

English MA Course Descriptions

2021 SPRING

ENGL 636: History of Literary Criticism

Prof. Seo-Young Chu

Class code 44865

Tuesdays 6:40–8:30pm

A nonlinear history of literary criticism and theory. Authors/sources will range from Aristotle to Sianne Ngai. Possible topics include aesthetics, disability, environmentalism, feminism, race, the relationship of theory to reality, technology, trauma, and war.

This online course will be hybrid, meaning a combination of synchronous meetings and asynchronous work.

English MA students who took theory courses as undergraduates may substitute ENGL 736 (see course description below) for their ENGL 636 requirement. To request permission, please email Prof. Caroline Hong (caroline.hong@qc.cuny.edu), the Director of Graduate Studies in English.

ENGL 701: Seminar in Graduate Methodology

Prof. Hillary Miller

Class code 44867

Thursdays 6:40–8:30pm

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? This course explores some of the “hot topics” in the field of English Studies (and its sub-fields) and surveys relevant changes to the discipline over the past decades. We will read scholarly writings in the humanities and adjacent disciplines, and study the methodologies that scholars use to interrogate literary texts. We will also spend time interrogating our own assumptions about literature and literary study, 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.

This online course will be a mix of synchronous and asynchronous work. Students can expect to meet once a week on Zoom and conduct all other work on Blackboard and a shared class Google Drive.

ENGL 702: Graduate Methodology for English-Education Students

Prof. Judith Nysenholc

Class code 47859

Thursdays 6:40–8:30pm

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 *Macbeth*, examine that text through a variety of critical approaches, and discuss how these reading strategies could be incorporated in a high school literature classroom; in particular, we will address how they can be used in differentiated instruction with special populations, such as English Language Learners. Independently, you will also research and synthesize existing interpretations of a novel or play 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 Next Generation Learning Standards, with a 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.

ENGL 702 fulfills a requirement for MS Ed students. This online course will be taught synchronously, with one weekly Zoom meeting on Thursdays at 6:40pm.

ENGL 703: Composition Theory and Literacy Studies

Prof. Sara Alvarez

Class code 44869

Thursdays 4:40–6:30pm

In *The Rise of Writing*, renowned literacy scholar Deborah Brandt (2015) shows how the practice of writing (in its many forms and modalities) is not only “on the rise,” but has also been dramatically transformed by our youth—to the extent of shifting how we read. We are writing more than ever before and young people, in particular, are redefining what it means to write. So why do we teach writing? Where did this practice come from and where is it going? And to what extent do “new” writing practices change how we conceptualize writing and literacies? This course contends with these questions, as it also invites current and future scholar-educators to explore a number of approaches taken to theorizing literacies and writing in the fields of Rhetoric and Composition and English Education. As a class, we will consistently engage in the practice of self-reflection, and look to works that centralize and sustain the rich writing practices of our culturally and linguistically rich students in the city of New York.

ENGL 703 fulfills a requirement for MS Ed students. This online course will meet virtually over Zoom/Google Meet on Thursdays from 4:40–6:30pm. We will keep course materials over Google Drive.

ENGL 720: Studies in Renaissance Literature

Prof. Robin Hizme

Class code 44871

Mondays 4:40–6:30pm

Voyage and exploration, discovery and domination: the literature of the Renaissance charts a rapidly expanding world, innovative technological and scientific advances, as well as seismic shifts in attitudes towards, nation, society, and governance. This course will chart the representation of identities in texts which stage or represent cross-cultural encounters as European nations were in a race to Empire. Readings will include conventional early modern genres—lyric poems, plays, prose narratives, utopias, and chivalric romance—as well as theoretical and secondary texts. Requirements: participation, weekly focused writings, a presentation, and a final research paper.

ENGL 720 fulfills the pre-1900 requirement for MS Ed and MAT students. This online course will be hybrid, meaning a combination of (primarily) synchronous sessions and asynchronous activities.

ENGL 726: Studies in Early American Literature

Race and the Environment in the Long Eighteenth Century

Prof. Siân Silyn Roberts

Class code 45208

Mondays 6:40–8:30pm

This course considers how race, slave capitalism, science, exploration, and aesthetic experience in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries shaped British and American readers' relationships to the natural world. We will trace routes of cultural and material transmission around the Atlantic to study ideas like the wilderness, property, labor, and conservation, as well as literary and intellectual movements such as the pastoral, the captivity narrative, the slave narrative, scientific naturalism, and romantic naturalism. Together, we will consider how these literary histories transformed modern ecological thought. To put this historical archive of ecocritical writings into dialogue with our current moment, we will examine what role these cultural and literary legacies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries play in contemporary failures to imagine and address climate crisis, and how they inform discourses of race and climate justice.

ENGL 726 fulfills the pre-1900 requirement for MS Ed and MAT students. This online course will meet synchronously on Zoom every Monday from 6:40pm to about

8:00pm. All other work will be conducted on a variety of collaborative digital platforms including OneNote, Perusall, and Slack.

