

Queens College Department of English

Graduate Courses for the Fall 2013 Semester

Required Courses:

636: History of Literary Criticism

Cassvan Jeffrey Mon 6:30pm-8:20pm KY 148

This course provides a thorough introduction to the main concerns of literary criticism and literary theory. We will begin with a careful reading of a few texts by Plato and Aristotle and then turn to a consideration of the diverse perspectives on literature (including Marxism, Psychoanalysis, Formalism, Structuralism, Semiotics, Poststructuralism, Deconstruction, New Historicism, Gender Studies and Queer Theory) that have emerged during the twentieth century. The most stimulating and far reaching theoretical insights very often arise out of reading encounters: Derrida's careful readings of Plato and Rousseau, Lacan's reading of Freud, Freud's own reading of literature and of the German language, Althusser's reading of Marx, Butler's reading of Derrida's reading of Austin, to cite a number of important examples. Accordingly, we will treat the texts of critics and theorists as primary and will attend throughout the semester to the fallout of what Paul de Man has described as literary theory's "necessarily pragmatic moment...that adds a subversive element of unpredictability and makes it something of a wild card in the serious game of the theoretical disciplines." So while we will make use of the introductory materials and organizational format provided in the second edition of *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, we will resist and question the tendency to produce or rely upon simple summaries and paraphrases of difficult arguments and points of view and our class sessions will be devoted to reading encounters with very specific paragraphs and pages in the assigned works. These primary critical and theoretical texts will often be supplemented with a wide range of literary materials (poems, short stories, essays, translations) made available on Blackboard.

701: Seminar in Graduate Methodology

Richter David Wed 4:30pm-6:20pm KY 148

We will investigate the aims and methods of graduate research, culminating in a major project that can be used as the seed for the master's thesis. Students will work at individual projects involving frequent library assignments, which will include the location and evaluation of materials, documentation, textual editing, palaeography, and lexicography. We will also be learning how to understand the relationship between the critical articles we read in learned journals and the literary and cultural theories taught in English 636. (Students need internet access for this course, as many assignments require research tools available on the World Wide Web. Queens College provides free internet access through student accounts at computer labs around the campus but a home computer with a fast connection will of course make working on the assignments much more convenient.)

702: Methodology for English/Education Students

Nysenholc Judith Th 6:30pm-8:20pm KY 148

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.

Elective Courses

662: Shakespeare's Language

Sargent Michael Th 6:30pm-8:20pm KY 248

When Juliet asks Romeo "Wherefore art thou Romeo?" She's not asking him where he is (he's just below her balcony), but why it is that he has to be named "Romeo" – and "Montague" to boot, and thus her enemy. "What," she goes on to ask, "is in a name?"

When the Earl of Kent challenges Lear, who has just made himself un-king, he offers him a double disrespect, asking, "What wouldst thou, old man?" – addressing him with the familiar pronoun, rather than the polite plural, since he is no longer a king, but only an old man.

In this course, we will work through a number of Shakespearean texts, of my choice and yours, looking closely at the historical linguistic issues involved: at how English sounded and meant in the ears of Shakespeare and his audience. Our goal will be that the end of the semester, you will be able to pick up any text of Shakespeare and read it with understanding, and without tears. And without "Shakespeare without Tears."

Text: We will use one of the standard, scholarly editions of Shakespeare (Oxford, Norton, Riverside, Yale, Arden, etc.): I will post my choice a little closer to the beginning of the semester.

719: Performing Conjuality: The Medieval Heterosexual Marriage Debate

Kruger Steven Wed 4:30pm-6:20pm KP 708

In this course, we will study a wide range of medieval European writing by women: drama (by Hroswitha of Gandesheim and Hildegard of Bingen), lyric poetry (by the women troubadours), dream vision (*The Flour and the Leaf*; *The Assembly of Ladies*), romance (by Marie de France), autobiography (by Margery Kempe), theology and mystical writing (by Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Siena, and others), allegory (by Christine de Pisan). We will consider how gender matters in such works, at the same time that we will examine the ways in which such women's writing relates to its broader cultural milieu. Alongside the primary texts, we will read both pertinent theoretical and critical essays and material that puts the literary/cultural texts into appropriate historical contexts. Though we will read some of these texts in the original Middle English, the bulk of the material for the course will be in Modern English translation.

