

**QUEENS COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
COURSE DESCRIPTIONS
SUMMER 2013**

GRADUATE SUMMER I DESCRIPTIONS

636: History of Literary Criticism

Cassvan	2	2539	M,T,W,R	6:45-8:25
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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.

720: Renaissance Passions: Violence, Sexuality, Urban Space

Komorowski	1	2554	M,T,W,R	4:00-5:40
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The early modern era witnessed an intense fascination with all manner of subjects as new geographical and scientific discoveries revolutionized the way thinkers understood themselves and the world around them. But perhaps more than for any new continent, philosophers and literary writers sought to draw a map of human emotions and to discover how the mind acted and was acted upon by the varied impulses they called the passions. This course will ask how early modern English writers' understanding of the emotions changed and how that understanding fostered intellectual curiosity. How did they explain links between passions like rage, fear, or love, and the drive to explore the world through science, philosophy, and travel? How did the

explosive growth of London shape the way writers represented human interaction? How did their understanding of the emotions refigure the relationship between men and women? Readings will include Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*; Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*; Browne, *Hydriotaphia*; Cavendish, *The Blazing World*; Milton, *Paradise Lost*; Behn, *Oroonoko*; and lyric poems by Crashaw, Donne, Herbert, Herrick, Lovelace, Marlowe, Marvell, Milton, Philips, Rochester, Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser, Vaughan, and Wyatt. Selections from Samuel Pepys's celebrated diary and contemporary theory on the passions in Hobbes, *Leviathan*, and Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul* may also be included.

781: "His Unkind Daughters?": Shakespeare, Toni Morrison, and Gloria Naylor

Grier	3	1207	M,T,W,R	6:45-8:25
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After King Lear divides his kingdom between two of his daughters, they agree to house him on the condition that he diminish his retinue. Inflamed by this sudden stinginess, the aged Lear chooses, rather, to stay outdoors, raving madly, in a merciless storm. Encountering a naked, dirty man he takes for a babbling beggar, Lear deduces that daughters brought both men to their wretched status. "Nothing could have subdued nature/To such a lowness but his unkind daughters," he insists. It would be easy for us to imagine contemporary black women writers similarly, as *Shakespeare's* thankless progeny who inherit the kingdom of Literature and banish the Bard as an old, racist patriarch. However, the relationship Toni Morrison and Gloria Naylor have forged with this literary forefather is far more complex.

This course will focus on the conversation about politics and literary aesthetics engaged by Shakespeare, Morrison, and Naylor. Our texts will come in two pairs. We will read *Twelfth Night* alongside Morrison's *Jazz* and *The Tempest* with Naylor's *Mama Day*. As we proceed, we will consider the ways that Shakespeare conceives of literary form and the kinds of relationships he imagines between men and women—and among Africans, Indians, and Europeans. With Morrison and Naylor, we will consider the ways they adopt and adapt Shakespeare and, in so doing, imaginatively redress imbalances in knowledge and power that produce gender and racial inequality. As a result of the compressed time of the course, **students will have some reading due on the first day of class**. These may include Herman Melville's "Hawthorne and His Mosses," Marjorie Garber's "Shakespeare as Fetish," and essays by Peter Erickson or Chris Roark. Student writing will likely include short (four- to five-page) analyses of each major text in light of the scholarly pieces we have read. The papers will demonstrate students' capacities to analyze passages of a single author's text *and* to consider relationships among texts in light of scholarship.

Ideally, in completing this course, students will learn to think of African-American and feminist writers as not only political but also as philosophical and aesthetically experimental—*precisely because they are political*. In addition, they will be able to enjoy the pleasures of making Shakespeare our contemporary, while also not giving him the last word on artistic strategies or human relationships.

GRADUATE SUMMER II DESCRIPTIONS

723: Romanticism and the Ruins of Paradise

Marotta 1 2584 M,W 6:00-8:05

For many romantic writers, the traces "of that first Paradise whence man was driven" 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 images of paradise, or as McGann said, of the idea "that poetry...can set one free of the ruins of history and culture is the grand illusion of every Romantic poet," forms the central core of belief that shapes the romantic imagination. Part of this exploration will focus on how the romantic poets defined themselves as 'seers' and then layered this search onto idealized characters as well as natural forms. Our readings from these poets will concentrate on how each of the major poets explores and imagines the exteriors and the interiors of this vision. Active participation and two papers are required.

729: Hip (Not Hop): African American Modernism

Moreland 2 1195 M,W 6:00-8:05

The core of the African American cultural tradition is a dual struggle: against racism and for democracy. But the manifestation of that struggle in literature and in cultural practice is itself awash in dualism: It is both inner-directed and outer-directed; it is both overt and subtle; it is both tragic and comic; it is both a performance and "real". In short, it is "hip", a coded stance against the prevailing norms of American culture and society that asserts the humanity and the worth of those at the margins of that society, yet at the same time seeks to transform that society that excludes its practitioners, who nonetheless revel in their exclusion.

Writers as varied as Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison, and Toni Morrison have attempted to explain this phenomenon at the same time as they've embodied it. This seminar takes as its premise that hip is the defining characteristic of African American modernism; that is, it is the specific response of the African American artist to the modern world, which defined him first as the object of segregation and always as an unabsorbable Other. The African American artist must extend his particular vernacular traditions, founded for the most part in the crucible of slavery, into the modern world of the iPod, bloggers, and cable TV. He has to unpack the tradition that tells him, in the words of the poet Amiri Baraka, to "sing and fight" but also be, in the words of Ellison, "a spy in the enemy's country".

We will look at a range of 20th and 21st century African American writers, from Hughes to Harryette Mullins, and at their embodiment of hipness. Of necessity, we will spend some time listening to and reading about the greatest avatars of hip, jazz musicians like Thelonious Monk and Charlie Parker, who showed their fellow artists there were other ways to find beauty.