

English MA Course Descriptions

SPRING 2022

ENGL 636: History of Literary Criticism

Prof. Seo-Young Chu

Class code 46146

TUE 6:40–8:30PM / fully online

A nonlinear history of literary criticism and theory. Authors/sources will range from Aristotle to Sianne Ngai. Possible topics include aesthetics, autotheory, climate change, disability, feminism, race, the relationship of theory to reality, technology, trauma, and war.

English MA students who took theory courses as undergraduates may substitute ENGL 736 (see course description below) for their ENGL 636 requirement. To request permission, please email Prof. Caroline Hong (caroline.hong@qc.cuny.edu), the Director of Graduate Studies in English.

ENGL 681: Special Studies (cross-listed as ITAST 703)

Transnational Modernism in Italian and American Literatures

Profs. Fred Gardaphe and Anthony Tamburri

Class code 46147

WED 5:00–6:50PM / in-person

Team-taught by Distinguished Professors Fred Gardaphe and Anthony Julian Tamburri, this course examines the development of Modernism in Italy and how it impacted U.S. literature. This will be accomplished by viewing major writers in both countries through the lenses of ethnicity and gender. Beginning with four major Italian Modernists, the course will introduce students to Modernism in an Italian context. Following this, students will explore the practice of Modernist writing in the works of American authors of Italian descent to determine transnational influences on cultural development. Designed to introduce students to the development of Modern Italian literature and the role that ethnicity plays in the development of U.S. American modernist literature, this course will help students examine and understand the transnational influences that shape the writers under consideration. It is also designed to give students alternative and comparative views of Italian and American Modernism. Instructor and guest

lectures on the Modernist traditions of both countries will contextualize readings as they relate to cultural developments in Europe and the United States.

ENGL 701: Seminar in Graduate Methodology

Prof. Duncan Faherty

Class code 46149

WED 6:40–8:30PM / in-person

What does literary scholarship in graduate school look like? When your graduate instructors ask you to write a research paper, what do they mean? In this course, we practice methods in reading, research, and writing that will be useful to you in all your graduate classes. In so doing, we will think together about how knowledge is created in the discipline of English literary studies, about how to formulate questions which generate knowledge, and about the various values that inform those questions. In the first weeks of our course, we will concentrate on some common readings—literary texts from a variety of genres we will read and discuss much as you would in any graduate seminar. In considering these, we will be particularly concerned to trace how critical reactions to these texts have changed over time as new critical approaches have emerged and complicated earlier interpretive frameworks. This will enable us to gain an overview of the history of scholarship in our field in order to understand the kinds of questions, methods, and ideas that are engaging the field today and the academic history that led to these conversations.

After these first few weeks, students will also begin to develop individual projects that they pursue throughout the semester, and as those projects develop (through a series of sequenced research and scaffolded writing assignments), students will define, revise, refine, and rearticulate their particular research agendas with an eye towards beginning to carve out a place for themselves in the ongoing critical conversations in their areas of interest. We will investigate a variety of research methods that allow us to find those journals, books, and databases of most interest and use to our projects (and we will do so mindful of how such practices have been disrupted and have shifted because of the lingering uncertainties of the pandemic). All of this will prepare students to write thesis-driven, research-based, and theoretically-grounded essays—both in a final paper for our course and in their future MA courses.

ENGL 702: Graduate Methodology for English Education Students

Prof. Judith Nysenholc

Class code 46150

THU 6:40–8:30PM / fully online

This course provides current and future secondary-school teachers with an opportunity to study literary criticism from a pedagogical perspective. Besides reflecting on the selection process of a text appropriate for a secondary-school curriculum, we will examine research methods and theoretical perspectives currently used in the field of literature. We will focus on *Macbeth*, examine that text through a variety of critical approaches, and discuss how these reading strategies could be incorporated in a high school literature classroom; in particular, we will address how they can be used in differentiated instruction with special populations, such as English Language Learners. Independently, you will also research and synthesize existing interpretations of a novel or play of your choice. The ultimate goal of the course is to enrich and deepen your understanding of literary study, as well as to broaden your pedagogical content knowledge. The shift to the Next Generation Learning Standards, with a renewed emphasis on complex texts, is meant to develop students' higher order thinking skills. This course equips you with essential tools to address these new standards in your teaching.

This online course will be taught synchronously through Zoom. All course materials will be available on Blackboard.

