

Spring 2024

English Graduate

Course Descriptions

English 636: History of Literary Criticism and Theory

INSTRUCTOR	Professor Seo-Young Chu
DAY/ TIME	Thursdays, 4:40 pm to 6:30 pm
COURSE CODE	36443
DESCRIPTION	A nonlinear history of literary criticism and theory. Authors/sources range from Aristotle to Sianne Ngai, from anecdotes to paratexts, from the etymological origins of the word "trauma" to symptoms of late-stage capitalism in contemporary science fiction. Topics include aesthetics, autotheory, cats, chronic illness, disability, ecocriticism, futurity, gender, the politics of form, popular culture, race, the relationship of theory to reality, technology, the uncanny valley, and war.

English 643: Young Adult Literature at the Cutting Edge

INSTRUCTOR	Professor Carrie Hintz
DAY/ TIME	Mondays, 6:40 pm to 8:30 pm ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS
COURSE CODE	36442
DESCRIPTION	Our seminar will explore YA works—and young people's cultural production—written in hybrid, experimental, and multimodal forms. How is formal innovation aligned with cultural and social change, and when do those alliances break down? How can we use theoretical tools like critical race theory, feminism, queer theory, dis/ability studies, and media studies to critically analyze works in new and emerging genres? Readings/ viewings will include graphic novels, digital and interactive fictions, verse novels and slam poetry. Course requirements include blog assignments on the CUNY Academic Commons and a final 20-page research paper.

English 644: Queer American Lives in the Twenty-First Century

INSTRUCTOR	Professor Megan Paslawski
DAY/ TIME	Thursdays, 6:40 pm to 8:30 pm
COURSE CODE	36440

DESCRIPTION

This course explores significant themes and strategies of American LGBTQ life writing from 2000 to the present that include autotheory/autofiction, witnessing, mediations of archival silences, intersectionality, and online autobiographical collage. While considering the reverberations of twenty-first century landmark moments that include federal recognition of same-sex marriage, the media's announcement of a "transgender tipping point," and the rise of new technologies of life narration, we will also visit recent critical interventions in autobiographical studies and some of this century's major contributions to queer theory. Some of the life writers we'll study may include Carmen Maria Machado, Bryn Kelly, Ocean Vuong, and Janet Mock. Expect to find Leigh Gilmore, Anna Poletti, Saidiya Hartman, and José Esteban Muñoz represented among the theorists and critics we engage. As we contemplate queer lives and queer ways of writing them, we'll join Ocean Vuong in seeking the "larger vision made of small things" that in *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* he suggests life writing could be.

English 701: Seminar in Graduate Methodology

INSTRUCTOR	Professor Omari Weekes
DAY/ TIME	Monday, 6:40 pm to 8:30 pm HYBRID/ SYNCHRONOUS
COURSE CODE	36439
DESCRIPTION	<p>This course is designed to introduce graduate students to key methodologies, practices, tools, and skills that we use in literary studies. We will begin by reading a canonical text together as a class: James Baldwin's 1953 novel, <i>Go Tell It on the Mountain</i>. We will then read some of Baldwin's essays on race, religion, sexuality, and the Black American experience and explore the secondary literature around Baldwin's first novel and its place within his larger body of work. In this endeavor, we will ask questions: Which aspects of this text have literary scholars most/best engaged? How have the conversations around this text shaping or responding to changes in the text's popular and critical reception? How have the conversations around this text responded to changes in literary critical methodologies?</p> <p>Along the way, students will have the opportunity to build scholarly community around a single textual object while also exploring their own unique research interests in a series of structured assignments that will lead to a final research paper or project. We will explore how literary critics from research questions as we read past and current literary criticism to identify what makes for good scholarship. We will figure out which research tools and resources are available to us as we make meaningful contributions to longstanding conversations around Baldwin's work. We will devote time to both writing and discussion in order to model for ourselves and each other how we do this thing we call literary studies.</p>

