

QUEENS COLLEGE - DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

SPRING 2013

English 636 - History of Literary Criticism

What is literature? What is literary theory?

Seo-Young Chu

T. 4.30-6.20 Code: 10602

Required for students pursuing the MA literature program.

Satisfies the theory requirement for students pursuing the MS.ED with a specialization in English who were admitted *before fall 2012*.

What does it mean to interpret a literary text? In exploring these and related questions, we will examine a diversity of frameworks through which to approach texts both "literary" and "non-literary." Such texts may range from lyric poetry to North Korean propaganda posters, from lesbian gothic slipstream to television detective shows, from philosophical treatises on the sublime to YouTube videos of puppies engaging in "cuteness overload." Possible frameworks include classical rhetoric, postcolonialism, trauma studies, formalism, marxism, deconstruction, queer theory, feminism, science fiction, and new historicism. Possible topics: mimesis, memes, metafiction, medicine, historiography, ethnicity, ethics, aesthetics, gender, genre, generalism, globalization, high art, pop culture, kitsch, camp, search engines, pronouns, the politics of form, the meaning of reading, the grammar of hyperlinks, canine epistemology, and the epistemology of "spoilers." Possible authors include Achebe, Anzaldúa, Aristotle, Auerbach, Butler, Caruth, Delany, Derrida, Freud, Greenberg, Haraway, Hayles, Jameson, Johnson, Kim, Landow, Marx, Miéville, Millan, Ngai, Plato, Poe, Said, Smith, Sontag, Stein, Wittig, Woolf, and you.

English 701 - Seminar in Graduate Methodology

Veronica Schanoes

Th 6.30-8.20 Code: 11138

Required for students pursuing the MA literature program.

What distinguishes graduate from undergraduate study? What kinds of questions do scholars ask? And how do they go about answering them? In this class, we'll explore the approaches professional scholars in literary criticism approach their work. We'll study various ways of looking at one text, finding reliable sources, getting the most out of secondary literature, and making interventions in scholarly "conversations." Using these tools, you will develop a major research project of your own, preparing the papers you will be doing in other classes, as well as for your culminating thesis essay.

English 702 - Graduate Methodology for English/Education Students**Judith Nysenholc****Th 6.30-8.20 Code: 11059**

Required for students pursuing the MS.Ed with a specialization in English who were admitted *before fall 2012*. Satisfies the methodology requirement for students pursuing the MS.Ed with a specialization in English who were admitted *fall 2012 and following*.

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 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. The shift to the Common Core Standards, with its 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.

English 703 - Composition Theory and Literacy Studies**Amy Wan****W 4.30-6.20 Code: 11159**

Satisfies the theory requirement for students pursuing the MS.Ed with a specialization in English who were admitted *before fall 2012*. Satisfies the methodology requirement for students pursuing the MS.Ed with a specialization in English who were admitted *fall 2012 and following*.

Most students in the process of earning an advanced degree in English are strong writers. But even the most skilled writer might 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, literacy and writing studies; and 3. to analyze the affordances and constraints of literacy learning and the teaching of writing. 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, implementation of Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in K-12, and the changing roles of formulaic writing, creative writing, and technology. The course is designed as a seminar with a substantial weekly reading load, class blog and other informal writing, and two formal writing/research assignments.

English 638 - Modern Drama**American Female Dramatists**

Rhoda Sirlin

F 4.30-6.20

Code: 11149

This special section of Studies in Modern Drama will focus on American female playwrights, some of whom have won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and some who are significant for cultural or historical reasons. We will explore themes and approaches of these women dramatists and what their plays reveal about American culture. Among the topics considered are the relationship between women writers and their cultural and social backgrounds, conditions affecting women's literary production, the influence of past female and male dramatists, the impact of race and class, and the continuities and breaks with the dominant literary tradition. The course will demonstrate the centrality of plays in American culture and how contemporary theater is connected to Greek tragedy and to the realistic social dramas of the 19th century. We will put on scenes from these plays, watch some film excerpts, and possibly see a Broadway production during the semester. Some of the playwrights we will cover are Lillian Hellman, Lorraine Hansberry, Beth Henley, Marsha Norman, Paula Vogel, Rebecca Gilman and Sarah Ruhl.

