their students are truly listening. But teaching PWOL demands more existential venturing, more careful listening, and more writing on my part. Doing each assignment with students—provoking class dialogue, engaging in my own existential experiments, faithfully keeping a philosophical journal, writing formal essays in response to the assignment prompts, and handing everything in to my students just as they hand everything in to me—all of this has fostered both new levels of inwardness and new varieties of outwardness as a teacher.

Like most teachers, I have sometimes “despaired of life” and pursued the “descending and darkening way” of hardworking exhaustion described by Thoreau until I found myself feeling alone against my students, like it’s one of me lecturing against thirty of them. But when I’ve paid them the attention they deserve, my students have always been willing to teach me that ineffective teaching is also stupid teaching. I’ve learned to spend more class time getting out of the way to let peer-led dialogue work its magic of drawing students into engaging conversation with each other about things they care about. I’ve learned that undertaking existential experiments and writing about them alongside my students—that is, joining them in a philosophical community of practice—does far more than merely lecturing at students while wishfully thinking that we automatically constitute a community of inquiry. Finally, as I’ve witnessed my students bring American Philosophy to life by theorizing and practicing self-culture semester after semester, they have taught me over and over again what Thoreau calls “the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor.”¹⁰⁰

Notes

1. Since 2018, I've served as Associate Director of UTRGV's Center for Bilingual Studies, which is one part of the B3 Institute, whose mission is "to participate in the transformation of the Rio Grande Valley by building and promoting a bicultural, bilingual, and biliterate teaching, research, and service environment through engaged practices with the community." The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, "Mission." <https://www.utrgv.edu/b3-institute/about/mission/index.htm>.
2. This essay focuses on PHIL 4340: American Philosophy, which I teach in English, but I also regularly teach courses bilingually. See Stehn, "Philosophizing in Tongues."
3. Peirce, "Fixation of Belief."
4. King, *Where Do We Go From Here*.
5. This name and all subsequent student names are pseudonyms.
6. My metaphorical characterization of students "deporting" Anzaldúa from American Philosophy is inspired by Carlos Sánchez's idea in "Philosophy and the Post-Immigrant Fear," *Philosophy and the Contemporary World* 18, no. 1 (2011) of Hispanic or Latinx philosophers having to show their "philosophical passport." Anyone reading this who is part of the Philosophical Border Patrol should read Mariana Alessandri, "Gloria Anzaldúa as philosopher: The early years (1962–1987)," *Philosophy Compass* 15, no. 7 (2020).
7. With a more Anzaldúa-centric aim and audience in mind, I published another essay for people familiar with Anzaldúa but largely unfamiliar with philosophy, "Teaching Gloria Anzaldúa." Some material from that essay also appears here, so I am grateful to the University of Arizona Press for allowing me to repurpose it.
8. See Andrea J. Pitts, "Gloria E. Anzaldúa's Autohistoria-teoría as an Epistemology of Self-Knowledge/Ignorance," *Hypatia* 31, no. 2 (2016).
9. John T. Lysaker, *Emerson and Self-Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 1.
10. See, for example, Edward F. Mooney, *Lost Intimacy in American Thought: Recovering Personal Philosophy From Thoreau to Cavell* (New York: Continuum, 2009).
11. John Dewey, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," in *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899–1924, Volume 10: 1916–1917, Essays*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980).
12. As of Fall 2020, UTRGV reports a ninety point five (90.5) percent "Hispanic Enrollment" because "Hispanic" is the category tied to our federal status as a "Hispanic Serving Institution," but most students prefer the term "Mexican American." Of course, some prefer other ethnic labels like "Chicano," "Latinx," or "Mexican," while others reject ethnic labels altogether. Fifty-seven point seven (57.7) percent of all our students are classified as "First Generation College Students." The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, "Fall 2020 Fast Facts." <https://www.utrgv.edu/sair/fact-book/2020-stats-at-a-glance.pdf>.
13. See Paccacerqua, "Teaching Philosophy."
14. Erin McKenna and Scott L. Pratt, *American Philosophy: From Wounded Knee to the Present* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 375.