724: Victorian Poetry and Poetics

Drury Annmarie Thu 4:30pm-6:20pm KP 708

We examine poetry of the period from 1830 to around 1900, considering especially its spectacular formal innovation (and formal uncertainties). We give particular attention to Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, and Matthew Arnold. And we read influential works of Christina Rossetti, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Meredith, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward FitzGerald, and Thomas Hardy.

The sense many Victorian poets had that they were writing too late, *after* the great age of poetry, during a time when the poet was increasingly irrelevant as a figure in society, generated complex meditations on the

role and meaning of poetry (and of the artist) in the world. We will look at writers on this question, including Arthur Henry Hallam, Arnold, and Thomas Carlyle, and think about how Victorian notions of what a poet should be and do connected to – and, sometimes, conflicted with – the choices poets make in their poems. We'll ask how Victorian poetics influenced the modernist writers of the twentieth century, we'll devote attention to the role of literary translation as a source of poetic innovation, and we'll think about the concept of poetic voice in this era when literary parody and the newly invented phonograph became popular means of playing around with voices.

726: Specters of The Black Atlantic: Antebellum African American Literature

Faherty Duncan Mon 6:30pm-8:20pm KY 248

Building on the work of Paul Gilroy's landmark volume, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993), this course seeks to map the "Africanist" presence in the formation of antebellum U.S. culture. In so doing, we will consider the ways in which issues of race, freedom, unfreedom, and personal sovereignty have been and still are the fundamental concerns of the U.S. literary imagination. In essence, we will sound out the contours of how the themes of *freedom and individualism* which have been proffered as the emblematic themes of "American literature" are in fact dependent on a manifestly unfree black population, a population which "came to serve white authors as embodiments of their own fears and desires." In so doing, we will also explore the ways in which African American writers responded to this concept of unfreedom as well to questions of diaspora and hybridity. Our readings will be drawn from a variety of genres and periods, and possible authors include: Venture Smith, Olaudah Equiano, Mary Prince, Phillis Wheatley, Jupiter Hammon, Charles Brockden Brown, Leonora Sansay, Herman Melville, Edgar Allan Poe, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Wilson, Martin Delany and Toni Morrison. In addition to the range of primary material, we also be engaging with a variety of theoretical readings including work by: Paul Gilroy, C.L.R. James, Ian Baucom, Robert Reid-Pharr, Kenneth Warren, Fred Moten, Daphne Brooks, Ivy Wilson, and Tavia Nyong'o.

727: Transnational Origins and Influences of American Poetry

Sedarat Roger Mon 4:30pm-6:20pm KY 148

This seminar surveys American poetry through the traditional influence of Emerson and Pound in their respective centuries as well as through their imitation and appropriation of ancient eastern traditions. Unconventionally reading Emerson in the context of post-colonial theory—wherein his assumptive practices of a "colonizing consciousness" underpin his attempt to inhabit a figuratively illusive first priority in the field of American letters—we closely examine the effect of his reading, translating, and imitating Persian poetry as well as Hindu philosophy. Building upon traditional comparative analyses through the use of translation theory, a Bloomian anxiety of influence further reveals how both Emerson and Pound after him endeavor to anticipate such masterful foreign predecessors as Hafez, Sa'di, and Li Po. Having established such an investigative practice, we then turn to later hybrid Middle Eastern-American poets like Khalil Gibran and Agha Shahid Ali as well as Asian-American writers like Yone Noguchi and Li-Young Lee, considering how Pound and Emerson have paradoxically invited them into the American tradition by much earlier claims upon transnational verse.

