

English MA Course Descriptions 2016 Fall

ENGL 636: History of Literary Criticism

Seo-Young Chu

Class no. 28479; Tue 6:30–8:20pm

ENGL 681: Special Studies

Counterparts, Painful Cases and Little Clouds: *Dubliners*, Theories of Literature and the New Century

Jeff Cassvan

Class no. 28480; Wed 6:30–8:20pm

June 2014 marked the centenary of the publication of *Dubliners*, James Joyce's collection of fifteen short stories. Although it is a work often overshadowed by the popularity of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and *Ulysses* (1922) and by the radical rethinking of the protean mettle of language and of reading in *Finnegans Wake* (1939), the complex character of the individual stories and of their entangled interrelations has assured the collection a rich and varied afterlife as a privileged site of fascination, inquiry and influence for general readers and translators, professional critics, and writers of fiction. The vexed publication history of the collection, notwithstanding Joyce's great consternation (we will read "Gas from a Burner," his satirical poem on the publisher, along with many of the letters chronicling the ordeal as well as drafts and early published versions of the stories), seems in fact to have been the sine qua non of the work's structural depth and richness. Like the development and transformations of a city (and thus unclassifiable by problematic metaphors of organicity and naturalness), *Dubliners* developed as a process of revision and expansion enabled by interruptions attendant upon the frequently stalled endeavor. And while an inevitable bitterness had its effect on the stories added to the initial design of a collection already intended as an anatomy exposing the consciencelessness and self-betrayal of a city and a people, we can also discern certain changes in attitude and style over the course of the writing that underscore the great significance of the collection as a cauldron of inventiveness. Rather than assume, however, that *Dubliners* is best understood as an early stage in the development of a mature, fully-formed literary voice, we will explore the ways in which Joyce's experiences in the material practices of literary production influenced his thinking not only in the practical matter of the possibilities of signification afforded by the suggestive open-endedness of intertextualities and framing designs (what his

reconfiguring of the potential relations between groups of stories revealed), but also about larger questions of interpretability, of the role of the reader, and of the defining incompleteness of literature, language and life. With its alluring opacities, the collection has steadily accrued a body of scholarship unique in its quantity and variety and has become something of a testing ground for the applicability of new literary theories. Accordingly, our range of focus in this course will also include an examination of the ever-changing state of *Dubliners* scholarship and of what *Dubliners* can tell us about the efficacies and limitations of particular theoretical enterprises. By examining the differences (in format and with regard to the inclusion of essays representing specific theoretical projects) between older and more recent critical editions of *Dubliners*, we will also have occasion to consider the nature and significance of the role of the university and the academy in canon formation and in the dissemination and transformation of literary tradition. Since our approach will be oriented to questions of 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.

ENGL 701: Seminar in Graduate Methodology

Karen Weingarten

Class no. 28481; Wed 4:30–6:20pm

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.

ENGL 721: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Literature

Andrea Walkden

Class no. 28482; Mon 4:30–6:20pm

This course will focus on *Paradise Lost*, the remarkable attempt by the seventeenth-century poet John Milton to rewrite the first chapters of Genesis in the form of a classical epic. Milton's contemporaries hailed him as a prodigy, the greatest English writer since Chaucer and Shakespeare, but they also attacked him as a libertine, heretic, and regicide whose blindness they took to be a punishment from God. We will enter imaginatively into the controversies that made Milton infamous in his own lifetime, while exploring the continuing notoriety of his work up to the present day. Our study of *Paradise Lost* will examine Milton's bold, sometimes shocking, engagement with ideologies of gender and sexuality, theologies of predestination and free will, and the political questions of tyranny, slavery, nationhood, labor, and freedom. As we go, we will fold into our discussion the work of later writers who appropriated and radically repurposed Milton's epic, complicating, exploiting, and protesting its preeminent status within the English literary tradition. Such later readers of Milton may include Mary Astell, Jonathan Swift, Olaudah Equiano, Thomas Jefferson, Mary Shelley, Virginia Woolf, Jorge Luis Borges, and the science fiction YA author Philip Pullman.

ENGL 724: Studies in Victorian Literature

Victorian Poetry and Poetics

Annmarie Drury

Class no. 28483; Tue 4:30–6:20pm

We examine poetry of the period from 1830 to around 1910, considering especially its spectacular formal diversity and innovation. Exploring connections between that formal diversity and transformations in the Victorian world, we give particular attention to Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, and Matthew Arnold. And we read works of George Meredith, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Fitzgerald, Michael Field, and Thomas Hardy.

The sense many Victorian poets had that they were writing too late, after the great age of poetry, created complex meditations on the role and meaning of poetry in the world. We will look at writers on this question, including Arthur Henry Hallam and Thomas Carlyle, and think about how Victorian notions of what a poet should be and do connected to and conflicted with the choices Victorian poets make in their poems. We will ask how Victorian poetry influenced the modernist writers of the twentieth century, we'll think about literary translation as a source of poetic innovation, we'll

consider the relationship between poetry and visual art, and we'll raise questions about the idea of "poetic voice" in relation to the era's new voice technologies.

