

# GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

## FALL 2014

### Courses with open seats

**635: Major English and American Novelists**  
**Richter, David**

**Wed 4:30pm-6:20pm**

**41071**  
**KY 173**

We will be examining the formal innovations and social content of some of the most important canonical novels in the Anglophone tradition. Texts will include six to eight novels selected from the following: Henry Fielding: *Tom Jones*; Jane Austen: *Emma*; Charles Dickens: *Bleak House*; Herman Melville: *Moby-Dick*; George Eliot: *Middlemarch*; Henry James: *The Wings of the Dove*; Ernest Hemingway: *The Sun Also Rises*; Virginia Woolf: *To the Lighthouse*; Ralph Ellison: *Invisible Man*; Salman Rushdie: *Midnight's Children*; Ian McEwan: *Atonement*.

**703: Teaching Writing in an Era of Standards:**  
**Composition Theory and Literacy Studies**  
**Wan, Amy**

**Wed 4:30pm-6:20pm**

**41086**  
**KY 148**

Most students in the process of earning an advanced degree in English are strong writers. But even the most skilled writer might be puzzled about how to teach others to write effectively for both academic and non-academic contexts. This course will focus on this challenge to think about both theories and practices English teachers can use to help students become better writers and readers. To this end, the course has three primary goals: 1. to reflect on our own writing practices in the context of literacy learning and teaching, 2. to investigate contemporary scholarship in composition and writing studies, and 3. to analyze the literacy learning and the teaching of writing within the context of power, assessment and standards. Course assignments include weekly responses on the course blog, an annotated bibliography, and a research-intensive grant proposal.

**719: Translation in the Age of Chaucer:**  
**The Vernacularity Debate**  
**Sargent, Michael**

**Thu 6:30pm-8:20pm**

**41089**  
**KP 708**

The role of literature in the vernacular was strongly contested at the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century in England – including particularly the theoretical debate over the appropriateness of the translation of scripture. According to one school of modern literary criticism, the debate was definitively ended by the ecclesiastical authorities with the promulgation of Archbishop Arundel's Lambeth Constitutions of 1409. Yet we must also observe the expansion of literary translation into English throughout this period, including not just the French literature that had often been translated into English throughout the medieval period, but

also, e.g., translations of Italian literature by Chaucer and others. Among texts we will read will be Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, one or two of the *Canterbury Tales*, selections from Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, and documents from the debate on the translation of the Bible into English.

**736: Despicable Theory: Reading de Man Again**  
**Cassvan, Jeff**

**Wed 6:30pm-8:20pm**

**41104**  
**KP 333**

This year saw the publication of Evelyn Barish's scandalous biography of the literary theorist Paul de Man (*The Double Life of Paul de Man*), whose far-ranging and influential insights first began to be discredited 26 years ago with the discovery of his wartime journalism. Barish admits that she doesn't understand her subject's mature work and spends her time pointing to "evidence of a ménage à trois, of a luxurious apartment of suspect provenance (was it seized from deported Jews?), of bigamy, blackmail, forgery, and suspicions about how he got into Harvard." There is also, however, a growing renewal of serious interest today in de Man's brand of theory, especially in the context of a return to formalist approaches to literature. As de Man explained, literary theory can be said to come into being "when the approach to literary texts is no longer based on non-linguistic, that is to say historical and aesthetic, considerations... when the object of discussion is no longer the meaning or the value but the modalities of production and of reception of meaning and value prior to their establishment—the implication being that this establishment is problematic enough to require an autonomous discipline of critical investigation to consider its possibility and its status." In this course we will try to come to grips with what it is that continues to make de Man's more radical formalism so unsettling by reading a representative selection of his major works, from his famous rethinking of allegory and irony in "The Rhetoric of Temporality," through the ground-breaking study *Allegories of Reading*, to his last lecture on Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator" and the posthumously published collection of later essays entitled *Aesthetic Ideology*. Throughout the course we will investigate the validity of de Man's claim that "the linguistics of literariness is a powerful and indispensable tool in the unmasking of ideological aberrations, as well as a determining factor in accounting for their occurrence" and we will attend to the fallout of the kind of rhetorical reading that 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." We will also consider the relationship between de Man's version of deconstruction and Derrida's work, as well as de Man's influence on the work of an important group of scholars including Barbara Johnson, J. Hillis Miller, Gayatri Spivak, Carol Jacobs, Samuel Weber, Tom Cohen, Eve Sedgwick and Judith Butler. Our work on de Man's essays will regularly be supplemented with a wide range of literary materials (poems, short stories, passages from novels, essays and translations), and since our approach will always be oriented to questions of form, craft and translatability as well as criticism and theory, the course is open to both MA Literature and MFA Creative Writing & Literary Translation students, and is designed to encourage interaction and to explore the fruitful dialogue between these groups of students. This course will appeal to anyone interested in the radical power of close reading.

