

English MA Course Descriptions 2017 SPRING

ENGL 636 (1145) – History of Literary Criticism

Jeff Cassvan

MON 4:30–6:20pm

ENGL 701 (1146) – Seminar in Graduate Methodology

Annmarie Drury

THU 6:30–8:20pm

What does literary scholarship in graduate school look like? When your graduate instructors ask you to write a research paper, what do they mean? In this course, we practice methods in research and writing that will be useful to you in all your graduate classes. For us, it is an especially reflective practice, because we think together about how knowledge is created in the discipline of “English”: about what kinds of questions generate knowledge, and about the values that inform those questions. By examining the work of others – of scholars outside our course and of one another – we collect a toolkit of thinking, reading, writing, and research strategies. We give particular attention to the academic essay as a flexible, sophisticated form. We aim to develop a new sense of our own proclivities as literary scholars and a new competence in realizing our interests: to leave the course knowing which strategies for reading and posing questions each of us finds most engaging *and* knowing how to research and write in ways convincing to other literary scholars.

ENGL 702 (7952) – Graduate Methodology for English/Education Students

Judith Nysenholc

THU 6:30–8:20pm

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 *Macbeth*, examine that text through a variety of critical approaches, and discuss how these reading strategies could be incorporated in a high school literature classroom; in particular, we will address how they can be used in

differentiated instruction with special populations, such as English Language Learners. Independently, you will also research and synthesize existing interpretations of a novel or play 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.

ENGL 719 (1147) – Studies in Medieval Literature

Michael Sargent

TUE 6:30–8:20pm

This course will explore the historical construction of the myth of Arthur, the “Once and Future King” of Britain, beginning with a few shards of evidence from archaeology and Celtic myth, through the full-blown fictions of Geoffrey of Monmouth, the romances of twelfth-century France, to the classic English form of the story in Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. We will also read and discuss *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in the original Middle English.

ENGL 723 (1148) – Studies in Romantic Literature: Jane Austen

David Richter

MON 6:30–8:20pm

We shall be reading the six mature novels (*Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Persuasion*) and interpreting them in the light of Austen's life, her letters and minor works, and the history of her times. Was Austen the “Gentle Jane” loved by the late Victorians who discovered her, or a wicked purveyor of social satire? Did she engage the stormy political issues that roiled Europe during the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars, or was she on the run from them? Was she an early feminist or a conservative about gender issues? The first six weeks will be spent surveying the novels; the last seven will be spent seminar-fashion, presenting, discussing, and critiquing the students' own research-in-progress.

ENGL 726 (49762) – Studies in Early American Literature
Promises Kept and Unmet in Early America

Miles Grier

WED 4:30–6:20pm

One of the surprising aspects of literature written during the colonial period and in the early United States is that the protagonists often already want to leave the country. In order to understand this desire to flee, this course will study historical texts from 1580 to the mid-1800s that reveal the hopes and disappointments of Africans, Europeans, and indigenous peoples in North America and the Caribbean. Texts are likely to include pamphlets, sermons, poems, plays, newspaper articles, novels, and petitions by writers such as Thomas Harriott, John Winthrop, Mary Rowlandson, Samson Occom, Phillis Wheatley, Prince Hall, Royall Tyler, Charles Brockden Brown, Leonora Sansay, David Walker, and Edgar Allan Poe.

ENGL 729 (1157) – Studies in Modern Literature

Modern Memoir: Tales of “Real Life” in the Twenty-First-Century U.S.

Karen Weingarten

MON 4:30–6:20pm

The memoir is as popular as ever in American literary culture, garnering prestigious awards in non-fiction and launching writers' careers. Critics have also turned to the memoir as a lens to understand identity, history, and even politics. This course will investigate why the personal narrative is so popular and what it has to teach us about understanding ourselves at this particular moment. We'll read memoirs that have been published since the beginning of the twenty-first century and that take a theoretical perspective on identity and its relationship to history, politics, and intimate life. We'll read work by recent Macarthur Fellows Ta-Nehisi Coates and Maggie Nelson, who have both won numerous awards for their memoirs. Coates structures *Between the World and Me* as a letter to his son that weaves his own experiences as a black man in the United States with a history of race and racism in this country. In *The Argonauts* Nelson explores the norms of family and family-building as she bends assumptions about gender and sexuality. We'll also read Alison Bechdel's *Are You My Mother?*, Cristina Crosby's *A Body Undone*, Kao Kalia Yang's *The Latehomecomer*, and Paul Kalanithi's *When Breath Becomes Air*. We'll likely read Margo Jefferson's *Negroland*, Rahna Reiko Rizzuto's *Hiroshima in the Morning*, Rebecca Solnit's *The Faraway Nearby*, Elizabeth Alexander's *The Light of the World*, Emily Rapp's *Still Point of the Turning World*, and Roz Chast's *Can We Talk About Something More Pleasant?* We'll explore such issues as American culture's relationship to death and dying (and getting old and older), to

illness, to sex and sexuality, to race and racism, to immigration, to class, to war, to history, and to love. We'll also read selected theoretical texts that speak to the memoirs discussed, and which, in some cases, the memoirists draw on directly.