15. Grant Silva, “‘The Americas Seek Not Enlightenment but Liberation’: On the Philosophical Significance of Liberation for Philosophy in the Americas,” *The Pluralist* 13, no. 2 (2018): 10.
16. “Practices of freedom” are usually associated with “The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom” in Michel Foucault, *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984*, 3 vols., ed. Paul Rabinow and Robert Hurley (New York: New Press, 1997). But the care of the self as a liberating practice of freedom also runs across the history of American Philosophy, especially African American Philosophy. See Harris, Leonard Harris, *Philosophy Born of Struggle: Anthology of Afro-American Philosophy from 1917* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1983).
17. The most visible and recent professional efforts to “revive” Philosophy as a Way of Life (PWOL) obscure forms of PWOL that are from neither the Ancient West nor the Ancient East, neither Analytic nor Continental. Conclusively demonstrating gaps in contemporary PWOL scholarship falls outside the scope of this paper, but consider Ambury, Irani, and Wallace Eds. *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. This volume of sixteen essays presents, expands, justifies, and challenges PWOL, but the American philosophical tradition is never mentioned, much less developed as a theoretical, practical, and pedagogical resource. My essay thus contributes holistically to the three areas of PWOL scholarship named by *Philosophy as a Way of Life*—History of Philosophy, Moral Philosophy, and Pedagogy—by grounding it in advanced undergraduate seminar in American Philosophy that I have been researching, teaching, and redesigning as a PWOL course over the last ten years.
18. Michael Eldridge, “The German Bildung Tradition” (34th Annual Meeting of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy, Columbia, SC 2007).
19. McKenna and Pratt, *American Philosophy*, 33.
20. Gary Gutting, “Bridging the Analytic-Continental Divide,” in *The Stone*, ed. Simon Critchley (The New York Times, February 19, 2012). <https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/02/19/bridging-the-analytic-continental-divide/>.
21. Howe, *Making the American Self*, 125.
22. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 66.
23. From 1839–1843, Fuller led a series of two-hour, thirteen-week Conversations with groups of roughly twenty-five women who each paid ten dollars for the course. These were essentially college courses for women who were, at the time, barred from college. I refer to them as Conversations to distinguish their structured educational format from ordinary conversations. See Charles Capper, “Margaret Fuller as Cultural Reformer: The Conversations in Boston,” *American Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (1987).”
24. Margaret Fuller, *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli*, 2 vols., ed. W. H. Channing, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and James Freeman Clarke (Boston, MA: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1852), 1:329.
25. Margaret Fuller, *The Letters of Margaret Fuller*, 6 vols., ed. Robert N. Hudspeth (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 2: 86–87.
26. Fuller, *The Letters of Margaret Fuller*, 2:87.

27. See Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold Davidson (Cambridge, MA: Wiley, 1995). Hadot argued that spiritual exercises were the core of ancient philosophy, which aimed to bring about “a profound transformation of the individual’s mode of seeing and being” (83) or what my course calls “self-culture.”
28. William Ellery Channing, *Self-Culture* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, Printers, 1838).
29. Channing, *Self-Culture*, 11.
30. Channing, *Self-Culture*, 32.
31. Channing, *Self-Culture*, 12.
32. Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Brooklyn, NY: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983).
33. Anzaldúa and Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back*, 169.
34. Angela Valenzuela, *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).
35. Channing, *Self-Culture*, 29.
36. Howe frames his book as “taking place within a corner of [Charles Taylor’s] *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*” (4).
37. Daniel Walker Howe, *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 4.
38. Howe, *Making the American Self*, 4.
39. Howe, *Making the American Self*, 8.
40. James Campbell, *Recovering Benjamin Franklin: An Exploration of a Life of Science and Service* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999), 262.
41. J.A. Leo Lemay, “Franklin’s *Autobiography* and the American Dream,” in *Benjamin Franklin’s Autobiography: An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds, Criticism* (New York: Norton, 1986).
42. Herbert W Schneider, “The Significance of Benjamin Franklin’s Moral Philosophy,” *Columbia University Studies in the History of Ideas* 2 (1918).
43. Howe, *Making the American Self*, 5.
44. Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Dover Publications, 1996), 66.
45. Franklin, *The Autobiography*, 70.
46. Students may modify the experiment in keeping with their own understanding of the virtue or adapt Franklin’s method in any way they think will make it more effective.
47. Foucault explored the ancient use of *hupomnemata* or philosophical notebooks as a “technology of the self” used to practice “self-writing” or “the transformation of truth into *ēthos*.” Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1997), 209.
48. Lemay, “Franklin’s *Autobiography*,” 354.
49. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (New York: Dover Publications, 1995).

