

THOREAU, EMERSON AND THE CONDUCT OF LIFE

Course description

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U3A Online www.u3aonline.org.au is an international adult education organisation run entirely by volunteers from different countries who want to share their expertise "for the greater good". There are no exams, no awards, no prerequisites. Currently there are more than 35 high quality courses, each written and taught by retired experts, for older people who love to learn new things. Each course runs for 8-9 weeks; alternatively the courses are available all year for independent study. The following course, *Thoreau, Emerson and the conduct of life* is a new one that will appeal to many Americans

Emerson 1803-1882 and Thoreau 1817-1862 were friends and lived in Concord Massachusetts where Louisa May Alcott and Nathaniel Hawthorne also lived and wrote. Emerson and Thoreau are both renowned for their profound, uplifting and freshly stated views about how we could all improve the way we live. The novelty of this 9 unit course is to bring together what each had to say on 49 topics, each with some commentary directed to the present usefulness of their ideas. For example:

Emerson *Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Self-Reliance.*

Thoreau *Man's noblest gift to man is his sincerity, for it embraces his integrity also. Journal 21 Jan 1841.*

The idiom of honesty is spontaneity, and the idiom of self-honesty is quick and easy admitting one's mistakes and faults, and responding untroubled and objectively to criticism. These are the outward signs of inward habits of thought which, like an off-stage prompt, influence all we say and do.

**Keep faith with yourself: to your own self be true;
This influences both your self-esteem, and how others treat you.**

The course aims to encourage people to form their own ideas about how best to live and to express those ideas in their own words. There are lots of quotes, which may seem a cheap and boring short-cut, but remember that knowing some of the best ideas, expressed particularly well, can be a stimulant to improving how you would say it. When you've said it in your own words, it is truly yours, and you can live it. The course takes the reader on a guided tour through the forest of the best observations of these two leading American Transcendentalists.