<b>781:</b>	<b>Transgender Narratives: From Gender Inversion to Gender Flexibility</b>	<b>41230</b>
<b>English, Hugh</b>	<b>Mon 6:30pm-8:20pm</b>	<b>KP 708</b>

Queer theorist, Judith/Jack Halberstam writes: “The gender-ambiguous individual today represents a very different set of assumptions about gender than the gender-inverted subject of the early twentieth century; and as a model of gender inversion recedes into anachronism, the transgender body has emerged as futurity itself, a kind of heroic fulfillment of postmodern promises of gender flexibility” (18). This course will consider a variety of texts and genres, especially autobiography, fiction and film, but also history, theory, political manifesto and ethnography. We will consider the varied dictions, figures, narrative tropes, and both explicit and implied “assumptions about gender” that underlie articulations of categories such as “gender inversion,” “transsexual,” “gender-ambiguous,” “transgender” and “gender flexibility.” We will begin with a few late-nineteenth/early twentieth century texts and then consider some representative examples from the mid-twentieth, late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Gender studies, Women’s Studies, LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) Studies and Queer Studies—all of the above are areas of thought and politics that are newly invigorated and sometimes challenged by transgender identities, bodies, experiences, politics, histories and theories. If second-wave feminism articulated and explored the distinction between sex and gender, and third-wave feminism opened up the categories of race, ethnicity and sexuality, can we begin to see now an emergent and consistent challenge to the fundamental assumptions of ideological heterosexuality, namely that there are two (only two!), binaristic, supposedly complementary and opposite sexes?

While studying the effects of different theoretical approaches, analytical frames, and cultural/historical understandings on our reading, we will also practice habits of close attention to language and form. Class activities will include student-facilitated discussions, short lectures, class discussions, small-group discussions and (possibly, if time permits) writing workshops. Students will write two interpretive essays and one essay based on self-defined research.

<b>781:</b>	<b>Consciousness and Literary Experiment</b>	<b>41232</b>
<b>Tougaw, Jason</b>	<b>Tues 6:30pm-8:20pm</b>	<b>KY 148</b>

“On or about December 1910 human character changed,” Virginia Woolf wrote in 1924. Woolf’s pithy statement has generated a great deal of debate, but it’s certainly true that the representation of character changed as Modernist writers experimented with literary forms to portray and examine the complexity and mystery of human consciousness. Nearly a century later, neurobiologist Antonio Damasio asked how “consciousness may be produced within the three pounds of flesh we call brain.” Literary experiments like those of Woolf and her contemporaries have been asking versions of this grand question for at least a century. While nobody can answer it with any assurance, theorists from William James to Damasio have investigated the nature of consciousness through both empirical observation and philosophical theory, while writers from Virginia Woolf to Kazuo Ishiguro have experimented with literary forms that represent what Damasio calls “private first-person phenomena.” In the past decade, theoretical neuroscience has begun to take questions about subjectivity seriously, and as a result new kinds of dialogue

between the literature and science of consciousness have begun to emerge. In this course, we will pursue—and create—such dialogue, with a focus on literary experiments and theories of consciousness (from the fields of neurobiology, cognitive science, philosophy, literary criticism, and cultural studies). Likely readings include literary works by Henry James, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, Ralph Ellison, Christopher Isherwood, David B., Siri Hustvedt, Christopher Haddon, Jonathan Lethem, and Maud Casey; theories of consciousness by Antonio Damasio, Alva Noë, Jesse Prinz, and Mark Solms; and literary and cultural criticism by Gabrielle Starr, Lisa Zunshine, Elaine Scarry, Ann Jurecic, and Victoria Pitts-Taylor. Students will post bi-weekly reading responses on a course blog and complete a research project in stages, with an emphasis on multidisciplinary methodologies.