

English MA Course Descriptions

FALL 2022

ENGL 636: History of Literary Criticism

Prof. Jeff Cassvan

Class code 25703

THU 6:40–8:30PM / fully online

This online synchronous course, which meets via Zoom on Thursdays from 6:40–8:30PM, provides a thorough introduction to a number of 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 Formalism, Structuralism, Semiotics, Marxism, Psychoanalysis, Poststructuralism, Deconstruction, Gender Studies and Queer Theory) that have emerged during the 20th and 21st 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 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 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 wide range of literary materials (poems, short stories, essays, translations) made available on Blackboard. This is a fully online course and we will use Blackboard as our learning management system.

ENGL 701: Seminar in Graduate Methodology

Prof. Hillary Miller

Class code 27675

MON 4:40–6:30PM / in-person

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” 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.

ENGL 639: Studies in Poetry

Contemporary American Poetry and Documentary Poetics

Prof. Nicole Cooley

Class code 27677

WED 4:40–6:30PM / in-person

Our focus in this seminar will be the strange, bewildering and fascinating field of documentary poetics in American writing. We'll talk about poetic texts as well as hybrid forms as we consider questions about poetry's function in the larger world. How do poets function as historians, journalists or witnesses? What kind of cultural work can poetry do? We'll read a range of texts from twentieth and twenty-first century US poetry, beginning with poems by Muriel Rukeyser and Charles Reznikoff and a discussion of modernist poets using "official" history and WPA documents before turning to a number of contemporary poets—with very recent books—who engage in various ways with documentary projects. We will investigate writing from archives, writing from found material, and writing from oral histories and narratives. We will discuss the wide range of aesthetic strategies that documentary poems deploy, and we will explore how documentary poems use visual discourses, including photography and film.

ENGL 726: Studies in Early American Literature**Formations: Circum-Atlantic Cultural Production after 1776**

Prof. Duncan Faherty

Class code 27671

MON 6:40–8:30PM / in-person

Instead of reading late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century texts as expressions of national subjectivities, this course will explore how they take up questions of mobility, fracture, commodification, dislocation, equality, and revolutionary circulation. Within this context, we will pay particular attention—because of the ways in which their bodies were often forced to circulate as commodities—to texts written by and about women and diasporic Africans. In so doing, we will consider how these texts trouble the very concept of an isolationist national tradition by underscoring the intimacies that actually shaped the formations of seemingly disparate geographical spaces. We will explore, in other words, how the post-Revolutionary Anglophone world was formed by the exchange of goods, ideas, and peoples. Our focus on the flows and valuations of bodies and capital within these texts will serve as our entry into thinking about how Anglophone cultural production represents mobility and belonging in the wake of the Revolutionary War (for both the emerging American Republic and for the now truncated British Empire). In so doing, we will grapple with the shifting structures of feeling that define notions of democracy, citizenship, empire, nation, and the human after the rupture in colonial relations. Possible texts include the anonymously published novellas *The Story of Constantius and Pulchera and Amelia; or, The Faithless Briton*, Unca Eliza Winkfield's *The Female American*, Charles Brockden Brown's *Ormond; or The Secret Witness*, William Earle's *Obi; Or The History Of Three-Fingered Jack*, the anonymous novel *The Woman Of Colour*, Mary Prince's *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave*, Leonora Sansay's *Secret History*, Maria Edgeworth's "The Grateful Negro," David Walker's *Appeal*, Cynric R. Williams's *Hamel, the Obeah Man*, and Uriah Derick D'Arcy's *The Black Vampyre; A Legend of St. Domingo*.

Note: ENGL 726 fulfills the pre-1900 requirement for MS Ed and MAT students.

ENGL 727: Studies in American Literature, 1820–1920**Eugenics and Racial Anxiety in American Literature and Culture, 1880–1920**

Prof. Karen Weingarten

Class code 27668

TUE 4:40–6:30PM / in person

This course will look at the relationship between eugenics and literature in the U.S. starting in the late nineteenth century. We'll look at how eugenics as an ideology and as a pseudoscience emerged because of white American anxieties about a changing United States, and to that end, we'll read historical sources from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to understand how eugenics was a theory of race, gender, sexuality, and disability. We'll also consider *why* eugenics became so popular, even among some Black intellectual thinkers. We'll read novels, short stories, and essays by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, W.E.B. DuBois, Angelina Weld Grimké, Margaret Sanger, Nella Larsen, among others. Alongside these primary texts, we'll read secondary sources that consider how eugenics influenced the Harlem Renaissance, the Modernist movement, the development of an American medical culture, and attitudes toward disability. We'll also discuss how some writers and intellectuals did write against eugenics, despite its ideological dominance in this era. Finally, we'll consider the relevance of this history to our present moment. Students will have the option of writing a final research paper, a creative project, or a pedagogical project that considers how to teach these ideas in the high school classroom.