ENGL 719: Studies in Medieval Literature

Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

Prof. Glenn Burger

Class code 46154

TUE 4:40–6:30PM / in-person

In this course we will read Chaucer's most experimental work, *The Canterbury Tales*, taking up a variety of interrelated historical, social, and political questions. How, for example, does Chaucer represent the relations and conflicts among the various classes of late-medieval society, and what effects does Chaucer's own class position—as bourgeois civil servant with strong ties to the aristocracy—have on the production of the *Canterbury Tales*? What views of gender and sexuality do the *Tales* present and explore? To what extent are they shaped by Christianity, and how do they represent the relation between Christianity and other systems of belief (classical “paganism,” Islam,

Judaism)? How might race, religion, gender and sexuality be approached differently in the Middle Ages? Why—of all the writers of the English Middle Ages—is it Chaucer whom we are most likely to read? What factors have especially contributed to canonizing Chaucer as the so-called “father of English poetry”?

ENGL 719 fulfills the pre-1900 requirement for MS Ed and MAT students.

ENGL 720: Studies in Renaissance Literature

Bridging the Medieval–Early Modern Space

Prof. Michael Sargent

Class code 46155

TUE 6:40–8:30PM / fully online

In the aftermath of the religious reformation of the 1530s, England engaged in a project of wholesale redefinition – as a Catholic Christian nation, neither religiously reformed in the Lutheran or the Calvinist sense, nor subject to the authority of the Roman church. This was an uncomfortable fit that culminated in the eventual Puritan revolution of the 1640s and -50s and the Restoration of 1660. Using theoretical tools provided by, e.g., Bruno Latour’s *Reassembling the Social* and Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, this course will examine the process of definition of what it meant to be English in the early modern period.

A major part of the re-imagination of the English community was literary, and the leading edge was the replacement of the ideal characters with whom the English identified. As early as 1538, for example, King Henry VIII required the removal of all references to the former patron saint of England, St. Thomas à Becket (the Archbishop of Canterbury – murdered at the instance of King Henry II – to whose shrine Chaucer’s pilgrims were headed) from all religious service books (missals, books of hours, etc.) throughout the land. This is why St. George (from Cappadocia) is the patron saint of England nowadays: reverence for an archbishop who asserted that he was the religious superior of the king was unacceptable. Another example: the Latin bible of the medieval period was replaced by the English “Bishops’ Bible” of 1568, and eventually by the King James Bible; the Latin Sarum service books that dictated the text of all masses and devotions for most of the kingdom was replaced by the English Book of Common Prayer.

This course will examine in detail two particular literary replacements that played a major role in the redefinition of English character: the story of King Arthur and the legends of the saints. King Arthur, the legendary king of Britain famous from the time of Geoffrey of Monmouth in the twelfth century to the printing of Sir Thomas Malory’s *Morte d’Arthur* in the late fifteenth, virtually disappears from the scene thereafter (he

does have a diminishing role in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*). What takes the place of the Arthurian legend, not entirely successfully, is Archbishop Matthew Parker's printing of Asser's *Life of King Alfred the Great* in 1574. Arthur does not truly return until the Romantic period.

The second literary replacement is that of medieval literary collections of the lives of the Christian saints (the most important of which is the *Legenda Aurea*, from which Chaucer's Second Nun's Tale derives) with *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* (actually *The Acts and Monuments*), which presents the narratives of the Protestants and proto-Protestants (as he saw them) of the period between the fifteenth century's largely successful suppression of Lollards (followers of John Wyclif and other dissidents) and Queen Mary's (bloody Mary's) attempt to bring England back under the authority of the Roman Catholic church in the 1550s. Simultaneously, Maurice Chauncy produced a series of narratives in Latin of the execution of a group of Carthusian monks and others under Henry VIII, addressed to various European courts among whom he attempted to find support. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* remained until the early twentieth century "the Bible of the English common folk" and is still a major influence on English-language discussion – even academic discussion – of the foundation of modern thought. Chauncy's *History of the Carthusian Martyrs*, on the other hand, was a major influence on the Roman Catholic canonization of the "Forty English, Welsh and Irish martyrs" in 1970. The effects of these works are still with us: let's talk about it.

ENGL 720 fulfills the pre-1900 requirement for MS Ed and MAT students.

