

## Fall 2025 MA Course Descriptions

### **ENGL 636: History of Literary Criticism**

Tues. 6:40pm – 8:30 pm (ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS)

Prof. Jeffrey Cassvan

Course Number: 51366

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This online-synchronous course meets via Zoom on Tuesdays from 6:40 PM to 8:30 PM and provides a thorough introduction to a number of important concerns and developments of literary criticism and theory. We will begin with a few texts by Plato and Aristotle and then we'll turn to a consideration of the diverse theoretical perspectives (including Formalism, Structuralism, Semiotics, Marxism, Psychoanalysis, Poststructuralism, Gender Studies, Queer Theory, New Materialism) that have emerged during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Since the central insights of theory 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), we will treat the texts of theorists and critics 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." While we will make use of the introductory materials and organizational format provided in the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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. Accordingly, a good portion of each class session will involve the careful discussion of very specific pages and paragraphs in the assigned works. These primary critical and theoretical texts will often be supplemented with a range of literary materials (poems, short stories, essays, translations) made available on *Brightspace*. This is a fully online course and we will use *Brightspace* as our learning management system.

### **ENGL 642: Genres of Children's Literature**

Tues. 4:40pm – 6:30 pm

Prof. Veronica Schanoes

Course Number: 50421

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This course examines changing ideas about middle-grade children's fiction and childhood by comparing early examples of different children's genres to their modern counterparts. We will read fantasy, realism, domestic fiction, adventure fiction, and mystery fiction from the nineteenth century through the present day and consider the representation and construction of childhood in the texts as well as how the books deal with issues of race, gender, sexuality, religion, and class. Authors may include Lewis Carroll, JM Barrie, Sidney Taylor, Ellen Raskin, Sarah Kapit, Kwame Mbalia, and Zetta Elliott. *Satisfies the pre-1900 requirement for MEd and MAT students.*

### **ENGL 664: Black Queer Studies**

Wed. 6:40pm – 8:30 pm

Prof. Omari Weekes

Course Number: 51462

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This course will introduce students to the dynamic field of scholarship that we now call Black Queer Studies. We will trace this field from its earliest resonances in Black and women of color feminism to its current debates expanding into interdisciplinary fields like diaspora and trans studies. Central to our investigation of the field will not only be the theory that makes Black Queer Studies a critical intervention in larger areas of study like literary studies, queer theory, feminism, African American studies, and others; we will also read key literary texts written by James Baldwin, Randall Kenan, Audre Lorde, and others in order to think about how Black Queer Studies gives us the conceptual tools to investigate how literature and aesthetics intersect with Black, queer, and Black queer politics. The objective in this course is not simply for students to become familiar with Black queer life through Black queer texts; rather, our goal will be to think about how Black queer writing opens up a space for a radical politics to emerge.

### **ENGL 701: Graduate Methodologies**

Wed. 4:40pm – 6:30 pm

Prof. Hillary Miller

Course Number: 51437

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This course is an introduction to graduate-level academic research and writing. What are the expectations of graduate-level coursework? How do we conduct graduate-level research? We will explore some of the “hot topics” of English Studies (and its sub-fields) and survey relevant changes to the discipline over the past decades. This will involve reading scholarly writings in the humanities and adjacent disciplines to discern the methodologies scholars use to interrogate literary texts. We will also spend time interrogating our own assumptions about literature and prepare to navigate graduate study while defining our interests and objectives. Where do we situate ourselves in contemporary scholarly conversations? How do we generate research questions and intervene in already existing scholarly debates? We will familiarize ourselves with the research tools available to execute our work, including academic databases, scholarly journals, scholarly reference guides, digital tools, and archives. Throughout, we will sharpen and deepen our reading and writing strategies and support each other’s progress in graduate-level research.

### **ENGL 724: Disability, Bodies, and Communities in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Fiction**

Mon. 4:40pm – 6:30 pm

Prof. Talia Schaffer

Course Number: 51447

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Have you ever wondered when we developed our ideas about bodies and minds? How did we come to believe certain ways of moving, feeling, and thinking were “normal,” and that other ways were mistakes that required professional interventions? In this course, we will explore how we came to hold the beliefs we do about abled and disabled people, looking at how those ideas were invented and what effect they have on our daily lives. Along with disability theory, however, we’ll be looking historically, seeing how illness and disability get represented in fiction from a period before modern medicine. We’ll read Austen’s *Persuasion*, Eliot’s *Silas Marner*, Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*, Gaskell’s *Cranford*, and Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* – relatively short and beloved texts that I hope will both stimulate new ideas and feel comforting in hard times. We’ll read the texts alongside paintings from the period, disability studies articles and a theory called “ethics of care,” which highlights kinship, social networks, and mutual aid. Today we need to find a way of reading that allows us to sustain each other rather than seeing each other as marked by incompletely cured flaws. I hope that this course can give you some theories that help you work through your social world, as well as teaching you about a range of ideas from the past, and some extraordinary, complex, passionate literature representing those ideas. You will have a range of short assignments

scaling up to the seminar paper: posts, presentation, annotated bibliography, peer review groups, and conferences. *Satisfies the pre-1900 requirement for MEd and MAT students.*

