

English MA Course Descriptions

2018 Summer Session I (4 weeks, June 4 to 27)

ENGL 781: Special Seminar: 20th- and 21st-century American Women Playwrights

Rhoda Sirlin

Class no. 4185; Mon/Tue/Wed/Thu 6:45–8:25pm

This special seminar will focus on 20th- and 21st-century American women playwrights, many of whose plays have either earned the Pulitzer Prize for Drama or whose work has been a finalist for that prize. It will also focus on a few playwrights whose work should have been nominated but were excluded because their plays were considered too controversial at the time of their publication. We will analyze how theatre explores important cultural and social issues, revealing the human condition, without necessarily providing any easy solutions to these problems. Plays we will discuss include Susan Glaspell's *Trifles*, Clare Booth Luce's *The Women* and *Slam the Door Softly*, Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*, Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, Marsha Norman's *Night, Mother*, Paula Vogel's *How I Learned to Drive*, Sarah Ruhl's *In the Next Room*, Amy Herzog's *4000 Miles*, Rebecca Gilman's *Boy Gets Girl*, Quiara Hudes's *Water by the Spoonful*, Margaret Edson's *Wit*, and Lynn Nottage's *Sweat*. We will explore contemporary definitions of tragedy, comedy, and tragicomedy, connecting contemporary dramas to the ancient Greek playwrights as well as to the 19th-century social dramas of Ibsen and Strindberg. We will watch some film excerpts of these plays and go to see a Broadway or off-Broadway play if there is a relevant production running in the summer.

ENGL 781: Special Seminar: LGBTQ Literature

Megan Milks

Class no. 5286; Mon/Tue/Wed/Thu 6:45–8:25pm

In this course we will examine some of the major aesthetic and political concerns that have shaped LGBTQ literature, engaging as we do so in issues central to LGBTQTSIAAx history and experience. We will explore the various ways in which writers and theorists have responded to a cultural archive defined both by trenchant injustice and vibrant political movement, whether by recovering lost histories, documenting precarious presents, or inventing new (or no) futures. Throughout, we will consider the roles that language, representation, and form have played in the regulation of sexual and gender identity and the production of cultural resistance, attending to the complexities of race, ethnicity, nation, indigeneity, disability, and class,

and with a particular focus on the queer child and queer/trans coming-of-age narratives. Our readings will span multiple modes, including canonical and punk literature, spoken word and somatic poetry, and graphic memoir; you will have opportunities to produce in multiple modes in turn, including theory and criticism, poetry, fiction, and memoir. Texts may include Justin Torres's *We the Animals*, James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*, Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts*, and Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*.

English MA Course Descriptions

2018 Summer Session II (6 weeks, July 2 to August 13)

ENGL 723: Studies in Romantic Literature

Richard Marotta

Class no. 9157; Tue/Thu 6:00–8:05pm

For many Romantic writers, the “traces of the first Paradise whence man was driven” (McGann) could be found in the imaginative and mimetic structures surrounding them. Wordsworth and Shelley found these traces in nature; Byron in irony; Keats in aesthetics; Blake in myth and Coleridge in ethics. This course will examine how the search for these traces of paradise, or as McGann put it, the idea “that poetry . . . can set one free of the ruins of history and culture is the grand idea of every Romantic poet,” forms the core belief that shapes the romantic imagination in its exploration of poetic language, of imaginative experience and of the art of poetry. As the romantics looked at ways of regenerating poetic language, they perceived a parallel between the “ruins of paradise” and the ruins of poetic language in Enlightenment practice. In revitalizing the language of poetry, these poets sought to uncover the traces of paradise contained and expressed by the logos and within the dialectic of negation and transcendence. Our exploration will focus on how the romantic poets layered this quest onto idealized characters, nature and poetry itself. Active participation and one major paper are required.

ENGL 781: Special Seminar: Poets Respond to America

Dara Barnat

Class no. 4209; Mon/Wed 6:45–8:25pm or 6:00–8:05pm

In this course we will be studying poets who explore the concept and construct of “America,” from the nineteenth century to the present. Such poets may include Walt

Whitman, Emma Lazarus, Muriel Rukeyser, Langston Hughes, Allen Ginsberg, Robert Pinsky, Shirley Geok-Lin Lim, Rhina P. Espaillat, Naomi Shihab Nye, Gustavo Perez Firmat, Eduardo Corral, Natasha Trethewey, and Cuban-American poet Richard Blanco, who read his poem “One Today” at President Barack Obama’s second inauguration. We will be asking how these poets—from a multitude of backgrounds—imagine, interrogate, and celebrate both America and themselves vis-à-vis America. We will examine how race, gender, and even class inform their poetic responses. Finally, together with poetry, we will be reading criticism that investigates the very idea of American poetry as a category.