

English MA Course Descriptions

2019 FALL

ENGL 636: History of Literary Criticism

Steven Kruger

Class no. 27928

MON 6:40–8:30pm

We all read theoretically. That is, we all read with some set of assumptions (both explicit and implicit) about what the written (or other cultural) work in front of us is, how it was fashioned, how readers (like us) are meant to respond to it, whether and how we are supposed to “figure it out,” what its role in a larger cultural (and social and political) frame might be, and so forth. In this course, we will examine a wide range of literary and cultural theory, works that reflect explicitly on what it is that a text does in the world and how it means; what authorship is, and the ways in which authors are implicated in their historical moments; how the cultural, social, political, and historical surroundings of a text are significant; and how readers read. The course will survey a number of influential theoretical approaches (such as psychoanalysis, Marxism/materialism, formalism, and feminism), but any survey of such a large field will be necessarily incomplete. Our main goals will be (1) to grapple with a set of challenging and exciting theoretical essays and (2) to examine how working with these texts might make us better, more self-aware, flexible, and innovative readers.

ENGL 701: Seminar in Graduate Methodology

Talia Schaffer

Class no. 27929

WED 4:40–6:30pm

When you sit down to write a research paper or a thesis, what does that mean and how can you do it? This course will tell you. We’ll investigate which websites are reliable, discuss how to find useful online 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. You’ll work on your own research project, and also do some shorter assignments to learn how to use various research techniques. Weekly short papers, final research paper.

ENGL 719: Studies in Medieval Literature

Michael Sargent

Class no. 27930

THU 6:40–8:30pm

The theme of this course will be Multilingual Anglo-Saxon England, and we will be looking at a number of works in which differences between peoples and languages play intriguingly complicated roles. *Beowulf*, for example, is thought of as the quintessential Old English poem, yet it is set in Denmark and its hero is from Sweden. The Britons, ancestors of the modern Welsh and lowlands Scots, had their own legends—the tales of the Mabinogi, for example—and heroic poems of their eventually unsuccessful battle to keep the Anglo-Saxons from turning Britain into England. And Norse sagas record the viking attempt—successful for a time—to turn York into the capital of a Scandinavian country (while some of the vikings fought on the side of the Saxons against the Norse king). And the history of all of this was recorded in a fourth language, Latin. The aim of this course is not to sort out this complexity, but to revel in it.

ENGL 724: Studies in Victorian Literature

Victorian Poetry and Poetics

Annmarie Drury

Class no. 27932

TUE 4:40–6:30pm

In this class, we examine poetry of the period from 1830 to around 1915, considering especially its spectacular formal innovation and giving special attention to the role of women poets—and to the question of what it meant to be a woman writer—in this age. We also think about dialect poetry (of William Barnes, namely) and the ways it challenged a dominant poetic culture; and about the emergence of new sound technologies that were often seen in the era as having special affinities with poetry.

We'll ask how Victorian poetics influenced the modernist writers of the twentieth century, and we'll devote attention to the role of literary translation as a source of poetic innovation. We will also think about the Victorian poetic collection as a material object: about how books of poems looked in their time and about the stories behind them.

Poets include Christina Rossetti, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Michael Field (a.k.a. Katherine Harris Bradley and Edith Emma Cooper), Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, and Matthew Arnold. We also read influential works of George Meredith, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Thomas Hardy.

ENGL 726: Studies in Early American Literature
Formations: Circum-Atlantic Cultural Production after 1776

Duncan Faherty

Class no. 27933

MON 6:40–8:30pm

Instead of reading late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century texts as expressions of national subjectivities, this course will explore how they take up questions of mobility, fracture, commodification, dislocation, equality, and revolutionary circulation. Within this context, we will pay particular attention—because of the ways in which their bodies were often forced to circulate as commodities—to texts written by women and diasporic Africans. In so doing, we will consider how these texts trouble the very concept of an isolationist national tradition by underscoring the intimacies which actually shaped the formations of seemingly disparate geographical spaces. We will, in other words, explore how the post-Revolutionary Anglophone world was formed by the exchange of goods, ideas, and peoples. Our focus on the flows and valuations of bodies and capital within these texts will serve as our entry point into thinking about how Anglophone cultural production represents mobility and belonging in the wake of the Revolutionary War (for both the emerging Republic and for the now truncated British Empire). In so doing, we will grapple with the shifting structures of feeling that define notions of democracy, citizenship, empire, nation, and the human after the rupture in colonial relations. Possible readings include Uriah Derick D'Arcy's *The Black Vampyre: A Legend of St. Domingo*, Unca Eliza Winkfield's *The Female American*, Leonora Sansay's *Secret History*, Victor Hugo's *Bug-Jargal*, William Earle's *Obi; Or The History of Three-Fingered Jack*, and the anonymously published *The Woman of Colour*.

ENGL 729: Studies in Modern Literature
Transnational Modernisms

Fred Gardaphe

Class no. 27934

THU 4:40–6:30pm

This course examines the development of Modernism internationally by focusing on how its development in Italy impacted U.S. literature. This will be accomplished by viewing major writers in both countries through the lenses of ethnicity and gender. Beginning with four major Italian Modernists (Luigi Pirandello, Maria Messina, Aldo Palazzeschi, and Italo Calvino) the course will introduce students to Modernism in an Italian context. Following this, students will explore the practice of Modernist writing in the works of American authors of Italian descent (John Fante, Tina DeRosa, Gilbert Sorrentino, and Carol Maso) to determine transnational influences in their work. Designed to introduce students to the

development of Modern literature and the role that ethnicity plays in the development of U.S. American modernist literature, this course will help students examine and understand the transnational influences that shape the writers under consideration. It is also designed to give students alternative and comparative views of Italian and American Modernism. Instructor and guest lectures on the Modernist traditions of both countries will contextualize readings as they relate to cultural developments in Europe and the United States.

