

2015 Fall

English Graduate Course Descriptions

ENGL 636: History of Literary Criticism: The Critical Tradition

David Richter

Class no. 51651; Wed 6:30–8:20pm; Kiely 325

We shall read some of the major texts of contemporary literary theory, including essays by many of the important creators of psychoanalytic criticism (Freud, Jung, Lacan, Zizek); marxism; new historicism and cultural studies (Marx, Althusser, Eagleton, Greenblatt, Bourdieu); feminism, gender studies and queer theory (Woolf, de Beauvoir, Rubin, Foucault, Butler); formalism, structuralism, deconstruction and reader-response theory (Brooks, Bakhtin, Derrida and Fish); postcolonialism and critical race theory (Said, Spivak, Gates, Morrison). As a class students will read theoretical essays and then practice these modes of criticism on selected imaginative texts; students will also select a single text for an independent project completed in stages.

ENGL 681: Hyphen American Poetry

Ryan Black

Class no. 51652; Wed 6:30–8:20pm; Klapper 708

In his 1946 polemic, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” Langston Hughes argues against a young poet’s “desire to pour racial individuality into the mold of American standardization.” Instead, Hughes calls for a poetics that foregrounds Black identity within and without American culture. In the “post-racial” United States of the 21st century, this type of hybridity has become, if not more risky, even more complex. According to Michael Omi and Howard Winant, with the election of Barack Obama in 2008, “many American people in the United States believe that the goal of the civil rights movement have been substantially achieved, that racial discrimination is a thing of the past, and that we are rapidly evolving into a truly colorblind society.” This class will explore the many ways a handful of contemporary American poets both foreground and complicate hyphenated racial identities. We will consider how these writers dismantle the myth of a “post-racial America,” thereby smashing the “mold of American standardization,” while simultaneously challenging Hughes’s own equation of identity. Poets will likely include Ken Chen, Eduardo Corral, Natalie Diaz, Thomas Sayers Ellis, Tarfia Faizullah, Claudia Rankine, and Jake Adam York. (This course is web-enhanced.)

ENGL 701: Graduate Methodology

Annmarie Drury

Class no. 51654; Thu 4:30–6:20pm; Klapper 708

What does literary scholarship in graduate school look like? When your graduate instructors ask you to write a research paper, what do they mean? In this course, we practice methods in research and writing that will be useful to you in all your graduate classes. For us in 701, this is an especially reflective practice, because we think together about how knowledge is created in the discipline of “English”: about what kinds of questions generate knowledge, and about the values that inform those questions. By examining the work of others – of scholars outside our course and of one another – we collect a toolkit of thinking, reading, writing, and research strategies. We give particular attention to the academic essay as a flexible, sophisticated form. We aim to develop a new sense of our own proclivities as literary scholars and a new competence in realizing our interests: to leave the course knowing which strategies for reading and posing questions each of us finds most engaging and knowing how to research and write in ways convincing to other literary scholars. (This course is web-enhanced.)

ENGL 719: Studies in Medieval Literature: Chaucer’s Dream Visions

Myra Wright

Class no. 51661; Tue 4:30–6:20pm; Klapper 708

In this course, we study the *Book of the Duchess*, the *House of Fame*, and the *Parliament of Fowls* through several lenses: as adaptations of ancient and contemporary works from the poet’s library, as subtle reflections of the cultural and political conditions of fourteenth-century England, and as groundbreaking experiments in narration and versification. Students encounter Chaucer’s poetry in its original language, building up a fluency in Middle English through exercises in close reading and philology. Alongside the poems, we read excerpts from Chaucer’s source material, including Latin, French, and Italian texts in translation. Students also explore the critical tradition that surrounds the genre of the medieval dream vision, and (most importantly) advance their own claims about what dreaming means for Chaucer.

