

**QUEENS COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS  
SPRING 2012**

**English 636: History of Literary Criticism**

**Jeff Cassvan**

**M 6.30-8.20                      5136**

As an introduction to literary criticism and literary theory, this course will consider the ways in which a wide range of thinkers have provided answers to the following questions: What is literature? How do we determine the meanings or meaning 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 with a careful reading of Plato and Aristotle and then turn to a consideration of the diverse perspectives on literature (including Marxism, Psychoanalysis, Formalism, Structuralism, Semiotics, Poststructuralism, Deconstruction, New Historicism, Gender Studies and Queer Theory) that have emerged during the twentieth century. Since the most stimulating theoretical insights arise out of reading encounters (for example, Derrida's readings of Plato and Rousseau, Lacan's reading of Freud, Freud's own reading of literature and of the German language, Althusser's reading of Marx), we will treat the work of critics and theorists as primary texts and our focus throughout the semester will be on the process of careful reading. This means that while we will make use of the introductory material and organizational format provided in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, we will resist and question the tendency to produce or rely upon simple summaries of difficult arguments and points of view and our class sessions will be devoted to a reading encounter with very specific paragraphs and pages in the assigned works. These primary critical and theoretical texts will often be supplemented with a wide range of literary materials (poems, short stories, essays, translations) made available on Blackboard.

**English 701: Graduate Methodology**

**Talia Schaffer**

**W 4.30-6.20                      5137**

When your graduate instructors tell you to do a research paper, what do they mean and how can you do it? This course will tell you. We'll investigate which websites are reliable, discuss how to find useful on-line resources, and explore how to find the best printed articles and books. Not only will we learn how to find the right sources, we will also study how to read and use them properly. We'll figure out what makes an article good (and how to tell if it's good at a glance), and we'll discuss how criticism has changed over the last few decades. Finally, we will talk about how to develop your master's thesis. You'll design your own research project, and also do some shorter assignments to learn how to use various research techniques. This course will prepare you for all your graduate research and help you get ready to write your thesis.

**English 702: Graduate Methodology for English/Education Students**

**Judith Nysenholc**

**R 6.30-8.20                      6561**

This course provides current and future secondary-school teachers with an opportunity to study literary texts 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 two novels, *Heart of Darkness* and *Things Fall Apart*, examine them through a variety of critical approaches, and discuss how these reading strategies could be incorporated in a high school literature classroom. Independently, you will also research and synthesize existing interpretations of a novel 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.

### **English 703: Composition Theory and Literacy Studies**

#### **Section 1: Kevin Ferguson**

**M 4.30-6.20 5139**

#### **Section 2: Amy Wan**

**W 4.30-6.20 5141**

Most students in the process of earning an advanced degree in English are strong writers. But even the most skilled writer may be puzzled about how to teach others to write well. This 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 situate composition scholarship within the field of literacy studies. Students will be expected to examine the curricular, pedagogical, and theoretical contexts that shape teaching and learning as a way to begin developing their own composition pedagogies. The course focuses on teaching practices (course and assignment design, conferences and peer workshopping, feedback and evaluation) and larger scale issues like the circulation of literacy, formulaic writing, creative writing, language standards, and technology. The course is designed as a seminar with a substantial weekly reading load, class blog, and two to three formal writing/research assignments.

### **English 719: Selected Poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer**

#### **Michael Sargent**

**R 4.30-6.20 5142**

Geoffrey Chaucer was **not** the father of English poetry, but he was a witty, perceptive writer, with a keen eye for the foibles we think of as “personality” and for what was (and was not) going on in society around him. He travelled widely on the European continent, and knew, or read, a number of the most important writers of his age. We will be reading a selection of his poetry, including examples from among his early dream-visions, plus the entirety of *Troilus and Criseyde*, as well as the “General Prologue” and several of the *Canterbury Tales*. Because we will be reading these works in the original Middle English, this course fulfills the History of the English Language requirement.