**781: From the Postmodern to the Postapocalyptic:
Technology and Culture in Contemporary Fiction and Film.**

Buell Frederick Tue 6:30pm-8:20pm KY 248

In the last 50 years, dramatic increases in the developmental pace and transformative power of a series of new technologies have impacted social life and cultural production. For better and/or worse, developed-world peoples now dwell, in fact and fantasy, in recently-invented technospheres, even as developing-world inhabitants have experienced these changes very differently. New invented realities include cyberspace, cyborgs, genetically modified organisms, cloning, militarized robots, simulations and virtual realities, and acceleration of bodies, information, commerce, and even evolution. Writers have had a field day with the new enthusiasms, catastrophes, and constructed normalities brought about by these changes, producing new postmodern and posthuman speculative fictions as well as 'realistically' disillusioned dramatizations of conditions that have changed the nature of the "real." At stake—whether futures, alternative presents, or constructed contemporary normalities are depicted—are not just limit-breaking new tools, but society's ongoing re-definitions of race, gender, sexuality, class, nationality, individuality, species, environment, and ontology. Our list of authors and films will include work by Octavia Butler, China Mieville, Colin Whitehead, Richard Powers, and Kazuo Ishiguro, and films will include *The Thirteenth Floor*, *Sleep Dealer*, *The Social Network*, and *Syriana*; their nominal subjects will range from computer networks, to VR, genetic engineering, globalization, and zombification. And we will discuss this material with reference to feminist, postmodern, posthumanist, postcolonial, globalization and new eco-materialist theories.

781: The Underside of Paradise

Leger Natalie Tue 4:30pm-6:20pm KP 708

All too often the Caribbean conjures thoughts of paradise, calling to mind isles of hedonistic pleasure and islands of uncomplicated tropical bliss. But for writers of the Caribbean, the region's warmth, beauty and seemingly immeasurable decadence overwhelmingly conceals the violence of the Caribbean's modern origin. In this course, we will closely examine how Caribbean writers have dealt with the history of violence that was the conquest, slavery and colonialism. We will closely consider how Caribbean writers of the twentieth and twenty-first century explore the residual effects of this history, specifically, its influence on social, political and interpersonal relations among races, classes, and cultures as well as its impact on persons struggling to love themselves and others. In reading various Caribbean novels, poems and plays, we will ultimately explore how the weight of the past shapes for Caribbean writers the possibilities of the present. In addition to the fiction read, we will further explore the enduring salience of the past to the present through Caribbean cultural theory. In so doing, we will gain greater insight into the cultural philosophy emanating from the Caribbean as well as the key ideas and points of contention that continue to fire the philosophical imaginary of the region. In the end, we will collectively explore how the Caribbean writer and theorist has sought to reinterpret a history of violence in ways that both demand and call attention to the pressing need for an improved regional future free from the racial, cultural and gender divisions of the past.

781: Nineteenth-Century British Children's Literature

Schanoes Veronica Wed 6:30pm-8:20pm RZ 343

The nineteenth century saw a sea-change in how childhood was constructed: While the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries understood children to be wicked or sinful, and some have argued that prior to that, children were understood merely as "miniature adults," the Romantics and the Victorians developed the models of childhood that persist today: the child as innocent, natural, and vulnerable. Nonetheless, the nineteenth century was a time of misery for many children, as child labor powered the rapidly industrializing society in the form of child miners, child factory workers, and child chimney sweeps. This class will use nineteenth-century children's literature to explore the changing conception of childhood, tracing a development from Maria Edgworth's *The Purple Jar* to E. Nesbit's *The Story of the Treasure-Seekers*; along the way we'll discuss the rise of the British Empire, and how we can its changing ideologies of race and gender being developed in the literature that was meant to develop young British subjects. Authors may include Maria Edgworth, E. Nesbit, Maria Martha Sherwood, Charles Kingsley, Lewis Carroll, R. M. Ballantyne, and Mrs. Molesworth.

791: Thesis Course

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792: Thesis Workshop

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795: Independent Study

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