ENGL 720: Studies in Renaissance Literature

Richard McCoy

Class no. 51664; Wed 4:30–6:20pm; Klapper 708

The course will focus on the literature and culture of sixteenth-century England, ranging from Thomas More's *Utopia*, through the sonnets of Wyatt, Surrey, Raleigh, Sidney, Shakespeare, and others. We will also examine major documents, events, and controversies of the English Reformation as well as important political issues of the Tudor regime. The erotic verse of Christopher Marlowe, religious and love lyrics of John Donne, selections from Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* will also be included in our survey. Required texts include *Norton Anthology of English Literature* (Norton), 9th ed., Volume B and John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford).

ENGL 722: Studies in Eighteenth-Century Literature

Ala Alryyes

Class no. 51667; Mon 6:30–8:20pm; Kiely 416

We will study a set of excellent and influential eighteenth-century novels, emphasizing the importance of close reading. Topics of the course include: the rise of the novel and the culture of experience; realism and allegory; the portrayal of selfhood; the novel's orchestration of time and space; the novel's stylistic "lawlessness" and its vexed relation to its generic predecessors—to pre-novelistic (such as the romance) and extra-literary discourses (such as newspapers) the novel adapted or parodied; the novel's connections with popular culture; its relation to privacy and the body; the novel's influence on the public sphere; the Gothic; the novel's universalism and its relation to the Enlightenment; the novel's representation of slavery and the colonial experience. Novels by Aphra Behn, Daniel Defoe, Eliza Haywood, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Horace Walpole, Tobias Smollett, and Jane Austen.

ENGL 726: The Transatlantic Gothic Novel

Sian Silyn Roberts

Class no. 51673; Mon 4:30–6:20pm; Klapper 708

British and American authors have long experimented with the languages of fear, persecution, loathing, and imprisonment to produce the style of writing popularly known as "Gothic." To understand why readers on both sides of the Atlantic found this changing, complex form so consistently appealing from the middle of the eighteenth-century onward, we will consider Gothic fiction as an arena in which different notions

of national community and individual subjectivity enter into conversation, confront, and revise one another. We will examine the Gothic's early literary origins and its changing preoccupations over the course of the nineteenth century to consider how the British and American traditions parallel and diverge from one another. Authors will likely include Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Allan Poe, Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, Bram Stoker, Nathaniel Hawthorne, among others.

ENGL 729: What Now? Twenty-First Century Literature

Gloria Fisk

Class no. 51675; Thu 6:30–8:20pm; Klapper 708

How will the literary historians of the future look back to describe the literature of the present? What formal devices prove most useful to contemporary writers, and what historical conditions explain their rise? As we debate these questions in relation to some of the most acclaimed literary texts of our new century, we'll also consider the theoretical assumptions that we make as we ask them. We'll join critics who debate the best ways to understand the relationship between literary forms and historical circumstance, and who question the premise of categorizing literature in historical periods at all. We'll also consider the costs and benefits of thinking about contemporary literature as world literature by locating ourselves as readers in a transnational public where the English language increasingly prevails.

Our primary texts will include the introductory volumes of the series by Karl Ove Knausgård and Elena Ferrante; the prose poetry of Claudia Rankine; and novels by J.M. Coetzee, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Zadie Smith. The critics we read will include Paul Dawson, Eric Hayot, Franco Moretti, Sianne Ngai, and Rebecca Walkowitz. (This course is web-enhanced.)