English 681-01 - Special Studies

Transgender Narratives and Theories

Hugh English

W 4.30-6.20

Code: 10626

Gender studies, Women's Studies, LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) Studies and Queer Studies—all of the above are areas of thought and politics that are newly invigorated and sometimes challenged by transgender identities, experiences, politics, histories and theories. If second-wave feminism articulated and explored the distinction between sex and gender, and third-wave feminism opened up the categories of race, ethnicity and sexuality, can we begin to see now an emergent and consistent challenge to the fundamental assumptions of ideological heterosexuality, namely that there are two (only two!), binaristic, supposedly complementary and opposite sexes? This course will consider a variety of texts and genres, especially autobiographical and fictional narratives of transgender experience, but also history, theory, political manifesto and ethnography. We will consider the varied diction, figures, narrative tropes, and both explicit and implied theoretical understandings—especially of the relations among the categories of sex, gender, sexuality and embodiment—that underlie articulations and understandings of categories such as “transsexual” and “transgender.”

English 681-02 - Special Studies

Hotel Orient

Wan-Chuan Kao

W 6.30-8.20

Code: 11160

It is a truism that travelers by necessity inhabit the space of the hotel, the hostel, the inn. Marco Polo, in his *Travels*, notes the lavish hostels that play host to foreign ambassadors and merchants in the fabled city of Khan-baliq (present-day Beijing) during the reign of Kubilai Khan. This

seminar charts the historical encounters between East and West through the very spaces that facilitate cross-cultural transactions from the medieval to the postmodern. Along the Silk Road, hostels are conducive to the traffic of people and wares; good hostel means good trade. If modern hotel consciousness is marked by transience, ennui, eroticism, and isolation, we ask whether or not the same characteristics held true in premodern hotel practices, and if the space of the Orient (as both the Near and the Far East) makes a difference in hotel narratology. The texts (some will be selections) we will examine include Marco Polo's *Travels*, Mary Wortley Montagu's *Letters*, V. S. Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness*, Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, Ghulam Abbas's *Hotel Moenjodaro and Other Stories*, A. S. Byatt's *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*, Michel Houellebecq's *Platform*, Yoko Ogawa's *Hotel Iris*, and Tennessee Williams's *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel*. Theoretical readings will include selections from the following: Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Wayne Koestenbaum's *Hotel Theory*, Hamid Dabashi's *Post-Orientalism*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *Other Asias*, and Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*. We will also consider representations of Eastern hotels in drama and cinema, such as Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil's *Miss Saigon*, Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*, Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation*, Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, Wong Kar-wai's *2046*, Todd Phillips's *The Hangover Part II*, and Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Semantically, "Orient" means not only the geographic east. As a verb, to orient means to position oneself in a particular alignment in order to ascertain one's bearings. In this sense, to write about lodging in the East is to sort out one's cultural and geopolitical orientation. Within the transhistoric cultural imaginary, is Hotel Orient really the desired space of elsewhere? Or is it a place of disorientation that nonetheless harbors travelers adrift?

English 719 - Studies in Medieval Literature

Literature and Culture in Medieval Britain

Gordon Whatley

M 6.30-8.20

Code: 11167

Satisfies the English language requirement for students pursuing the MS.Ed with a specialization in English who were admitted *before fall 2012*. Satisfies the pre-1900 requirement for students pursuing the MS.Ed with a specialization in English who were admitted *fall 2012 and following*.

The course studies a variety of texts from the 8th to the 15th centuries, clustered thematically to illustrate aspects of the medieval belief system (original sin, the devil, salvation through the cross, martyrdom, virginity, poverty, penance, and the sacraments of the Church) co-existing or conflicting with the secular aristocratic values of chivalric honor and noble love; these contrasting themes are reflected in such representative literary genres as biblical paraphrase (the Old English *Genesis B* and *Dream of the Rood*), the devotional tract (*Holy Virginity*); the saint's life (the Old English *Juliana*, the Middle English *Seinte Margarete* and *Seyn Francys*), the miracle tale (*Saint Erkenwald*), the Breton lay (Marie de France's *Guigemar* and *Bisclavret*, and the Middle English *Sir Orfeo*), Arthurian chivalric romance (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*), and the courtly dream vision (Chaucer's Saint Valentine's poem, *The Parlement of Fowles*). Students contribute short oral and/or written reports on selected secondary sources and write a term paper using research to explore one of the course topics in greater depth.