ENGL 781-01 (1154) – Special Seminars

Difficult Novels, Uneasy Narratives

Maaza Mengiste

TUE 4:30–6:20pm

How has the novel learned to accommodate histories that are too difficult to describe? How have novelists begun to construct narratives that take into account the incoherence and confusion of political and personal events? In this class, we will be reading challenging works that seek to embrace complexity. We will be asking ourselves how novels can both verbalize and quiet some of the questions we have been asking as one inevitable occurrence seems to lead to the next. In this class, you will be thoroughly immersed in novelistic exchanges. You will be asked to reckon with the questions that spring from each novel, and to set several novels in conversation with each other to see what surprising, new dialogue emerges. Readings will include such writers as Dasa Drndic, Han Kang, Jose Eduardo Agualusa, Burhan Sonmez, and Yasmine El Rashidi, Sophocles, and Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

ENGL 781-02 (1155) – Special Seminars

Theory in the Flesh: Latina/o/x Cultural Expression and Queer of Color Critique

Bill Orchard

THU 4:30–6:20pm

Responding to literary theory's seeming inability to account for the ways in which race, gender, class, and sexuality impacted lived experiences during the 1970s, Chicana writer Cherrie Moraga declared in 1981 that we needed a "theory in the flesh . . . where the physical realities of our lives—our skin colors, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a politic born of necessity." Although Moraga's work has often been acknowledged as central to women of color feminism, it has also been foundational for queer of color critique, which the sociologist Roderick Ferguson describes as an "interrogat[ion] of social formations as the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class, with particular interest in how those formations correspond with and diverge from nationalist ideas and practices." In a special issue of the journal *Social Text*, David Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz extend this mode of analysis, asking, "What does queer studies have to say about empire, globalization,

neoliberalism, sovereignty, and terrorism? What does queer studies tell us about immigration, citizenship, prisons, welfare, mourning, and human rights?" This class will locate its discussions and writing in this expanded analytic frame.

Through close readings of plays, poems, essays, graphic narrative, fiction, art works, and film, we will consider the questions that arise when sexual identities are negotiated with and against racial, ethnic, and national ones: How do migration and globalization affect how we understand and live sexualities? How do queer Latina/o/x writers and artists reimagine family and kinship? How do we narrate or describe a queer childhood? How have queer critiques of different ethno-nationalist projects aided in the development of a Latino tradition? What sorts of places—real and symbolic—have queer Latinos cultivated in order to flourish in the face of society's oppressions? How do writings by queer Latinos extend and challenge queer theory's accounts of loss, the archive, affect, and the closet? How have transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming Latinx writers introduced new conceptual frameworks and concepts for 21st-century queer politics?

Among the writers and artists that we will consider in the class are: Achy Obejas, Cherrie Moraga, Gloria Anzaldúa, José Esteban Muñoz, Antonio Viego, Ricardo Abreu Bracho, Christopher Soto, Julio Salgado, Arturo Islas, Rafael Campo, Virginia Grise, Eduardo Corral, David Tomas Martinez, Rigoberto González, Reinaldo Arenas, Manuel Muñoz, Junot Díaz, Felix González-Torres, Erika Lopez, Juana Maria Rodriguez, Cristy Road, and tatiana de la tierra. In addition, we will also examine several films, such as *Mala Mala*, *Mind if I Call You Sir*, *Mosquita y Mari*, *Gun Hill Road*, *Ugly Betty*, *Wildness*, *Nasty Baby*, *Paris is Burning*, and *Julio in Jackson Heights*.

ENGL 781-03 (1156) – Special Seminars

Feminist Fairy Tales

Veronica Schanoes

TUE 6:30–8:20pm

What happens in between "Once upon a time" and "Happily ever after?" How have fairy tales changed over time? How has feminism affected the stories we grew up with? And why do women writers return, time and time again, to the stories we all grew up with? In this class, we will explore the impact of popular culture on fairy tales and fairy tales on popular culture, as well as the effects of fairy tales on the formation of a woman's self-image. We will examine the value of beauty, kindness, youth, sexuality and wealth from a variety of angles, and we will also assess what fairy tales from different cultures suggest about women and femininity. Finally, we will consider what these tales have to offer contemporary feminist writers--why do writers revise old stories at all? We will read several different versions of the same fairy tale from

different time periods and cultures and contrast the most well-known and influential versions of fairy tales with feminist revisions of those tales. Writers will include Angela Carter, Terry Pratchett, Catherynne M. Valente, Tanith Lee, and Neil Gaiman.

ENGL 791 (7887) – Thesis Course

Department consent required. Please email the Director of Graduate Studies, Dr. Caroline Hong, at caroline.hong@qc.cuny.edu if you wish to enroll in this course.

ENGL 795 (7885) – Independent Study

Department consent required. Please email the Assistant Director of Graduate Studies, Dr. Bill Orchard, at william.orchard@gmail.com if you wish to enroll in this course.