English 724: Care, Disability, and Community in the 19th Century

INSTRUCTOR**Professor Talia Schaffer**

DAY/ TIME	Wednesdays, 4:40 pm to 6:30 pm
COURSE CODE	33978
DESCRIPTION	<p>Have you ever wondered when we developed our ideas about bodies and minds? How did we come to believe certain ways of moving, feeling, and thinking were “normal,” and that other ways were mistakes that required professional interventions? In this course, we will explore how we came to hold the beliefs we do about abled and disabled people, looking at how those ideas were invented and what effect they have on our daily lives. Along with disability theory, however, we’ll be looking historically, seeing how illness and disability get represented in fiction from a period before modern medicine. We’ll read Austen’s <i>Mansfield Park</i>, Dickens’s <i>Bleak House</i>, and Brontë’s <i>Jane Eyre</i>. Do those novels present different and maybe even more sustaining and positive ideas about how to handle a range of bodyminds? We’ll read these texts alongside disability studies articles and a theory called “ethics of care,” which highlights kinship, social networks, and mutual aid, and the class will explore whether ethics of care can be useful in our own modern lives (we’ll read some contemporary activists in this field). As our world drags itself slowly past the pandemic, as we all grapple with diverse embodiment and cognitive capacities, we need to find a way of reading that allows us to sustain each other rather than seeing each other as marked by incompletely cured flaws. I hope that this course can give you some theories that help you see yourself and your social world more positively, as well as teaching you about a range of ideas from the past, and some extraordinary, complex, passionate literature representing those ideas. You’ll have short assignments helping you work towards a final paper and possibly other collaborative work, and you’ll be encouraged to use these ideas to help you read material from a cultural tradition or text that is meaningful to you.</p> <p><i>Satisfies the pre-1900 requirement for MEd and MAT students.</i></p>

English 733: 21st-Century Asian American Literature

INSTRUCTOR	Professor Caroline Hong
DAY/ TIME	Wednesdays, 6:40 pm to 8:30 pm ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS
COURSE CODE	36438
DESCRIPTION	<p>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 seminar, 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 and sexuality, class and labor, (dis)ability, trauma, capitalism, imperialism, etc., in addition to race and racism. Writers we might read include Gina Apostol, Fatimah Asghar, Elaine Castillo, Alexander Chee, Chen Chen, Franny Choi, Tarfia Faizullah, Cathy Park Hong, Mimi Khúc, Lisa Ko, T</p>

Kira Māhealani Madden, Rajiv Mohabir, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Ruth Ozeki, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, Bushra Rehman, Barbara Jane Reyes, Margaret Rhee, Anthony Veasna So, Sokunthary Svay, Lehua M. Taitano, Lysley Tenorio, Kai Cheng Thom, Saymoukda Vongsay, Ocean Vuong, and Charles Yu. Requirements will include weekly discussion posts, a lead discussant presentation on one of our texts, an annotation and close reading assignment (3-4 pages), and a final project (options include an academic essay, a multimedia creative-critical project, or a teaching unit).

English 742: Disability Studies and Shakespeare

INSTRUCTOR	Professor Sawyer Kemp
DAY/ TIME	Tuesdays, 6:40 pm to 8:30 pm ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS
COURSE CODE	36437
DESCRIPTION	<p>In this course, we will read a selection of Shakespeare's plays with a complement of critical readings from early modern disability studies scholars like Lindsey Row-Heyveld, Simone Chess, Genevieve Love, Cameron Hunt McNabb, and Katherine Schaap Williams. This course will examine disability in the plays in themes of veterans and war, vagrancy, poison, illness, and cure. We will also look at relevant contemporary performances to think about how drama represents disability, how theatres engage accessibility practices, and to imagine what other "crip-futures" might be possible. Play selections may include, but are not limited to: <i>All's Well that Ends Well</i>, <i>Julius Caesar</i>, the <i>Henriad</i>, <i>King Lear</i>, <i>Othello</i>, and <i>Richard III</i>.</p> <p><i>Satisfies the pre-1900 requirement for MAT and MSED majors.</i></p>

English 781-01: Staging America: Dramatic Literature and the Civil Rights Movement

INSTRUCTOR	Professor Hillary Miller
DAY/ TIME	Thursdays, 4:40 pm to 6:30 pm
COURSE CODE	35629
DESCRIPTION	<p>This course will investigate dramatic literature in the United States between 1935 and 1975 in the context of the "long Civil Rights era." We will investigate the thematic and formal choices of dramatic writers and read scholarly approaches to the theatre and performance of the period. Playwrights may include James Baldwin, Amiri Baraka, William Branch, Alice Childress, Edward Chodorov, Lonne Elder III, Lorraine Hansberry, Abram Hill, Langston Hughes, Lofton Mitchell, Louis Peterson, and Theodore Ward. One focus of our investigations will be on the efforts to end "Jim Crow casting" in new play producing; our case studies of institutions may include the American Negro Theatre, the Federal Theatre Project's Negro Unit, the Greenwich Mews, and the Free Southern Theater. Topics will include Black</p>

radical theatre in the New Deal era; government surveillance of writers; anti-fascist dramas.

English 781-02: The Humanities at Work

INSTRUCTOR	Professor William Orchard
DAY/ TIME	Monday, 6:40 pm to 8:30 pm ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS
COURSE CODE	41889
DESCRIPTION	Beyond teaching and writing, what careers does a graduate degree in English prepare one for? (The short answer: all of them). This class will try to answer this question by investigating histories of the discipline, reading about the state of academic labor, and examining current debates about the value of humanities in a world that often seems to dismiss them. At the same time, this will be a project-oriented course, designed to build a set of career resources for English MA students and to practice some genres of writing associated with career searches, such as the job letter and the interview.