Philosophy as a Way of Life

50. Rafia Zafar, "Franklinian Douglass: The Afro-American as Representative Man," in *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays* (1990).
51. Frederick Douglass, "Self-Made Men," in *The Frederick Douglass Papers. Series One, Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*, ed. John W. Blassingame (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 549.
52. Zafar, "Franklinian Douglass," 113.
53. Howe, *Making the American Self*, 137.
54. Permission was granted for this and all subsequent quotations from students, although their names are pseudonyms.
55. Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*, 49.
56. Douglass's speech was originally published as a pamphlet titled *Oration, Delivered in Corinthian Hall, Rochester, July 5th, 1852*, but it became better known by its central question: "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"
57. For obvious reasons, there are no official statistics on the number of undocumented or DACAmented students enrolled at UTRGV, but a recently published estimate of one out of every twenty-four (1,200 out of 28,644 total students in Fall 2018) seems plausible.
58. Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*, 48.
59. We return to this example in the next unit when discussing Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* as a form of *obedience* to what he calls "Higher Laws" in *Walden*. I am still experimenting with how much secondary scholarship to assign—for now, I tend to make it recommended rather than required reading—but the recent scholarship on insurrectionist ethics is especially useful for teasing out the relevant differences in the projects of cultivating virtue as conceived by Douglass as opposed to Franklin. See Lee A. McBride III, "Insurrectionist Ethics and Racism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Race*, ed. Naomi Zack (Oxford University Press, 2017).
60. The basic structure remains the same for this unit: introduce a classic theorist and practitioner of self-culture, but then raise critical questions, this time with respect to gender, so that we develop a critical consciousness of the historical, material, and cultural conditions that limit self-culture as a theoretical and practical project.
61. Channing, *Self-Culture*, 12.
62. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 233.
63. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings* (New York: Random House, 2000), 3.
64. Philip Cafaro, *Thoreau's Living Ethics: Walden and the Pursuit of Virtue* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004).
65. Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, 14.
66. Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, 85.
67. Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, 752.
68. Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, 766.
69. Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, 632.
70. Thoreau, *Walden and Other Writings*, 35.

American Philosophy as a Way of Life

71. Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century: An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds, Criticism*, ed. Larry J. Reynolds (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998).
72. Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, 68–69.
73. Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, 20.
74. Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (New York: Penguin, 2001).
75. Henry Bugbee, *The Inward Morning: A Philosophical Exploration in Journal Form* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999), 107, 139.
76. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark / Luz en lo oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, ed. AnaLouise Keating (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 238.
77. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, 221.
78. David W. Rodick, “Finding One’s Own Voice: The Philosophical Development of Henry G. Bugbee, Jr.,” *The Pluralist* 6, no. 2 (2011).
79. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012), 77.
80. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 38.
81. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 41.
82. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 44.
83. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 44.
84. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 81.
85. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 88.
86. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 92.
87. Anzaldúa and Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 163.
88. Margaret Crouch, “Implicit Bias and Gender (and Other Sorts of) Diversity in Philosophy and the Academy in the Context of the Corporatized University,” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 43, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 224.
89. Anzaldúa and Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*.
90. Anzaldúa and Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 196.
91. Anzaldúa and Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 170.
92. Anzaldúa and Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 170.
93. Anzaldúa, “To Live In the Borderlands.” The poem begins at about 6:40 into the video.
94. Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark / Luz en lo oscuro*, 1.
95. Anzaldúa’s creative process of writing *Borderlands/La Frontera* moved from poetry to philosophy. It was originally drafted as “a book of poetry, mostly written to Chicanos looking for some symbols of what it meant to be Mexican.” But since Anzaldúa felt like the poems would make the most sense if placed into a historical, cultural, and philosophical context she “added the introduction and it kept growing until it became seven chapters, half of the book.” Hernandez and Anzaldúa, “Re-Thinking Margins and Borders,” 13.
96. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 103.

97. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 80.
98. As we workshop our final projects, we read from Anzaldúa's posthumously published dissertation, focusing on chapters where she explores her own creative process. Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark / Luz en lo oscuro*.
99. Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark / Luz en lo oscuro*, 2–3.
100. Thoreau, *Walden*, 85.

References

- Alessandri, Mariana. "Gloria Anzaldúa as Philosopher: The Early Years (1962–1987)." *Philosophy Compass* 15, no. 7 (2020): e12687. <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12687>
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 4th ed. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Light in the Dark / Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. Edited by AnaLouise Keating. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822375036>
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. "To Live in the Borderlands Means You." In *La Literatura: Contemporary Latino/Latina Writing*, March 23, 1993. <https://commons.und.edu/writers-conference/1993/day2/3/>.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria, and Cherríe Moraga. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Brooklyn, NY: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983.
- Bugbee, Henry. *The Inward Morning: A Philosophical Exploration in Journal Form*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999.
- Cafaro, Philip. *Thoreau's Living Ethics: Walden and the Pursuit of Virtue*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004.
- Campbell, James. *Recovering Benjamin Franklin: An Exploration of a Life of Science and Service*. Chicago: Open Court, 1999.
- Capper, Charles. "Margaret Fuller as Cultural Reformer: The Conversations in Boston." *American Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (1987): 509–528. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2713122>
- Channing, William Ellery. *Self-Culture*. Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, Printers, 1838.
- Crouch, Margaret. "Implicit Bias and Gender (and Other Sorts of) Diversity in Philosophy and the Academy in the Context of the Corporatized University." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 43, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 212–226. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9833.2012.01562.x>
- Dewey, John. "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy." In *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899–1924, Volume 10: 1916–1917, Essays*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston, 3–48. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980.
- Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. New York: Dover Publications, 1995.
- Douglass, Frederick. "Self-Made Men." In *The Frederick Douglass Papers. Series One, Speeches, Debates, and Interviews*, edited by John W. Blassingame. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.