ENGL 736: Studies in Criticism

Disability Studies

Prof. Talia Schaffer

Class code 44873

Mondays 4:40–6:30pm

This course will introduce you to the field of disability studies and enable you to practice doing disability-theory readings of literary texts. We will ask what it means to be disabled – or to be ‘able’ or ‘normal’ – and who decides who qualifies for each category. How might ideas of the body and mind have changed over time, determining certain conditions as normative or disabling in different eras? How much do social attitudes and built environments shape our sense of ability? Why do we regard highly mediated, enhanced bodies as ‘normal’? How might we rethink our social and political responsibilities if we see ourselves as enmeshed in care relations, rather than autonomous beings? And what happens if we see disability as a universal experience that everyone cycles in and out of throughout their lives, rather than an identity limited to a small population? We’ll answer these questions in two ways. First, we’ll have short focused theoretical units on such issues as blindness, autism, cognitive disorders, and mobility issues. Second, we’ll read fiction that considers disability in a radically different way, because it comes from cultures with alternative ideas of bodies and minds. We will use *The Disability Studies Reader* for our theoretical work plus case studies that depict alternative embodiment and caregiving in different centuries.

We will conduct class via Zoom, meeting every Monday from probably 5-6, and have a Slack channel and website for contact the rest of the week.

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ENGL 742: Studies in Shakespeare’s Plays

Undertaking Shakespeare/Shakespeare’s Undertakers

Prof. Miles Grier

Class code 50979

Wednesdays 6:40–8:30pm

This course has two basic aims: to increase students’ technical ability to read Shakespearean text and to extend their knowledge of the politics surrounding the Shakespeare industry. The actor and playwright from Stratford has been dead for nearly four centuries, but his

name remains at the center of any contest over Anglo/American cultural heritage (see “Wait, Can They Still Study Shakespeare?” in the September 18, 2020 *Chronicle of Higher Education*). What are the mediations that have kept and keep “Shakespeare” before the public? What persons and institutions have pursued cultural and political goals by printing out staging Shakespeare—and what outcomes does your pedagogy foster? What do you need to learn in order to undertake Shakespeare? For what parts of the Shakespeare legend do you want to serve as undertaker?

ENGL 742 fulfills the pre-1900 requirement for MS Ed and MAT students. This online course will meet synchronously, with the exception of days set aside for drafting essays or individual conferences with the professor.

ENGL 781-02: Special Seminar
Multiethnic Graphic Narratives

Prof. Caroline Hong

Class code 45043

Thursdays 4:40–6:30pm

This course focuses on multiethnic graphic narrative as a literary and cultural form. Through in-depth analyses of a wide range of texts, we will develop a vocabulary for talking about comics as a medium and examine how that vocabulary is used in different contexts, to tell different kinds of stories for/about different kinds of communities. We will read both independent and mainstream comics, and texts may include works by artists/writers such as Jessica Abel, Lynda Barry, Thi Bui, Will Eisner, Malaka Gharib, the Hernandez brothers, Mira Jacob, John Jennings, Mat Johnson, Derek Kirk Kim, Henry (Yoshitaka) Kiyama, Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda, Scott McCloud, Aaron McGruder, Tony Medina, Miné Okubo, Greg Pak, Arigon Starr, Jillian Tamaki, Mariko Tamaki, Whit Taylor, Tak Toyoshima, Adrian Tomine, GB Tran, Wendy Xu, and Gene Luen Yang. We will study these works alongside theoretical and critical readings that deal with comics and visual cultures. We will think about how comics in general, and these texts in particular, complicate our understandings of literature and history, as well as of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, ability, trauma, and so on. And, hopefully, together we will discover how the hybrid visual-verbal form is uniquely equipped to engage intersectionality and the contested politics of representation.

This online course will be roughly two-thirds synchronous and one-third asynchronous. We will meet synchronously every week via Zoom or Google Meet on Thursdays 4:40–5:55pm. The rest of our classwork will be asynchronous via Google Classroom and Twitter.

ENGL 781-03: Special Seminar
Difficult Texts, Uneasy Narratives

Prof. Maaza Mengiste

Class code 45044

Thursdays 6:40–8:30pm

How has literature learned to accommodate histories that are too difficult to describe? How have writers begun to construct narratives that take into account the incoherence and confusion of political and personal events? In this class, we will be reading challenging works that seek to embrace complexity. We will be asking ourselves how novels, plays, and nonfiction can both verbalize and quiet some of the questions we have all been asking as one inevitable occurrence seems to lead to the next. In this class, you will be thoroughly immersed in literary exchanges. You will be asked to reckon with the questions that spring from each literary work, and to set several books in conversation with each other to see what surprising, new dialogue emerges. This is a class deeply engaged in the ideas that spring from your own interpretations and considerations of what you read.

This online course will be fully synchronous.

ENGL 781-04: Special Seminar
Decade of Fire: Theatre and Drama in 1970s New York

Prof. Hillary Miller

Class code 45045

Tuesdays 6:40–8:30pm

The 1970s has been mythologized as one of New York City's most turbulent decades. Setting aside the neat categories of experimental performance, community theatre, and Broadway, we will study plays with an emphasis on the political movements and the newly formed institutions of the post-World War II period. Playwrights may include Julie Bovasso, Ed Bullins, Maria Irene Fornes, Roger Furman, Adrienne Kennedy, Robert Patrick, Miguel Piñero, Neil Simon, Shūji Terayama, and Joseph A. Walker. How do these playwrights respond and adapt to the changing spatial and social organization of New York's theatrical landscape? We will investigate the thematic and formal choices of dramatic writers while reading existing critical and theoretical approaches to the dramatic literature of the period. Students can expect to develop their own research project on a topic relevant to course readings and discussion.

This online course will be a mix of synchronous and asynchronous work. Students can expect to meet once a week on Zoom (Tuesdays 6:40–8:00pm), and conduct all other work on Blackboard and a shared class Google Drive.

ENGL 791: Thesis Course and ENGL 795: Independent Study

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