Note: ENGL 727 fulfills the pre-1900 requirement for MS Ed and MAT students.

ENGL 733: Asian American Literature

Asian American Graphic Narratives

Prof. Caroline K. Hong

Class code 27574

WED 4:40–6:30PM / fully online

This course focuses on a wide range of graphic narratives created by and/or about Asian Americans. We will examine both how Asians and Asian Americans have historically been racialized as caricatures and orientalist stereotypes in US comics and how Asian American comics creators have grappled with, resisted, and moved beyond this racist visual legacy. We will familiarize ourselves with comics as a medium and read independent and mainstream comics in a variety of genres. Texts may include work by writers/artists like Lynda Barry, Thi Bui, Nidhi Chanani, Fred Chao, Mike Curato, Aminder Dhaliwal, Malaka Gharib, Robin Ha, Kiku Hughes, Mira Jacob, Keshni Kashyap, Shing Yin Khor, Derek Kirk Kim, Henry (Yoshitaka) Kiyama, Arp Laszlo, Kazimir Lee, Lela Lee, Marjorie Liu and Sana Takeda, MariNaomi, Jeremy Nguyen, Nguyêñ Khôi Nguyêñ, Trung Le Nguyen, Jamie Noguchi, Miné Okubo, Greg Pak, Aatmaja Pandya, Thien Pham, Lark Pien, Katie Quan, Yumi Sakugawa, Jason Shiga, Bishakh Som, Connie Sun, Jillian Tamaki, Mariko Tamaki, Tak Toyoshima, Adrian Tomine, GB Tran, Jen Wang, Yao Xiao, Wendy Xu, Gene Luen Yang, Victoria Ying, and others. We will study these works alongside theoretical and critical readings that deal

with comics and visual cultures. Over the course of the semester, 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, (dis)ability, religion, history, trauma, and so on. And, hopefully, together we will discover how this hybrid visual-verbal form is uniquely equipped to tell Asian American stories and engage intersectionality and the contested politics of representation. For the final project, students will have three options—to write a more traditional academic essay, to develop a multimedia scholarly or pedagogical project, or to create a minicomic.

This online synchronous course will meet weekly on Wednesdays 4:40–6:30PM via Zoom. In addition to Zoom, we will also likely be using Blackboard and Twitter.

ENGL 742: Studies in Shakespeare's Plays

Professor and description TBA

Class code 27650

TUE 6:40–8:30PM / in person

Note: ENGL 742 fulfills the pre-1900 requirement for MS Ed and MAT students.

ENGL 781-01: Special Seminars

Science Fiction

Prof. Seo-Young Chu

Class code 27575

THU 4:40–6:30PM / fully online

A vibe, a logic, a subculture, a marketing tag, a set of reading protocols, a trauma response, a way of theorizing race and gender, a kind of realism, the opposite of realism, a growing presence in everyday reality: science fiction is all of the above and more. In this course we will explore the fluid identities and uses of science fiction through the various forms science fiction can take, including lyric poetry/verse, prose fiction, design fiction, creative nonfiction, plays, cinema, music videos, games, TV shows, concept art, 만화, couture, and climate change warnings. How do different “forms” of science fiction interact with different science-fictional “meanings” and types of “content”? Possible authors/sources: *Aliens*, Gloria Anzaldúa, Isaac Asimov, *Black Mirror*, Octavia Butler, Karel Čapek, Ted Chiang, Samuel Delany, Emily Dickinson, Djuna, *Ex Machina*, E.M. Forster, Hugo Gernsback, William Gibson, N.K. Jemisin, Janelle Monáe, Margaret Rhee, Mary Shelley, Tracy K. Smith, *The Twilight Zone*, H.G. Wells, Charles Yu.

ENGL 781-02: Special Seminars

Black Women Writers

Prof. Omari Weekes

Class code 25958

WED 6:40–8:30PM / in person

This course is designed to introduce students to major literary works written by Black women during and since the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920's. This remix of traditional surveys of 20th century African American Literature, which often relegate Black women's writings to the margins, asks students to consider what American and African American literature are as genres and literary traditions if we define them from the perspective of Black women. Emphasis will be placed on the historical and cultural contexts in which these works were written and focus on how particular theatics and aesthetics were being used to comment upon and challenge the dominant hierarchical modes carved out by patriarchy, white supremacy, heterosexism, nationalism, class oppression, Jim Crow laws, and otherwise. By the end of the course, students will be able to demonstrate a greater knowledge of the significance of the cultural and artistic contributions that Black women have delivered to the larger field of American literature. Readings may include work by Nella Larsen, Zora Neale Hurston, Gwendolyn Brooks, Toni Morrison, Tracy K. Smith, Claudia Rankine, and others.

ENGL 791: Thesis Course and ENGL 795: Independent Study

Department permission required. For more information and copies of the sign-up forms, please email the Director of Graduate Studies in English at MAEnglish@qc.cuny.edu.