

English MA Course Descriptions

2020 Summer Session I (4 weeks, June 1 to 24)

ENGL 719: Studies in Medieval Literature

Edward Currie

Class no. 8896; Mon/Tue/Wed/Thu 6:45–8:25pm

Medieval English literature follows the Classical period and precedes the Renaissance. Therefore, it has been considered the inferior product of the 'Dark Ages.' But this course seeks to capture the complexity of the Middle Ages by studying texts from various genres, including epic, romance, and saga. Course readings will include *Beowulf*, *Exodus*, excerpts of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, excerpts of the *Poetic Edda*, the *Saga of the Volsungs*, *Hrafnkel's Saga*, Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *Sir Orfeo*.

Texts will be read in translation, except for certain Middle English texts that will be read in the original language. Students will write short papers and a longer, comparative research paper. Students will also give brief oral presentations on assigned texts.

ENGL 781-01: Special Seminar

Contemporary American Theater

Rhoda Sirlin

Class no. 3617; Mon/Tue/Wed/Thu 6:45–8:25pm

This seminar will focus on Pulitzer Prize-winning American playwrights from the late 20th and early 21st centuries. We will explore the connection between these modern plays with Greek tragedy and with the social dramas of 19th-century playwrights like Ibsen and Strindberg, discovering in the process the use of realism, naturalism, and expressionism in contemporary American theater. Some of the playwrights we will discuss are Paula Vogel, Margaret Edson, John Patrick Shanley, Tracy Letts, Quiara Hudes, Sarah Ruhl, Rebecca Gilman, Ayad Akhtar, Stephen Guirgis, Lynn Nottage, Amy Herzog, and Martyna Majok. If possible, we might see a Broadway production of one of these playwrights.

English MA Course Descriptions

2020 Summer Session II (6 weeks, June 29 to August 6)

ENGL 720: Studies in Renaissance Literature

Spenser, Marlowe, Sidney

Richard Marotta

Class no. 4099; Mon/Wed 6:00–8:05pm

This course will study three important writers from the early modern period: Spenser, Marlowe, and Sidney. Each of these poets contributed to the development of English literature and poetics in very dynamic and lasting ways. Spenser fuses the epic tradition with English mythology, neo-Platonism, and a blend of Italian and Anglo Saxon poetic techniques. Marlowe's use of dramatic and poetic language helps recognize the natural rhythms of English as a poetic medium and builds upon that language both mythically and dramatically. Sidney, like Spenser, recognizes the importance of Italian poetry at the time and redefines the role of poetics and rhetoric within the context of the Petrarchan tradition. Each of these poets fully engages in self-reflective rhetorical strategies as well as being conscious of the transformation they are forging from the classical and the Italian to the English and the contemporary.

We will read from Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and the Amoretti (sonnets); for Marlowe, his play *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* and his excursion into the Ovidian mode, *Hero and Leander*, will give us a chance to study how this remarkable poet forged a poetics that influenced Elizabethan drama and poetry; Sidney brings into English poetics an *ars poetica* with his *An Apologie for Poetrie* and with his astonishingly self-conscious poetry in the *Astrophil and Stella*.

Participation and one 10–15 page paper are required.

ENGL 781: Special Seminar

Modern and Postmodern American Poetry

James Richie

Class no. 4102; Tue/Thu 6:00–8:05pm

While new work is continually being done to reexamine the claims, terms, and historical contexts for modern poetry, there's a general critical consensus on what poetic modernism entails and what works may be considered modern. Postmodern poetry, which both emerges and diverges from the tenets of modernism, is another story. Parameters are starting to emerge, but for the most there's still debate on what counts as

postmodern or if there even is (or was) such a thing as a “postmodernism.” This course is going to examine modern and postmodern American poetry with a historicizing lens to understand how poets from the early part of the 20th century developed poetic strategies to account for the feeling of overwhelming, rapid, and unprecedented historical change, and how the poets of the mid part of the 20th century drew from and critiqued those strategies to account for their own historical moment. It will also conclude by analyzing a few poets whose work emerged much later in the 20th century (or beginning of the 21st) to think through how these writers may be dealing with their own inherited dual legacy. Poets under consideration include but are not limited to T. S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, H. D., Langston Hughes, Adrienne Rich, Elizabeth Bishop, John Ashbery, Robert Hayden, Rita Dove, James Merrill, A. R. Ammons, Frank Bidart, Jorie Graham, and Carl Phillips.