ENGL 729: Studies in Modern Literature

Caribbean Modernisms: Literary, Visual, and Artistic Practice

Prof. Vanessa Pérez-Rosario

Class code 46156

THU 6:40–8:30PM / in-person

Across a range of artistic and intellectual expressions and identities, modernism has been a shaping force in the twentieth-century Caribbean. If European high modernism was partly nourished on an imperial conception of itself as different from the primitive 'other', the vernacular modernisms of the colonial world were compelled to forge self-authored modernisms by appropriating, indigenizing, creolizing, transforming and translating the forms and languages of modernism within and in opposition to the authoritative narrative of 'the west'. Founded as it was, as a geopolitical region, within modern structures of power—colonial slavery and indenture—the problem of modernity is native to the Caribbean. Not surprisingly, therefore, across the regional and diasporic Caribbean modernism contributed to the modes of radical artistic and intellectual

response to colonial domination, dispossession, and oppression, providing some of the idioms and styles and infrastructures through which the politics and poetics and aesthetics of self-determination was articulated. If colonial modernity (in all its racializing and dispossessing modes) is the founding social, economic, and political reality of Caribbean life, it should not be so surprising that *modernism* would come to be, from the early twentieth century, the dominant idiom and framework through which literary, artistic, and intellectual opposition has been expressed. This seminar will focus on the what and why of Caribbean modernisms across the Anglophone, Francophone, and Hispanophone regions, with a focus on the following themes: exile and dislocation, history and historiography, coloniality and decoloniality, and language and representation. We will read authors such as Aime Cesaire, Samuel Selvon, Jean Pris Mars, Alejo Carpentier, and Paule Marshall among others.

ENGL 736: Studies in Criticism

The Good of Literary Criticism in the Contemporary World

Prof. Gloria Fisk

Class code 46157

MON 6:40–8:30PM / fully online

Why should we spend our time analyzing literary texts? On a planet that's dying by degrees, in an economy built to enrich whole swaths of the world at the expense of others, the reasons are not self-evident. Every contemporary critic could do work that would bring more immediate benefits to ourselves and others, and yet, here we are. Why?

We'll refine our own answers to that question in this seminar by analyzing some of the most significant works of criticism published in the past decade. Taking it as our hypothesis that every contemporary critic has to make an argument—implicitly or explicitly—for the relevance of their claims to the world, such as it is, we will study some of the most influential critics working today and weigh the claims they make. Our reading will include work by Merve Emre, Tiffany Lethabo King, Lisa Lowe, Christina Sharpe, and Rinaldo Walcott, among others.

This course will meet synchronously on Zoom during scheduled class times, but for an abbreviated period (ending by 8:00 pm). We'll use Slack for the asynchronous discussion that is so essential to the work we'll do as critics together.

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ENGL 781-01: Special Seminars – The Art of Elizabeth Bishop

Prof. Jeff Cassvan

Class code 47945

THU 6:40–8:30PM / fully online

Elizabeth Bishop (1911–1979) is widely considered to be one of the most imaginative, innovative and influential American poets of the twentieth century. In this online-synchronous course, we will read most of Bishop's published poetry, a number of her unpublished poems and her translations, and a representative selection of her prose, including short fiction, a number of important letters, and essays. We will also consider the role of the visual arts in her work and the relationship between her own paintings and her poems. We will explore Bishop's relationship to her literary predecessors (the Metaphysical poets, the Romantics, Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost and Wallace Stevens), to contemporaries such as Marianne Moore and Robert Lowell, as well as her importance for James Merrill, John Ashbery, and a range of more recent American poets. A central goal of the course will be, as Robert Frost once explained in a reflection on what it means to be a reader of poetry, "to get among the poems where they hold each other apart in their places as the stars do." The immersive experience of engaging with her poems in this way will help us to chart Bishop's complex exploration of questions of home, travel, and identity. We will be guided throughout the course by newer theoretical and critical approaches to gender and sexuality, posthumanism, ecocriticism, and the role of the image in poetry. This will make possible a deeper appreciation of the social, political, and historical dimensions of a body of work usually praised for its reticence. MA and MFA students with interests in poetry and poetics, American literature of the second half of the twentieth century, the relationship between the visual arts and poetry and translation studies will find the course particularly useful.

This online course meets synchronously via Zoom on Thursdays from 6:40–8:30PM. We will also make use of the Blackboard learning management system for course readings, discussions, and other types of assignments.

