

English MA Course Descriptions

2019 Summer Session I (4 weeks, June 3 to 26)

ENGL 781-01: Special Seminar
Classic and Contemporary Male Playwrights
Rhoda Sirlin
Class no. 1287; Mon/Tue/Wed/Thu 6:45–8:25pm

This special seminar will focus on post-1945 American male playwrights, beginning with classic Pulitzer Prize–winning dramatists: Eugene O’Neill, Tennessee Williams, and Arthur Miller. We will then explore their influence on late 20th-century and early 21st-century playwrights, such as David Mamet, Donald Margulies, August Wilson, Alfred Uhry, Edward Albee, Tracy Letts, John Patrick Shanley, Ayad Akhtar, and Stephen Guirgis, all Pulitzer Prize winners. In the process we will analyze the role of realism, naturalism, and expressionism in American theater and the nature of the tragic hero in contemporary American life and theater.

ENGL 781-02: Special Seminar
Coming-of-Age Literature
Megan Milks
Class no. 1288; Mon/Tue/Wed/Thu 6:45–8:25pm

In this course we will explore coming-of-age literature as it has evolved over time. In examining how (mostly) American writers have variously narrativized maturation, we necessarily embark on a critical study of what constitutes im/maturity in American culture. What does it mean to grow up, and when do we know when we’re done? Engaging with texts across genres, we will ask how literature has shaped and been shaped by changing conceptions of adolescence and adulthood—and how such stories, and the models of development they present, may be complicated by social differences such as sexual identity, race, ethnicity, class, ability, gender identity, and citizenship status. Among other topics we’ll read up on the *bildungsroman*, the birth of the teenager, and the emergence of Young Adult as a genre/market, and when and how coming-of-age literature itself came of age in the US. Readings may include S.E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders*, Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home*, Kai Cheng Thom’s *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars: A Dangerous Trans Girl’s Confabulous Memoir*, Angie Thomas’s *The Hate U Give*, Cameron Awkward-Rich’s *Sympathetic Little Monster*, and short works by James Baldwin, Sonja Livingston, and Junot Díaz.

English MA Course Descriptions

2019 Summer Session II (6 weeks, July 1 to August 12)

ENGL 721: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Literature

Milton

Richard Marotta

Class no. 1303; Mon/Wed 6:00–8:05pm

This course will focus on Milton's *Paradise Lost* as a major example of the visionary epic. We will examine the intellectual, theological, and mythical contexts of the poem and then move on to such issues as sexual politics, the emergence of gender identity, the authority of the Divine voice, the rhetoric of the Satanic voice, the birth of the Human voice, the "contradictory energy" (Smith) between paganism and Christianity, and the various configurations of Adam and Eve. Milton made a number of poetic choices in the context of an epic poem that have endeared him to some readers and alienated him from others. We will look at these choices in the context of an epic poem that is very much heir to a non-Christian classical epic tradition and, at the same time, the recipient of a very specific Christian theological influences and conventions. These conflicted imaginative moments engender some of the more problematical and visionary elements in *Paradise Lost*.

REVISED COURSE

ENGL 727: Studies in American Literature, 1820–1920

American Poetry and Poetics, 1810–1910

James Richie

Class no. 1304; Tue/Thu 6:00–8:05pm

Through much of the 20th century, the standard critical line was that the two most exemplary American poets of the previous century were Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson. That assessment would have been bizarre and baffling to a critic or scholar writing in the 19th century and not just given the relative obscurity of both of those writers. Shifts in culture, aesthetics, expectations for poetry, and the nature of publication helped shape the appreciation and elevation of these two writers. So what was American poetry before it was Whitman and Dickinson? And how did we go from whatever that was to 20th (and to a large degree 21st) century expectations for verse? This course will work towards developing an answer to those questions. We will be exploring the wide range of versification throughout the 19th century, paying special attention to the various ways Americans used verse as an aesthetic balm, a nation-

building exercise, an evasion of current events, a method of making money, an expression of political outrage with the hope of change, a personal examination of existential angst, or some combination of all of these. We will also be thinking about the ways and places in which people read poetry, both figuratively and literally, charting the move from small press distribution to industrial mass production. Authors studied may include William Cullen Bryant, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Edgar Allan Poe, John Greenleaf Whittier, Lydia Huntley Sigourney, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Helen Hunt Jackson, Emma Lazarus, George Santayana, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Stephen Crane, and Trumbull Stickney. And of course Whitman and Dickinson.