ENGL 726: Studies in Early American Literature
Formations: Circum-Atlantic Cultural Production after 1776
Duncan Faherty
Class no. 28485; Mon 6:30–8:20pm

Instead of reading late eighteenth and early nineteenth century texts as expressions of national subjectivities, this course will explore how they take up questions of mobility, fracture, commodification, dislocation, equality, and revolutionary circulation. Within this context, we will pay particular attention—because of the ways in which their bodies were often forced to circulate as commodities—to texts written by women and diasporic Africans. In so doing, we will consider how these texts trouble the very concept of an isolationist national tradition by underscoring the intimacies which actually shaped the formations of seemingly disparate geographical spaces. We will, in other words, explore how the post-Revolutionary Anglophone world was formed by the exchange of goods, ideas, and peoples. Our focus on the flows and valuations of bodies and capital within these texts will serve as our entry point into thinking about how Anglophone cultural production represents mobility and belonging in the wake of the Revolutionary War (for both the emerging Republic and for the now truncated British Empire). In so doing, we will we will grapple with the shifting structures of feeling that define notions of democracy, citizenship, empire, nation, and the human after the rupture in colonial relations.

N.B. This course seeks to build on foundational concepts from Spring 2016's English 726 with Prof. Silyn-Roberts and English 722 with Prof. Alryyes. While these courses are not prerequisites for this course, students who wish to further develop projects begun in either of these courses are encouraged to enroll.

ENGL 781-01: Special Seminar
"Tell all the Truth but tell it slant--": Writing a Life Through Indirection, Fiction, Humor, Verse and Other Autobiographical Tropes
Hugh English
Class no. 28490; Mon 6:30–8:20pm

Tell all the truth but tell it slant —
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight

The Truth's superb surprise
As Lightning to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind —

— Emily Dickinson

In *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* (1999), Paul John Eakin describes “the lifelong process of making selves that we engage in daily and that informs all autobiographical writing.” This course will explore modern and contemporary autobiographical writing from the early 20th- through the 21st-century with an emphasis on strategies of indirection in self-representations of lives. How have writers articulated their lives with a variety of rhetorical, poetic and narrative strategies, including but not limited to first-person point of view and relatively naive versions of ‘truth’? How have such autobiographical gestures produced their own versions of what one might call the ‘truth’ of a life?

We will read work in a variety of genres—autobiography, essay-memoir, poetry and prose fiction—all of which represent life-writing in some way. And we will frame our consideration of our primary autobiographical texts with secondary sources from autobiography criticism and theory. Class activities will include student-facilitated discussions, short lectures, class discussions, small-group discussions, some experiments in life writing, and writing workshops. In addition to facilitating a discussion and writing a reflective narrative analysis of that facilitation after it, each student will write one interpretive (close-reading) essay and one self-defined research essay that incorporates their own research.

ENGL 781-02: Special Seminar

The Politics of Time

Gloria Fisk

Class no. 28491; Wed 4:30–6:20pm

How do literary texts control their readers’ experience of time, with what political causes and effects? We’ll debate that question in this seminar, where we’ll think about literary time in three primary ways: as feature of every text’s duration; its historical period; and its form. We’ll test the utility of critical terms like the Anthropocene, planetary scale, slow violence, and singularity as we read contemporary texts that are notably long (for example, Karl Ove Knausgård’s *My Struggle*) and short (Lydia Davis’s super-short short stories). We’ll test the hypotheses that new technologies make us both more and less capable of paying attention over time, and we’ll ask why so many

contemporary fictions begin by revealing what happens at the end. Our literary texts will include Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*, Anne Boyer's *Garments Against Women*, Octavia Butler's *The Parable of the Sower*, Ben Lerner's *10:04*, and Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts*. Our theoretical texts will include seminal work by Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello as well as Dipesh Chakrabarty, Mark Currie, Indra Sinha, Caroline Levine, and Fredric Jameson, among others.

ENGL 781-03: Special Seminar

Multiethnic Graphic Narratives

Caroline Hong

Class no. 28492; Thu 4:30–6:20pm

This course focuses on multiethnic graphic narratives as a literary and popular form. Through in-depth analyses of a wide range of texts, we will develop a vocabulary for talking about graphic narratives as a medium and examine how that vocabulary is used in different contexts, to tell different kinds of stories. We will think about how these diverse texts engage literary and critical traditions, bridge the literary and the popular, and challenge fixed notions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, ability, etc. And we (hopefully) will discover how the hybrid visual-verbal form is uniquely equipped to engage intersectionality and the politics of representation. We will look at both mainstream and independent comics, and texts may include works by artists/writers such as Jessica Abel, Kyle Baker, Lynda Barry, Los Bros Hernandez, Derek Kirk Kim, Henry (Yoshitaka) Kiyama, Aaron McGruder, Miné Okubo, Marjane Satrapi, Art Spiegelman, Adrian Tomine, GB Tran, and Gene Luen Yang. We will study these works alongside theoretical and critical readings that deal with comics and visual cultures.

ENGL 791: Thesis Course

* Please email the Director of Graduate Studies, Caroline Hong, in order to sign up for this course.

ENGL 795: Independent Study

* Please email the Assistant Director of Graduate Studies, William Orchard, in order to sign up for an independent study.