

GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

FALL 2014

635: Major English and American Novelists
Richter, David Wed 4:30pm-6:20pm

41071
KY 173

We will be examining the formal innovations and social content of some of the most important canonical novels in the Anglophone tradition. Texts will include six to eight novels selected from the following: Henry Fielding: *Tom Jones*; Jane Austen: *Emma*; Charles Dickens: *Bleak House*; Herman Melville: *Moby-Dick*; George Eliot: *Middlemarch*; Henry James: *The Wings of the Dove*; Ernest Hemingway: *The Sun Also Rises*; Virginia Woolf: *To the Lighthouse*; Ralph Ellison: *Invisible Man*; Salman Rushdie: *Midnight's Children*; Ian McEwan: *Atonement*.

636: History of Literary Criticism
Orchard, Bill Mon 6:30pm-8:20pm

41075
KY 148

This course is an introduction to literary criticism and theory. We will consider the ways in which thinkers from diverse disciplines and intellectual traditions have provided answers to the following questions: What is literature? How do we determine the meanings of a text? What is the relationship between an author, a text, a reader, and a context? What role does a text play in representing or even producing our conceptions of reality? We will begin by reading foundational figures like Plato, Aristotle, and Hegel before turning to theoretical perspectives (including Marxism, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, formalism, new historicism, feminism, queer theory, postcolonialism, and critical race studies) that inform much of contemporary literary criticism. Literary theory allows us to connect literature to larger political and philosophical questions in the world. To that end, we will strive to understand theoretical texts on their own terms and work to think *with* them so that we can ask more compelling questions about the literary works that we analyze.

701: Seminar in Graduate Methodology
Weingarten, Karen Wed 4:30pm-6:20pm

41079
KP 708

This course will introduce students to the skills they'll need to succeed in graduate-level course work and research. We'll begin by examining scholarship in "English" to understand the kinds of questions, methods, and ideas that are engaging the field today. Like most disciplines, English scholarship is divided into many sub-fields. Some are organized by historical markers, such as Victorian or Medieval literature, and some are organized by approaches, like cultural studies or historicism. One of the goals of this course will be to help students navigate their interests within the discipline and begin to carve a place for themselves within the numerous conversations. In order to do this, we'll focus on how literary theory, archival work, and close reading (as some

examples) are used to generate research questions and intervene in already existing scholarly debates. In part, our work in this course will be technical. We'll spend time exploring journals, books, and databases to learn how to read and manage already existing literary scholarship. Through this work we will also explore the history of English Studies to understand how contemporary conversations emerged within the discipline. Finally, the course will also devote time to students' own writing to prepare them for producing thesis-driven, research-based, and theoretically-grounded papers in their courses, and eventually, for their final research project.

**703: Teaching Writing in an Era of Standards:
Composition Theory and Literacy Studies**
Wan, Amy **Wed 4:30pm-6:20pm**

41086
KY 148

Most students in the process of earning an advanced degree in English are strong writers. But even the most skilled writer might be puzzled about how to teach others to write effectively for both academic and non-academic contexts. This course will focus on this challenge to think about both theories and practices English teachers can use to help students become better writers and readers. To this end, the course has three primary goals: 1. to reflect on our own writing practices in the context of literacy learning and teaching, 2. to investigate contemporary scholarship in composition and writing studies, and 3. to analyze the literacy learning and the teaching of writing within the context of power, assessment and standards. Course assignments include weekly responses on the course blog, an annotated bibliography, and a research-intensive grant proposal.

**719: Translation in the Age of Chaucer:
The Vernacularity Debate**
Sargent, Michael **Thu 6:30pm-8:20pm**

41089
KP 708

The role of literature in the vernacular was strongly contested at the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century in England – including particularly the theoretical debate over the appropriateness of the translation of scripture. According to one school of modern literary criticism, the debate was definitively ended by the ecclesiastical authorities with the promulgation of Archbishop Arundel's Lambeth Constitutions of 1409. Yet we must also observe the expansion of literary translation into English throughout this period, including not just the French literature that had often been translated into English throughout the medieval period, but also, e.g., translations of Italian literature by Chaucer and others. Among texts we will read will be Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, one or two of the *Canterbury Tales*, selections from Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, and documents from the debate on the translation of the Bible into English.