- Eldridge, Michael. "The German Bildung Tradition." 34th Annual Meeting of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy, Columbia, SC 2007.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Edited by Brooks Atkinson. New York: Modern Library, 2000.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954–1984*. Edited by Paul Rabinow and Robert Hurley. 3 vols. New York: New Press, 1997.
- Foucault, Michel. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. Edited by Paul Rabinow. New York: New Press, 1997.
- Franklin, Benjamin. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. New York: Dover Publications, 1996.
- Fuller, Margaret. *The Letters of Margaret Fuller*. Edited by Robert N. Hudspeth. 6 vols. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983.
- Fuller, Margaret. *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli*. Edited by W. H. Channing, Ralph Waldo Emerson and James Freeman Clarke. 2 vols. Boston, MA: Phillips, Sampson and Company, 1852. <https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501725234>
- Fuller, Margaret. *Woman in the Nineteenth Century: An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds, Criticism*. Edited by Larry J. Reynolds. New York: W.W. Norton, 1998.
- Gutting, Gary. "Bridging the Analytic-Continental Divide." In *The Stone*, edited by Simon Critchley, The New York Times, February 19, 2012. <https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/02/19/bridging-the-analytic-continental-divide/>.
- Hadot, Pierre. *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Edited by Arnold Davidson. Cambridge, MA: Wiley, 1995.
- Harris, Leonard. *Philosophy Born of Struggle: Anthology of Afro-American Philosophy from 1917*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1983.
- Hernandez, Ellie, and Gloria Anzaldúa. "Re-Thinking Margins and Borders: An Interview with Gloria Anzaldúa." *Discourse* 18, no. 1/2 (1995): 7–15.
- Howe, Daniel Walker. *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Lemay, J.A. Leo. "Franklin's *Autobiography* and the American Dream." In *Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography: An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds, Criticism*, 349–360. New York: Norton, 1986.
- Lysaker, John T. *Emerson and Self-Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008.
- McBride III, Lee A. "Insurrectionist Ethics and Racism." In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Race*, edited by Naomi Zack, 225–234. Oxford University Press, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190236953.013.52>
- McKenna, Erin, and Scott L. Pratt. *American Philosophy: From Wounded Knee to the Present*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2015.
- Mooney, Edward F. *Lost Intimacy in American Thought: Recovering Personal Philosophy from Thoreau to Cavell*. New York: Continuum, 2009.
- Paccacerqua, Cynthia María. "Teaching Philosophy at a Hispanic Serving Institution: A Pedagogical Intervention Inspired by Anzaldúa." In *El Mundo Zurdo 4: Selected Works from the 2013 Meeting of the Society for the Study of Gloria Anzaldúa*, edited by T. Jackqueline Cuevas,

Larissa M. Mercado-López and Sonia Saldivar-Hull, 39–57. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2015.

Philosophy as a Way of Life: Historical, Contemporary, and Pedagogical Perspectives. Edited by James M. Ambury, Tushar Irani and Kathleen Wallace. Malden, MA: Wiley, 2021.

Pitts, Andrea J. “Gloria E. Anzaldúa’s Autohistoria-Teoría as an Epistemology of Self-Knowledge/Ignorance.” *Hypatia* 31, no. 2 (2016): 352–369. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12235>

Rodick, David W. “Finding One’s Own Voice: The Philosophical Development of Henry G. Bugbee, Jr.” *The Pluralist* 6, no. 2 (2011): 18–34. <https://doi.org/10.5406/pluralist.6.2.0018>

Sánchez, Carlos. “Philosophy and Post-Immigrant Fear.” *Philosophy and the Contemporary World* 18, no. 1 (2011): 31–42. <https://doi.org/10.5840/pcw20111814>

Schneider, Herbert W. “The Significance of Benjamin Franklin’s Moral Philosophy.” *Columbia University Studies in the History of Ideas* 2 (1918): 293–312.

Silva, Grant. “‘The Americas Seek Not Enlightenment but Liberation’: On the Philosophical Significance of Liberation for Philosophy in the Americas.” *The Pluralist* 13, no. 2 (2018): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.5406/pluralist.13.2.0001>

Solnit, Rebecca. *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. New York: Penguin, 2001.

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. “Fall 2020 Fast Facts.” <https://www.utrgv.edu/sair/fact-book/2020-stats-at-a-glance.pdf>.

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. “Mission.” <https://www.utrgv.edu/b3-institute/about/mission/index.htm>.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden and Other Writings*. New York: Random House, 2000.

Valenzuela, Angela. *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999.

Zafar, Rafia. “Franklinian Douglass: The Afro-American as Representative Man.” In *Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays*, 99–117, 1990.