Most of the primary readings will be in modern translations but Chaucer's Parlement, and the lay of Sir Orfeo will be read in older forms of English (no previous knowledge required, but students will need to budget extra time to cope with the language). Some of the other texts offer opportunities (purely optional) for working with French, as well as some more difficult forms of Middle English.

Required Texts: Glynn Burgess & Keith Busby, trans. *The Lais of Marie de France* (Penguin); Bella Millett & Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, ed. *Medieval English Prose for Women* (Oxford U. Pr); James Winny, ed. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Broadview Press). The other readings will be available online at the Blackboard course website.

English 726 - Studies in Early American Literature

Love and Death in the Transatlantic Novel: American and British Gothic Fiction 1682-1959.

Siân Silyn Roberts

M 4.30-6.20 Code: 11147

Satisfies the pre-1900 requirement for students pursuing the MS.Ed with a specialization in English who were admitted *fall 2012 and following*.

British and American authors have long experimented with the languages of fear, persecution, loathing, and imprisonment to produce the style of writing popularly known as "Gothic." To understand why readers on both sides of the Atlantic found this changing, complex form so consistently appealing (beyond its obvious power to titillate or entertain) from the middle of the eighteenth-century onward, we will consider Gothic fiction as an arena in which different notions of community (national, transatlantic, cosmopolitan, etc.) and individual subjectivity enter into conversation, confront, and revise one another. Situating ourselves primarily in the long eighteenth-century, we will examine the Gothic's early literary origins and its changing intellectual preoccupations to consider how the British and American traditions supplement and diverge from one another. We will enhance our understanding of this complex literary form with a combination of recent scholarly criticism, political philosophy, and individual research. Authors and critics may include Rowlandson, Radcliffe, Bird, Irving, Poe, Hawthorne, Brockden Brown, Brontë, Stoker, Jacobs, Jackson, Foucault, Agamben, Esposito, Locke, Rousseau, Smith, Hume.

English 729 - Studies in Modern Literature

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

Jeffrey Cassvan

T 6.30-8.20 Code: 9951

June 2014 will mark the centenary of the publication of *Dubliners*, James Joyce's collection of fifteen short stories. Although it is a work often over-shadowed by the popularity of *Portrait* and *Ulysses* and by the radical rethinking of the protean mettle of language and of reading in *Finnegans Wake*, 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. 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.

English 781-01 - Special Seminar

World Literature

Gloria Fisk

W 6.30-9.20 Code: 10629

How can we read literary texts in a more global context, and why should we try? If we think of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, for example, as a contribution to "world literature" as well as American and African-American literature, then we can read it alongside texts that range from Euripedes' *Medea* to J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*. But what new interpretive tools will we need, and what new insights can we hope to gain? Students in this seminar will enter into a scholarly conversation that responds to questions like these about the conditions for literature's circulation across national borders. We'll think critically about the variety of ways that literary texts engage their readers with worlds that seem at once strange and familiar; distant and close: in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled*, for example, Abbas Kiarostami's *Certified Copy*, and *The Arabian Nights*. We'll test the utility of "world literature" as a critical category as we consider the

processes—of interpretation, imagination, translation, and commerce—it requires. And as we reflect on our own experiences as readers, we'll trace the ways that fictional representations of people and places that seem foreign to us shape the way we imagine a more global community. To debate our conclusions, we'll put them in conversation with some of the most influential scholars in the field, including Pascale Casanova, David Damrosch, Wai-Chee Dimock, Franco Moretti, Ross Posnock, Bruce Robbins, Lawrence Venuti, and Rebecca Walkowitz.