ENGL 781: Digital Literary Studies, Or How to Read a Million Books

Kevin Ferguson

Class no. 51771; Thu 4:30–6:20pm; Kiely 148

This course will introduce students to central debates in the digital humanities that inform literary study and allow students to practice some of the basic tools of digital literary analysis. We will begin by framing the problems that the digital humanities poses to the study of literature, specifically how digital technologies upset deep-seated notions of something as basic as what it means to "read" a text. By considering the limitations of interpretive strategies like "close reading," we will come to appreciate the

argument made by Franco Moretti and others for a computer-aided “distant reading.” Next, we will practice some basic digital literary analysis and visualization using tools like Wordle, Google’s N-gram viewer, TextArc, Voyant, TAPoR, and Mallet’s topic modeling tool. These are free, mostly web-based programs that will allow us easily to do things like compare authors’ writing styles, analyze a novel’s themes, and even “read” a million books, all without cracking a page. Last, we will work together using what we have learned to create online group projects analyzing an author, text, or corpus from a digital perspective. No special knowledge of computer programs is required, although this web-enhanced course does require regular access to a computer.

ENGL 781: (Post)Colonial Literature and Anti-Colonial Activism

Natalie Leger

Class no. 51772; Tue 6:30–8:20pm; Kiely 325

In this course, we will explore the conceptual power of revolution, specifically; the alluring imaginative hold revolution has for colonized peoples and formerly colonized peoples in the Americas, Africa, and South Asia. Of import here is how the history and lived reality of subjugation, by way of slavery, colonialism, imperialism and/or puppet dictatorship, shapes not only an enduring longing for revolution but the tragic and comic tenor of fiction in colonized and formerly colonized spaces. In addition to the comic and tragic nuances of the novels, plays, poems and short stories that we will discuss, this course will also explore how the longing for revolution created, in the twentieth and twenty-first century colonial and postcolonial world, a tradition of writing dedicated to radically transforming how individuals, collectively, think and imagine existence. Accordingly, as we read fiction from writers like Aimé Cesaire, Rabindranath Tagore, and J.M. Coetzee we will also read the writing of anti-colonial thinker-activists like Frantz Fanon, Mahatma Gandhi and Amilcar Cabral, among others. We will read fiction alongside anti-colonial political writing in order to better understand the political stakes shaping how and why the writers we discuss wrote the fiction that they did. Ultimately, our exploration of revolution and revolutionary longing will foster awareness of the immense, imaginative and cognitive, work that is the act of thinking existence anew. (This course is web-enhanced.)

ENGL 781: Religion, Fantasy, and Narrative Theory in Children's Literature

Meira Levinson

Class no. 51773; Tue 6:30–8:20pm; Klapper 708

Madeleine L'Engle once said, "Fantasies are my theology." From Sara Coleridge's *Phantasmion* and George MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind* to C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* and Virginia Hamilton's Justice Trilogy, British and American children's speculative fiction often engages with theological, religious, and spiritual theematics. Yet how does one define, and methodologically approach, terms such as "childhood," "children's" literature, "fantasy," and "religion?" Definitions of, and values associated with, all of these terms vary greatly based on historical period and geographic locale. In this course, we'll explore different understandings of "childhood" and "children's literature" through scholars such as Beverly Lyon Clark, Jacqueline Rose, Peter Hunt, Perry Nodelman, and Jack Zipes; we'll also examine different theoretical approaches to the fantastic, such as those of Tzvetan Todorov, Eric Rabkin, Brian Attebery, Rosemary Jackson, and Farah Mendlesohn. Our primary readings will include prose, poetry, graphic novels, and picture books; authors include Sara Coleridge, George MacDonald, C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, J. K. Rowling, Diana Wynne Jones, Madeleine L'Engle, Ursula K. Le Guin, Virginia Hamilton, Tamora Pierce, Philip Pullman, David Almond, Lois Lowry, Grace Lin, Nalo Hopkinson, Maurice Sendak, Shel Silverstein, David Wisniewski, Jewell Parker Rhodes, Barry Deutsch, and G. Willow Wilson. Through our readings and discussions, we'll address questions such as: what are the power dynamics, ethical issues, and political stakes of epistemological and authoritative paradigms presented in children's literature? How do different modes of narration and rhetoric impact such dynamics, for audiences of all ages?

ENGL 791: Thesis Course

Class no. 55939

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

ENGL 795: Independent Study

Class no. 58109

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