This course will study American art and visual culture from the revolutionary era through the Civil War, examining the ways that artists participated in defining and shaping American democracy. Major themes will be: the tension between America’s effort to both identify with and separate from England and Europe, as it was manifested in the realm of culture; the rise of a middleclass audience for art; the dissonance between the ideal of liberty and the struggles over slavery that troubled this period; and the contradictions and social changes that accompanied industrialization, modernization and progress, especially as these were discernible in westward expansion and Manifest Destiny. We will view the first hundred years of the American experiment through the lens of painting, sculpture, popular prints, and new image technologies such as photography.