

English MA Course Descriptions 2016 Spring

ENGL 636: History of Literary Criticism and Theory

Jeffrey Cassvan

Class no. 56737; Mon 6:30–8:20pm; Kiely 173

This course provides a thorough introduction to the main concerns and developments 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." 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 pages and paragraphs 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.

ENGL 681: Special Studies: Asian American Literatures of the 21st Century

Caroline Hong

Class no. 56738; Tue 4:30–6:20pm; Kiely 248

The term "Asian America" has been and continues to be used by writers, readers, and scholars of Asian American literature. But where or what or who is Asian America? As a construct, it encompasses diverse, and often contested, visions of identity, culture, and

belonging. We will read twenty-first-century Asian American works to explore the most contemporary of these visions, which demonstrate the heterogeneity, hybridity, and multiplicity of Asian America. We will frame our readings with seminal theory and criticism from the field of Asian American studies and within/alongside their historical, political, social, cultural, and economic contexts, focusing on issues of gender, sexuality, class, citizenship, imperialism, globalization, etc., in addition to race and racism. Texts will include, but is not limited to, works by Ruth Ozeki, Karen Tei Yamashita, Nina Revoyr, Celeste Ng, Chang-rae Lee, and Viet Thanh Nguyen.

ENGL 701: Seminar in Graduate Methodology

Bill Orchard

Class no. 56739; Thu 6:30pm–8:20pm; Klapper 708

This course will introduce students to the writing and research skills needed to succeed in graduate-level coursework in English. We will begin by considering the history of the discipline, with an eye toward understanding the kinds of questions that animate contemporary criticism. We will then explore the interpretive choices that help define the structure, shape, and plausibility of our research projects. To this end, we will focus on how we read in English, exploring not only close reading (the type of reading most practiced in undergraduate literary study) but also symptomatic reading, ideology critique, reflection theory, models of containment and transgression, among other approaches to interpretation. We will familiarize ourselves with the research tools at our disposal to execute our projects, including academic databases, scholarly journals, scholarly reference guides, digital tools, and archives. Finally, we will devote considerable time to examining, evaluating, and practicing academic writing at the graduate level.

ENGL 702: Graduate Methodology for English/Education Students

Judith Nysenholc

Class no. 56740; Thu 6:30–8:20pm; Kiely 148

ENGL 722: Studies in Eighteenth-Century Literature: The British Enlightenment

Ala Alryyes

Class no. 56741; Mon 6:30–8:20pm; Kiely 248

This seminar will consider the British Enlightenment as a period and an idea, a formative collection of great texts and an “unfinished project.” We will investigate

particular aspects of the Enlightenment's critical vision and method, such as satire, travel writing, mediation, the hallowing of science, and the role of the public intellectual. What are the limits of reason; how can knowledge be organized and disciplines defined and separated? What are the consequences of secularization and the devaluation of the spiritual; how did the aspiration for universal values interact with a more lucid picture of gender inequality? How can beauty be rationally examined? And, though taking account of the criticism levied against them today, the seminar will emphasize how the Enlightenment's intellectuals themselves questioned their own moral and epistemological systems. Readings by Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, Robert Hooke, John Locke, Ephraim Chambers, Mary Astell, Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, Adam Ferguson, David Hume, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, as well as by modern theorists.

ENGL 726: Early American Literature and Culture

Sian Silyn-Roberts

Class no. 56742; Mon 4:30–6:20pm; Klapper 708

This course is designed as an intensive introductory seminar for graduate study in the field of early American literature. It covers a range of American literature from colonial contact to the Civil War era, and will introduce students to the major themes and critical concepts that have shaped the field since the Cold War. We will read works – including spiritual autobiography, travel narrative, slave narrative, poetry, the essay, short stories, and the novel – in terms of their cultural, social, and political preoccupations while placing them in a broad circum-Atlantic (Europe-America-Africa) context. Thus while our primary focus will be English-language literatures of North America, we will work to situate that literature in an international network of cultural exchange between (but not limited to) Britain, Africa, the Caribbean, France, and Spain. Within this context, we will pay special attention to contending definitions of the individual, community, race, freedom, and citizenship. By attending to who might have been reading these works and why, we will consider how early American literature engages, negotiates, and continually reworks the changing interests of an American readership.

ENGL 729: Literature of the Simulacrum: From Plato's Cave to Pluto's Disneyland

Roger Sedarat

Class no. 56745; Wed 6:30–8:20pm; Rathaus 102

Originally understood by Plato as the intentional distortion of reality, the simulacrum in our postmodern age has become reality itself. This course critically examines classical

and contemporary texts to better understand how and why the “real” world came to imitate the model. In addition to traditional literary genres, the analysis of technology—from the invention of photography to the iPhone—offers a means by which to interrogate the displacement of nature with artifice. Other cultural artifacts to receive close attention include Disneyland, electronic gaming, the U.S. stock market, the U.S. military, robots, and reality television. Students are encouraged to present original analysis on texts of their own choosing beyond those assigned for the course. Primary texts include works by Jorge Luis Borges, Margaret Atwood, Radiohead, Wallace Stevens, Jorie Graham, and Umberto Eco. Theorists considered include Plato, Jean Baudrillard, Gilles Deleuze, Walter Benjamin, and Fredric Jameson.