### **English 727: Henry James and the Art of Fiction**

#### **Amy Tucker and John Weir**

**T 6.30-8.20 5146**

The course, designed for students in both the MFA and MA programs, looks at a selection of James's literary essays and fictions (as well as several stories, novels and parodies by other writers based on subjects drawn from James's life and literary production) from the twin perspectives of critical reader and creative writer. In addition to producing a researched critical essay on one of the assigned texts, class members will be asked to experiment with a variety of Jamesian themes, genres, and techniques: for instance, to "rewrite" a story as James rewrote tales by Maupassant; to deploy in their own fiction distinctively Jamesian elements such as supernatural ambiguity, the unreliable narrator, or the ficelle; and (along the lines of James's analyses of authors who inspired him) to produce a "process paper" in which they discuss writers whose work influenced their writing, as well as the artistic problems they have set for themselves and how they arrived at strategies for addressing those challenges. (NB: This last assignment is intended to serve as preparation for the process paper MFA students are asked to submit as part of their final project for the program.) Readings will include James's essays on "The Art of Fiction," Guy de Maupassant and Balzac; a selection of James's letters and notebook entries; Leon Edel's one-volume biography of the author; stories of artists and authors such as "The Real Right Thing" and "The Lesson of the Master"; Max Beerbohm's short parody of the Master's late style and Edith Wharton's reminiscences about her friend in her memoirs; James's novella "The Aspern Papers" and his novel *What Maisie Knew*, along with contextual material concerning the book's publication; and "Miss Grief," a bitter story by James's friend Constance Fenimore Woolson that centers on a successful male writer.

### **English 742: Shakespeare**

**Richard Marotta**

**R 6.30-8.20 6568**

Shakespeare's great achievement is best seen within the context of the very dynamic and energetic life of the Elizabethan stage. The literary environment in which Shakespeare wrote pulsed with theatrical experimentation, an awakening to the possibilities of dramatic literature and a successful and tumultuous response to other earlier forms of theatre. We will study a number of Shakespeare's plays, among them *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Richard II* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. In addition, we will also read a number of plays by other very successful Elizabethan dramatists, including Marlowe, Kyd, Jonson, Webster and Ford. Among our themes will be the creation of identities, the exploration of gender and the relationship between tragedy and comedy. Class participation and two papers will be required.

### **English 781: Science Fiction**

**Seo-Young Chu**

**T 6.30-8.20 5162**

We will explore some of the ways in which works of science fiction (SF) have dealt with topics such as gender, war, ethnicity, and the near future. We will also explore the many identities of science fiction itself – as a genre, a subculture, a marketing tag, as a state of mind, a set of reading protocols, as the opposite of realism, as a type of realism, and as a growing presence in everyday reality. Possible authors/artists include Asimov, Atwood, Ballard, Bowie, Butler, Chiang, Clarke, Delany, Deltron 3030, Dickinson, Docu, Freud, Gibson, Haraway, Hayles, Jameson, Lady Gaga, Ligeti, Lovecraft, Miéville, Mori, Paick, Radiohead, Shelley, Strauss, Suvin, Toomer, Vangelis, Wells, Yamashita, Yeats. Possible films/shows include 2001: A Space

Odyssey, Aliens, Blade Runner, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Doctor Who, Ghost in the Shell, Inception, The Matrix, Star Trek, The Twilight Zone, The X-Files.

### **English 781: Caribbean Literature**

**Sandra Duvivier**

**W 6.30-8.20 6571**

Foregrounding selected fictive, theoretical, and political texts, this course examines writings by authors from the varied locales that constitute the Caribbean. While we will contest claims of a Caribbean monolith and analyze differences between the texts—especially as the authors hail from Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, Martinique, St. Lucia, Antigua, Guadeloupe, and Dominica—we will pay particular attention to the commonalities that render them Caribbean. In so doing, we will investigate key themes informing these works and Caribbean literature generally—such as home, (post)colonialism, culture, nation, and migration, to name a few. We will also explore the ways gender and sexuality further shape and complicate these works. Additionally, we will foreground Caribbean contributions to and influence on not only the literary canon but also Western philosophy. We will read the works of Frantz Fanon, George Lamming, Derek Walcott, Jamaica Kincaid, Michelle Cliff, Maryse Conde, Elizabeth Nunez, Edwidge Danticat, Earl Lovelace, and Marie-Elena John.

### **English 781: The Golden Age of Children's Literature**

**Veronica Schanoes**

**T 4.30-6.20 5161**

Our current idea of what children's literature should be—imaginative, exciting, and fun—is almost entirely the creation of the Golden Age of children's literature, beginning in 1865 with Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and ending in 1926 with A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*. These years produced the majority of what we regard as children's classics today. Whereas previous decades had stressed the importance of moral improvement and education for young readers, the children's literature of the Golden Age brought into being an awareness of the child as a reader to be entertained with adventure, magic, and wordplay. How did these two ideas about how children's books should be written interact? How did the ideas of childhood and what it meant to be a child change? And how were these ideas of childhood related to gender and class? These are only some of the questions we'll consider as we explore this important and influential period of children's literature. Texts may include Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, J.M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy*, Frances Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess*, Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, and E. Nesbit's *The Story of the Treasure-Seekers*, among others. There will also be significant amounts of secondary reading—critical essays on children's literature—to consider, and this reading will be required.