723: Reading Jane Austen
Schaffer, Talia **Mon 4:30pm-6:20pm**

41090
KP 708

In "Reading Jane Austen," we will go in depth into the work of one of the formative novelists of the British literary tradition. We'll read *Northanger Abbey*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, *Persuasion*, as well as some of her juvenilia. But we will also

be looking at historical information about dramatic changes in ideas of marriage and family during Austen's time, changes to which her novels respond (and which they, in turn, helped perpetuate). Our class will also explore the history of Austen criticism, asking why it so often, in Eve Sedgwick's words, imagines Austen as "a girl being taught a lesson." We will look at how critics have dealt with sexuality, war, slavery, economic change, class mobility, and gender roles in Austen's fiction, so the class will also function as a kind of introduction to changes in critical and theoretical work over the past century. We will also look at film adaptations of Austen novels and read criticism helping us explore what aspects of Austen's texts get altered, emphasized, or excluded in contemporary American popular culture, and why. Presentation, research paper, and blog.

729: Studies in Modern Literature

Weir, John

Thu 4:30pm-6:20pm

41095

KP 708

A frenzied cult of "difficulty" and "genius" has lately grown up around David Foster Wallace's 1996 "big book," *Infinite Jest*, because: why? Because Wallace died young, a suicide? Because postmodern literary critics and writers still believe in the fantasy of the Great American Novel? Because the book is actually as complicated and interesting as some people say? Let's read the thing, and find out for ourselves. In this course, we'll perform a close reading not just on *IJ*, but also on the D/F/W industry that is busily positioning Wallace as cultural prophet – an upcoming film with Jason Segal as D/F/W! A limited-issue art book assembled by Wallace's widow! And in order to provide a context for Wallace's work, we will read what we might very generally call "experimental fiction" by writers like Percival Everett, Aimee Bender, Giannina Braschi, and others. We may also read Wallace's short fiction and his first novel. And we'll attend to critical theoretical texts that explore histories and theories of the novel-as-(unique?)-genre

736: Despicable Theory: Reading de Man Again

Cassvan, Jeff

Wed 6:30pm-8:20pm

41104

KP 333

This year saw the publication of Evelyn Barish's scandalous biography of the literary theorist Paul de Man (*The Double Life of Paul de Man*), whose far-ranging and influential insights first began to be discredited 26 years ago with the discovery of his wartime journalism. Barish admits that she doesn't understand her subject's mature work and spends her time pointing to "evidence of a ménage à trois, of a luxurious apartment of suspect provenance (was it seized from deported Jews?), of bigamy, blackmail, forgery, and suspicions about how he got into Harvard." There is also, however, a growing renewal of serious interest today in de Man's brand of theory, especially in the context of a return to formalist approaches to literature. As de Man explained, literary theory can be said to come into being "when the approach to literary texts is no longer based on non-linguistic, that is to say historical and aesthetic, considerations... when the object of discussion is no longer the meaning or the value but the modalities of production and of reception of meaning and value prior to their establishment—the implication being that this establishment is problematic enough to require an autonomous discipline of critical investigation to consider its possibility and its status." In this course we will try to come to grips with what it is that continues

to make de Man's more radical formalism so unsettling by reading a representative selection of his major works, from his famous rethinking of allegory and irony in "The Rhetoric of Temporality," through the ground-breaking study *Allegories of Reading*, to his last lecture on Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator" and the posthumously published collection of later essays entitled *Aesthetic Ideology*. Throughout the course we will investigate the validity of de Man's claim that "the linguistics of literariness is a powerful and indispensable tool in the unmasking of ideological aberrations, as well as a determining factor in accounting for their occurrence" and we will attend to the fallout of the kind of rhetorical reading that de Man has described as literary theory's "necessarily pragmatic moment... that adds a subversive element of unpredictability and makes it something of a wild card in the serious game of the theoretical disciplines." We will also consider the relationship between de Man's version of deconstruction and Derrida's work, as well as de Man's influence on the work of an important group of scholars including Barbara Johnson, J. Hillis Miller, Gayatri Spivak, Carol Jacobs, Samuel Weber, Tom Cohen, Eve Sedgwick and Judith Butler. Our work on de Man's essays will regularly be supplemented with a wide range of literary materials (poems, short stories, passages from novels, essays and translations), and since our approach will always be oriented to questions of form, craft and translatability as well as criticism and theory, the course is open to both MA Literature and MFA Creative Writing & Literary Translation students, and is designed to encourage interaction and to explore the fruitful dialogue between these groups of students. This course will appeal to anyone interested in the radical power of close reading.