ENGL 757: The Art of the Book: A Practical and Historical Investigation into the Book as (Art) Object

Matvei Yankelevich

Class no. 56749; Mon 4:30–6:20pm; Kiely 246

** MA students may take this MFA course as an elective only with department permission.*

Please email the Director of Graduate Studies, Caroline Hong, in order to register for this course.

The focus of this course is the book’s potential existence as an art object and—simultaneously—as a container of *and* vessel for literary texts. We will investigate the practical aspects of the invention, design, and making of books, with special emphasis on book structure, distribution strategies, DIY production tactics, and the social mission of publishing in the contexts of small press and the “democratic multiple.”

To provide context for our own book-making endeavors, we will survey the history of the artists book (with some special attention directed toward literary artists book, poet-printers, and artist-writers) beginning with the illustrated books of William Blake and William Morris, the *livre d’artiste* tradition, the modernist experiment (Blaise Cendrars & Sonia Delaunay’s *Prose of the Trans-Siberian* and Russian Futurist books), experiments in visual language (Bob Brown, Henri Michaux, Aram Saroyan, Letrisme, and CoBrA), and conceptual book projects. The work of contemporary artists/writers (Johanna Drucker, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Tom Phillips, and Jen Bervin), and artists books from small presses (Coracle, Granary), will provide an important backdrop for our conversations and class projects. Topics of reading and discussion include: the democratization of art in Dieter Roth and Ed Ruscha’s work, the “democratic multiple” and its influence on literary culture (zines, etc.); the role of the book-object in the tradition and contemporary practices of little magazines and chapbook presses; the place of the book in the digital age.

Students will be given a basic grounding in book craft and assigned a variety of individual book-making projects focused on experiential learning of book structure,

starting with simple one-sheet folded books. Assignments will involve both research and original writing, collaborative projects between artists and writers, and the formulation of aesthetic vision and editorial practice. In addition to practicums, readings and discussions, we will have a field trip or two to rare books libraries and book-arts organizations.

ENGL 781-01: Lyric Science Fiction

Seo-Young Chu

Class no. 56589; Thu 4:30–6:20pm; Kiely 248

Premise: lyric science fiction is a genre that encompasses verse and prose. In this course, we will explore and test this premise by analyzing poems, stories, novels, and song lyrics by a range of writers, among them: Marvell, Yeats, Sun Ra, Craig Raine, Joyce Carol Oates, Emily Dickinson, Richard Powers, Jean Toomer, D.H. Lawrence, David Bowie, China Miéville, Dan Simmons, Elizabeth Bishop, Del tha Funky Homosapien, Radiohead, Gloria Anzaldua, Keats, Whitman, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Asimov, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Cathy Park Hong. Possible topics include intertextuality, genre, form, structures of voice, paratexts, lyric time, the power of lyric science fiction to change the mind, and the intersection between epistemology and aesthetics.

ENGL 781-02: Literature of Conflict

Maaza Mengiste

Class no. 56590; Tue 6:30–8:20pm; Kiely 246

It seems impossible to ignore all the news in recent months about revolutions and wars. In this class, we will look at how literature has dealt with conflict and its consequences. We will examine lives beyond battlefields to consider how fiction depicts both forced and necessary encounters between different groups of people. Though we will inhabit the world of literature, you will be asked to consider past and current events and determine how fiction can inform what is happening around you. What kind of truth emerges through fiction that is absent in history? What assumptions are challenged? What stereotypes are created? You will be given a series of short writing assignments and a larger paper due at the end of the semester. Readings will include authors such as Hisham Matar, J.M. Coetzee, Hassan Blasim, Chimamanda Adichie, Chang-rae Lee, and Jenny Erpenbeck.

ENGL 781-03: The Golden Age of Children's Literature in Britain (1865–1926)

Veronica Schanoes

Class no. 56591; Thu 6:30–8:20pm; Kiely 173

Our current idea of what children's literature should be—imaginative, exciting, and fun—is almost entirely the creation of the Golden Age of children's literature, beginning in 1865 with Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and ending in 1926 with A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*. These years produced the majority of what we regard as children's classics today. Whereas previous decades had stressed the importance of moral improvement and education for young readers, the children's literature of the Golden Age brought into being an awareness of the child as a reader to be entertained with adventure, magic, and wordplay. How did these two ideas about how children's books should be written interact? How did the ideas of childhood and what it meant to be a child change? How were these ideas of childhood related to gender and class? And given that the Golden Age coincides quite closely with the height of British imperial power, how did imperialist ideologies influence children's literature—and did the influence run only one way? Primary texts will include works by Lewis Carroll, Charles Kingsley, Frances Hodgson Burnett, A.A. Milne, Hugh Lofting, Mrs. Molesworth, and J.M. Barrie. We will read secondary works by critics such as Marah Gubar and Kate Flint.

ENGL 791: Thesis Course

Class no. 56752

** Please email the Director of Graduate Studies, Caroline Hong, in order to sign up for this course.*

ENGL 795: Independent Study

Class no. 56754

** Please email the Assistant Director of Graduate Studies, William Orchard, in order to sign up for an independent study.*