ENGL 781-02: Special Seminars – 21st-Century Asian American Literatures

Prof. Caroline Hong

Class code 46418

TUE 4:40–6:30PM / fully online

The term "Asian America" has been and continues to be used by writers, readers, and scholars of Asian American literature. But where or what or who is Asian America? As a construct, it encompasses diverse, and even contested, visions of identity, culture, and

community. In this course, we will read twenty-first-century Asian American literary works to explore the most contemporary of these visions, which demonstrate the “heterogeneity, hybridity, multiplicity” of Asian America, to use Lisa Lowe’s influential formulation. We will frame our readings with recent theory and criticism from the field of Asian American studies and within/alongside their historical, political, social, cultural, and economic contexts, focusing on issues of gender, sexuality, class, disability, trauma, citizenship, imperialism, globalization, etc., in addition to race and racism.

Writers we might read include Anida Yoeu Ali, Thi Bui, Elaine Castillo, Alexander Chee, Franny Choi, Cathy Park Hong, Mira Jacob, Gish Jen, Alice Sola Kim, Lisa Ko, Min Jin Lee, Ken Liu, Ling Ma, Rajiv Mohabir, Shani Mootoo, H. M. Naqvi, Celeste Ng, Diana Khoi Nguyen, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Ruth Ozeki, Aimee Phan, Bushra Rehman, Margaret Rhee, Nina Revoyr, Rakesh Satyal, Sejal Shah, Anthony Veasna So, Monica Sok, Shruti Swamy, Lysley Tenorio, Kai Cheng Thom, Monique Truong, Mai Der Vang, Ocean Vuong, Esmé Weijun Wang, Alice Wong, Karen Tei Yamashita, and Charles Yu.

This online synchronous course will meet weekly on Tuesdays at 4:40pm via Zoom. In addition to Zoom, we will also be using Blackboard and Twitter.

ENGL 781-03: Special Seminars – Graphic Educations: The Lessons of Latinx Comics

Prof. Bill Orchard

Class code 46166

THU 4:40–6:30PM / in-person

Although comics were once regarded as a threat to the development of young readers, comics studies scholars now regard graphic narratives as forms that cultivate sophisticated types of verbal-visual literacy that actively critique the forms of knowledge produced in culturally sanctioned spaces like the university. Latinx graphic narratives function in this way, producing novel accounts of Latinidad beyond the academy and critiquing media industries that exclude Latinxs. This aspect of Latinx comics is apparent in the work of Javier Hernandez (*El Muerte*), Edgar Miranda-Rodriguez (*La Borinqueña*), and the Black and Latinx founders of Milestone Comics, who have produced works that contest representations in mainstream comics by centering Latinx heroes and exposing injustices perpetrated against Latinx communities. Latinx comic artists have also leveraged the medium’s visual dimensions to tell the stories of Latinx lives that often fit uneasily within existing paradigms while being conspicuous in the visual sphere. In *Diary of a Reluctant Dreamer*, Alberto Ledesma notes how comics allowed him the space to first reckon with his undocumented status. Wilfred Santiago’s 21 provides a biography of baseball great Roberto Clemente that considers the ways he

was racialized in the U.S., Canada, and Puerto Rico; Jaime Cortez's *Sexile* chronicles the bodily and political transformations of trans Latina activist Adela Vázquez. Finally, this class considers what Latinx comics can teach us about the institutionalization of Latinx literary studies and of comic book studies by examining the work of the Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez, whose *Love and Rockets* is a foundational text of alternative comics. Latinx literary studies was slow to reckon with the Hernandez Brothers' work as the field sought more traditional literary objects. This class will explore how Latinx graphic narratives have long been an important source of Latinx cultural expression and central to the history of comics in the United States.

ENGL 781-04: Special Seminars – American HIV/AIDS Narratives

Prof. Megan Paslawski

Class code 46167

WED 4:40–6:30PM / in-person

This course is a multifaceted exploration of the enduring impact of HIV/AIDS on the U.S. landscape. Traveling from the queer activist urgency of the early AIDS crisis to the present-day normalization of HIV as a sociomedical complication disproportionately affecting some Americans, our readings will include theory, memoir, fiction, poetry, and histories as we grapple with the implications of a pandemic that continues to highlight inequities that create what activist/writer Sarah Schulman termed “people in trouble.” In doing so, we will discuss strategies of cultural response to HIV/AIDS that range from mourning to militancy and from denial to direct action. As our understanding of one pandemic’s legacy within the US deepens over the semester, we will also work to understand the significance of HIV/AIDS narratives in developing responses to the ongoing crisis of COVID-19.

ENGL 791: Thesis Course and ENGL 795: Independent Study

Department permission required. For more information and copies of the sign-up forms, please email Prof. Caroline Hong (caroline.hong@qc.cuny.edu), the Director of Graduate Studies in English.