781: Transgender Narratives:

From Gender Inversion to Gender Flexibility

41230

English, Hugh

Mon 6:30pm-8:20pm

KP 708

Queer theorist, Judith/Jack Halberstam writes: "The gender-ambiguous individual today represents a very different set of assumptions about gender than the gender-inverted subject of the early twentieth century; and as a model of gender inversion recedes into anachronism, the transgender body has emerged as futurity itself, a kind of heroic fulfillment of postmodern promises of gender flexibility" (18). This course will consider a variety of texts and genres, especially autobiography, fiction and film, but also history, theory, political manifesto and ethnography. We will consider the varied dictions, figures, narrative tropes, and both explicit and implied "assumptions about gender" that underlie articulations of categories such as "gender inversion," "transsexual," "gender-ambiguous," "transgender" and "gender flexibility." We will begin with a few late-nineteenth/early twentieth century texts and then consider some representative examples from the mid-twentieth, late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Gender studies, Women's Studies, LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) Studies and Queer Studies—all of the above are areas of thought and politics that are newly invigorated and sometimes challenged by transgender identities, bodies, experiences, politics, histories and theories. If second-wave feminism articulated and explored the distinction between sex and gender, and third-wave feminism opened up the categories of race, ethnicity and sexuality, can we begin to see now an emergent and consistent challenge to the fundamental assumptions of ideological heterosexuality, namely that there are two (only two!), binaristic, supposedly complementary and opposite sexes?

While studying the effects of different theoretical approaches, analytical frames, and cultural/historical understandings on our reading, we will also practice habits of close attention to language and form. Class activities will include student-facilitated discussions, short lectures, class discussions, small-group discussions and (possibly, if time permits) writing workshops. Students will write two interpretive essays and one essay based on self-defined research.

781: Consciousness and Literary Experiment
Tougaw, Jason Tues 6:30pm-8:20pm

41232
KY 148

“On or about December 1910 human character changed,” Virginia Woolf wrote in 1924. Woolf’s pithy statement has generated a great deal of debate, but it’s certainly true that the representation of character changed as Modernist writers experimented with literary forms to portray and examine the complexity and mystery of human consciousness. Nearly a century later, neurobiologist Antonio Damasio asked how “consciousness may be produced within the three pounds of flesh we call brain.” Literary experiments like those of Woolf and her contemporaries have been asking versions of this grand question for at least a century. While nobody can answer it with any assurance, theorists from William James to Damasio have investigated the nature of consciousness through both empirical observation and philosophical theory, while writers from Virginia Woolf to Kazuo Ishiguro have experimented with literary forms that represent what Damasio calls “private first-person phenomena.” In the past decade, theoretical neuroscience has begun to take questions about subjectivity seriously, and as a result new kinds of dialogue between the literature and science of consciousness have begun to emerge. In this course, we will pursue—and create—such dialogue, with a focus on literary experiments and theories of consciousness (from the fields of neurobiology, cognitive science, philosophy, literary criticism, and cultural studies). Likely readings include literary works by Henry James, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, Ralph Ellison, Christopher Isherwood, David B., Siri Hustvedt, Christopher Haddon, Jonathan Lethem, and Maud Casey; theories of consciousness by Antonio Damasio, Alva Noë, Jesse Prinz, and Mark Solms; and literary and cultural criticism by Gabrielle Starr, Lisa Zunshine, Elaine Scarry, Ann Jurecic, and Victoria Pitts-Taylor. Students will post bi-weekly reading responses on a course blog and complete a research project in stages, with an emphasis on multidisciplinary methodologies.

791: Thesis Essay
Walkden, Andrea Wed 6:30pm-8:20pm

41238
KP 710

For students writing their culminating thesis essay. Students must submit a Thesis Sign-Up Form to the Director of Graduate Studies in order to be eligible to register for this course.

795: Independent Study
Walkden, Andrea

69472

Tutorial for work in a special subject not covered by regular course offerings. May be repeated for credit if the topic is different. Please schedule an advising appointment with the Director of Graduate Studies.