

English MA Course Descriptions

Summer 2023

SESSION I

June 5 to June 29, 2023

ENGL 638: Modern Drama

Prof. Rhoda Sirlin

Class code 1706

MTWTh 6:45 to 8:25 pm/ online synchronous

This graduate-level course will focus on classic American plays of the 20th century. We will explore the connection between these plays with Greek tragedy and with the social dramas of 19th-century playwrights like Ibsen and Strindberg, discovering in the process the use of realism, naturalism and expressionism in American theater. We will also explore the changing definitions of tragedy, comedy, and tragicomedy as well as analyze the nature of the tragic hero in contemporary American life and theater. Some of the playwrights we will be reading are Susan Glaspell, Lillian Hellman, Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Lorraine Hansberry, Beth Henley, Marsha Norman, August Wilson, Alfred Uhry, Sarah Ruhl, Paula Vogel and others. If possible, we will see an off-Broadway or Broadway production together.

ENGL 719: Medieval Literature

Prof. Edward Currie

Class code 1651

online asynchronous

The epic is generally taken to be one of the oldest and most venerable genres, a literary form used by ancient cultures to represent their legendary origins and martial achievements. This course, a survey of medieval epics from the eighth century to the thirteenth, will explore the diversity of forms and purposes that can be found in the epic productions of the period and the difficulty of bringing these extremely varied texts under one denominator. Although works within this genre have much in common, they are also diverse enough that it is hard to speak of them as belonging to one tradition. For example, a heroic epic can include narrative elements derived from myth, legend, and folklore. We will read epics composed in medieval England, France, Scandinavia, and Carolingian Germany; namely, *Beowulf*, *The Song of Roland*, *The Saga of the Volsungs*, and *The Nibelungenlied*. The literature will be read in translation. Students will turn in weekly responses and write two papers: the first will require close readings of a text; the second will be a research paper that involves engagement with scholarship. This online course will be asynchronous. *Class discussions will occur on our Blackboard site, where required lectures and other course materials will also be available. (This course satisfies the pre-1900 requirement for MSED and MAT students.)*

SESSION II

July 5 to August 15, 2023

ENGL 723: Studies in Romantic Literature

Prof. Richard Marotta

Class code 1699

English 638 (Special Seminar)

MW 6:00 to 8:05 pm / hybrid

For many Romantic writers, the “traces of the first Paradise whence man was driven” (McGann) could be found in the imaginative and mimetic structures surrounding them. Wordsworth and Shelley found these traces in nature; Byron in irony; Keats in aesthetics; Blake in myth and Coleridge in ethics. This course will examine how the search for these traces of paradise, or as McGann put it, the idea “that poetry...can set one free of the ruins of history and culture is the grand idea of every Romantic poet,” forms the core belief that shapes the Romantic imagination in its exploration of poetic language, of imaginative experience and of the art of poetry. As the romantics looked at ways of regenerating poetic language, they perceived a parallel between the “ruins of paradise” and the ruins of poetic language in Enlightenment practice. In revitalizing the language of poetry, these poets sought to uncover the traces of paradise contained and expressed by the logos and within the dialectic of negation and transcendence. In doing so, the romantic poets “paganize” their sense of the spiritual, infusing the earth with a far more permeating omnipresence of the spiritual than did the institutional religions. They not only attempted to free the imagination from “reason” but also from the “ruins” of the spiritual as exclusively a dogmatic act. Our exploration will focus on how the romantic poets layered this quest onto idealized characters, nature and poetry itself. Active participation and one major paper are required. (*This course satisfies the pre-1900 requirement for MSED and MAT students.*)

ENGL 781: Special Seminar

Prof. James Richie

Class code 1700

TTh 6:00 to 8:05 pm/ online synchronous

American Poetry from Modernism to Postmodernism (and After)

While new work is continually being done to re-examine the claims, terms, and historical contexts for modern poetry, there’s a general critical consensus on what poetic modernism entails and what works may be considered modern. Postmodern poetry, which both emerges and diverges from the tenets of modernism, is another story. Parameters are starting to emerge, but for most there’s still debate on what counts as postmodern or if there even is (or was) such a thing as a “postmodernism.” This course is going to examine modern and postmodern American poetry with a historicizing lens to understand how poets from the early part of the century developed poetic strategies to account for the feeling of overwhelming, rapid, and unprecedented historical change and how the poets of the mid part of the 20th century drew from and critiqued those strategies to account for their own historical moment. It will also conclude by analyzing a few poets whose work emerged much later in the 20th century (or beginning of the 21st) to think through how these writers may be dealing with their own inherited dual legacy.