### **ENGL 731: Black Aliveness in the Long Nineteenth Century (Then & Now)**

Mon. 6:40pm – 8:30 pm

Prof. Duncan Faherty

Course Number: 51420

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In his introduction to *Black Aliveness, or a Poetics of Being* (2021), the theorist Kevin Quashie praises Saidiya Hartman's use of the method of critical fabulation since it enables her to elude "the discursive trap of the black historical past as a monolith of terror wrought by the structures of modernity." For Quashie, Hartman "offers us a past that, in its aliveness, holds relation to our being now." Building on the critical insights of both Hartman and Quashie, this course will explore how African American writers, in both the nineteenth century and in our own contemporary moment, foregrounded Black aliveness in their work even when living through (or reflecting back upon) the structural terrors of enslavement and Jim Crow. Beginning with considerations of work by Frederick Douglass, Sutton Griggs, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Elizabeth Keckley, W.E.B DuBois, and Pauline Hopkins, this course will explore how nineteenth century African American writers insisted on Black aliveness in the face of structural racism as they sought to make sense of both the African American past and the futurity of the United States. The second half of our course will consider why so many contemporary African American writers, such as important thinkers as Toni Morrison, Colson Whitehead, Percival Everett, Jocelyn Nicole Johnson, Suzan-Lori Parks, and Branden Jacobs Jenkins, have sought to reanimate fractious nineteenth century historical flashpoints -- and the Black aliveness that was present in them -- in order to question the past's hold on our present. As we consider the lingering import of the nineteenth century on our own social and political formations, we will be attentive to how these writers move to surface, critique, and interrogate historically situated conceptions of power, race, gender, citizenship, belonging, and cultural identity. *Satisfies the pre-1900 requirement for MEd and MAT students.*

### **ENGL 781: Detective Fiction**

Thurs. 4:40pm – 6:30 pm (ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS)

Prof. Kevin Ferguson

Course Number: 51423

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"The distinction's always fine / between detection and invention." – Mary Jo Salter

This course will use the metaphor of the detective as a way of approaching our own strategies of reading and analytical thinking. Interpretation perpetually slides between induction and deduction. In this course we will look at a range of fictional detectives and the mysteries they solve in order to consider how our detectives' theories and techniques can reflect more broadly on cultural identities and can also teach us something about various modes of literary interpretation. Looking at a range of whodunnits, procedurals, neo-noirs, true crime, amateur, and existential detectives through a range of media such as short stories, novels, drama, comics, young adult literature, film, podcasts, and board games, we will examine more carefully themes of the individual and society, social justice, liberty and choice, paranoia and over-reading, and how reading is like detecting and vice versa. Detective texts we study might include from: Robert Browning, Sherlock Holmes, Edgar Allan Poe, Agatha Christie, Inspector Maigret, *The Maltese Falcon*, Nancy Drew, Encyclopedia Brown, Jorge Luis Borges, Wilkie Collins, Batman, Scooby-Doo, John Constantine, *Mumbo Jumbo*, Susan Glaspell, Detective Dee, *The Crying of Lot 49*, *Under the Silver Lake*, *The*

*Final Solution, The New York Trilogy, Lone Star, Blade Runner, Brick, Memories of Murder, Clue, Guess Who, Detective Pikachu, Missing.*

**ENGL 781: Folklore and Literature**

Thurs. 6:40pm – 8:30 pm (ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS)

Prof. Fred Gardaphe

Course Number: 51425

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This course will explore the role that orality plays in the creation of literature by focusing on the folkloric aspects found in the fiction of a variety of U.S. American novelists, poets and short fiction writers. Critical readings in the theories of oral tradition and first literatures will help us establish ways of identifying aspects of oral traditions that make their way into literature from a variety of the racial and ethnic cultures that form the multicultural makeup of the U.S.A. Historical examples of this phenomenon include *The Odyssey*, *Beowulf*, *The Story of Pangu*, and other origin narratives. Works derived from oral traditions include Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Louisa Ermelino's *The Black Madonna*, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, Ana Castillo's *So Far from God*, Tony Ardizzone's *In the Garden of Papa Santuzzu*, Fred L. Gardaphe's *Moustache Pete is Dead: Evviva Baffo Pietro* and others. We will look at the role that tall tales played in creating short fiction by authors such as Ishmael Reed, Sherman Alexie, among others, and finally explore the poetry of Langston Hughes, Niki Giovanni, Ai, Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Cherrie Moraga, and others. Using the concept of "indigenuity" (indigenous ingenuity) as developed by Daniel K. Wildcat in ecological studies and practices, we will explore the role that literature plays in presenting and sustaining traditional cultures over time.