ENGL 781-01: Special Seminar
Global Arab Literature

Ala Alryyes
Class no. 27940
WED 6:40–8:30pm

This course aims to introduce students to a select set of works of literature, in a variety of genres, produced by writers of Arab heritage in several languages (students will read them in English translation). Topics include perennial problems of political tyranny, military defeat and exile, patriarchy and gender, immigration, the rise and fall of the Arab Spring, and the relation of Arabs and the Arab world to the West. Our seminar's guiding principle, however, will be that literature includes politics, history, and culture and not vice versa. Because Arab modernity was both accelerated in relation to its Western counterpart and profoundly influenced by Western colonialism and technology, the work we will read offer new insights into global modernity and poetics. Works by Ahmed Saadawi, Riad Sattouf, Laila Lalami, Raja Shehadeh, Suheir Hammad, Naomi Shihab Nye, Sayed Kashua, and others. Theoretical texts by Bakhtin, Jameson, Said, Lukács, Fabian, and others.

ENGL 781-02: Special Seminar
Urban Stages: Dramatic Literature & the City

Hillary Miller
Class no. 27941
MON 4:40–6:30pm

This course explores the interdisciplinary nexus of dramatic literature, the stage, and urban space. We will trace the city on stage from the Progressive Era to the present and address the “spatial turn” in literary and theatre studies, which conceptualizes dramatic literature as part of urban processes. In order to consider the many geographies of drama, we will investigate stage representations of the modern and contemporary city and analyze the various ways in which theatre engages with urban life.

Our readings of dramatic literature will emphasize struggles over urban space, including the tensions between private space and political freedom, and the local and the global. How has the spatial and social organization of the modern city informed the thematic and formal choices writers make? How have literary texts shaped our own experiences of the city? How do conceptions of place and space alter our interpretations of dramatic texts? How have playwrights spatialized the concerns of city dwellers, such as development, homelessness, segregation, or contested definitions of “public”? How have playwrights responded to changing sites of theatrical production in cities?

Readings from literary studies, cultural studies, and geography may include theorists Timothy Cresswell, Arlene Dávila, Elizabeth Grosz, David Harvey, Jen Harvie, Henri Lefebvre, Doreen Massey, Michael McKinney, and J. Chris Westgate. Playwrights may include Lisa D’Amour, Kristoffer Diaz, Michael V. Gazzo, Madeleine George, Stephen Adly Guirgis, Charles Hale Hoyt, Katori Hall, Ron Milner, José Rivera, Anna Deavere Smith, Diana Son, and August Wilson.

ENGL 781-03: Special Seminar

Digital Rhetoric

Marco Navarro

Class no. 27943

THU 6:40–8:30pm

In our digital society, multimodal and non-traditional forms of communication challenge us to reexamine established notions of rhetoric, persuasion, audience, and identification. Our daily use of the internet, social media, gaming, and virtual and augmented realities reveals the extent to which we participate in, and contribute to, a wide range of digital rhetorical practices. This seminar will examine a range of theories, issues, and practices related to rhetoric in our digital world. In particular, we will explore the social, cultural, political, educational, and ethical dimensions of rhetoric in our ever-expanding digital society.

ENGL 781-04: Special Seminar

Central America in the US Imagination

William Orchard

Class no. 27944

TUE 6:40–8:30pm

Central America looms large in contemporary political discourse in the US, even if many Americans don’t recognize its prevalence. We see oblique references to the region in discussions of migrant caravans or in specious invocations of MS-13. But, the US’s

entanglement with Central America has a much longer history. In Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, the narrator notes in one footnote, "Central America was Iraq before Iraq was Iraq," signaling how the US used Central America as a testing ground for various imperial and neo-colonial projects. In this class, we will consider the history of the United States' engagement with the region, reading texts in history, political science, and sociology alongside literature. Our first group of literary texts will come from liberal and leftist writers of the 1980s who were attracted to the region either because of an affinity with its political ideologies, a desire to critique US military interventions, or a need to witness and report on the human right abuses that resulted from the region's prolonged civil wars. Indeed, a wide array of notable American writers took Central America as a subject, including Joan Didion, Carolyn Forché, June Jordan, Barbara Kingsolver, Demetria Martinez, and Helena Maria Viramontes. Although these writers were well meaning and sympathetic to Central America's plights, their attempts to draw attention to Central America's crises were often fraught. We'll therefore also read a more recent body of writing by Central American Latinx writers who reckon with this complicated literary, political, and economic history. These writers include Gioconda Belli, Hector Tobar, Maya Chinchilla, William Archila, Roy Guzmán, Javier Zamora, and Francisco Goldman. Among the topics we will discuss are the various US military interventions in the region, the Sanctuary Movement in the United States, the role that Central American migrations plays in the formation of a pan-Latinx identity, and how sexuality affected the movement of Central Americans into the US.

ENGL 791: Thesis Course and ENGL 795: Independent Study

Department consent required. Please email Prof. Caroline Hong, Director of Graduate Studies in English, at caroline.hong@qc.cuny.edu if you wish to enroll in these courses.