English 781-02 - Special Seminar

Daring in a Damaged World: Representing Eco-Activism in Fiction and Film

Frederick Buell

M 6.30-9.20 Code: 11982

The topic of this course is eco-activism in fiction and film today. Writers in the last three or four decades have been experimenting with new protagonists, altered genres, and hybrid narratives in the attempt to create engaging and provocative cultural texts responsive to society's new social and environmental conditions. In the process, they have fulfilled one of the credos of first-wave eco-theory and criticism. They have not just depicted human dramas enacted on the passive environmental stage of a "setting"; they have made environmental forces a dynamic and overt part of the characterizations, problematics, conflicts, and actions of their fictions.

Behind much of this innovation is the fact that environmental problems, risks, and threats have ceased to come apparently from outside modern Western society, but have become securely embedded within it. As both environmental historians and second-wave eco-theorists have been exploring, pristine nature as the Romantics knew it (constructed it, represented it) has become today at best an image of loss that evokes nostalgia and anger; today, that "nature" is, in a number of essential ways "over." Nature no longer is "outside" society; society and it have become complexly fused.

On the one hand, human impacts have, some environmental historians argue, become a geologic force, changing "nature" everywhere and doing it fast. Nature is no longer our foundation, but, thanks to our species' collective power, our risky flux. Natures 'r us. At the same time, "us" 'r natures: environmental pressures and problems surface today vividly *inside* our private corporeal, psychic, cultural and social worlds. As victims of environmental poisoning or postcoloniality feel, environmental toxification and degradation is at the center of their intimately personal, internal fates, and the conflicts of their lives, if art is to explore them, must foreground the damaged environments they dwell in as well as the hidden social webs producing them.

Increasingly, just as you can't build anything of size without an environmental review being part of the process, you can't write anything of significance without consideration of environmental forces and issues being deeply embedded in the text.

So the course hopes to introduce everyone to a host of new protagonists, including eco-feminists, eco-terrorists, eco-detectives, eco-justice activists, eco-postcolonials, eco-scientists and eco-businesspeople. With them come new social-environmental problematics and hybrid narratives. We'll read fiction by authors like Edward Abbey, Neal Stephenson, Ann Patchett, Indra Sinha, and Jane Ozeki. We'll discuss films like *12 Monkeys*, *Blade Runner*, *Erin Brocovich*, *The Constant Gardiner*, and *Safe*.

English 781-03 - Special Seminar**Where Are You *Really* From? The Literatures of “Asian America”****Caroline Hong****Th. 4.30-6.20 Code: 11983**

“Where are you *really* from?” is a question often posed to Asian Americans, a question that makes assumptions about who does and does not belong “here.” The term “Asian America” has been and continues to be used by writers, readers, and critics of Asian American literature, partly in response to this question. But where or what or who is Asian America? As a construct, it encompasses diverse, and sometimes contested, visions of identity, culture, and belonging. The literature we read will demonstrate that the many places of Asian America—from Angel Island to internment camps, from urban ghettos to affluent suburbs, from Asia to the Americas, LA to NYC, Hawaii to the South—are as heterogeneous as the people who inhabit those spaces. We will read these texts within and alongside their historical, political, social, and cultural contexts, focusing on issues of gender, sexuality, class, citizenship, imperialism, globalization, etc., in addition to race and racism. Course material will include work by writers like Jhumpa Lahiri, R. Zamora Linmark, H. M. Naqvi, Nina Revoyr, GB Tran, Monique Truong, and Karen Tei Yamashita, to name a few possibilities, as well as seminal theory and criticism from the field of Asian American studies.

English 791 – Thesis Course**Andrea Walkden****Code: 11157**

Registration by permission only. Please schedule an advising appointment with Andrea Walkden if you wish to register for this course.

English 792 – Thesis Workshop**Andrea Walkden****Code: 11158**

Registration by permission only. Please schedule an advising appointment with Andrea Walkden if you wish to register for this course.

English 795 – Independent Study**Caroline Hong****Code: 12533**

Registration by permission only. Please schedule an advising appointment with Caroline Hong if you wish to register for this course.