FALL 2018 COURSES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH ♦ RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

The English major at Rhode Island College offers the opportunity to explore literature as well as other texts through a variety of perspectives in literary and cultural criticism. Majors learn to read texts critically, to understand the historical and cultural conditions within which texts are produced, and to become aware of current theoretical approaches that shape the study of English today. Courses for English majors also emphasize effective writing in several critical modes.

Your introduction to these approaches to texts and modes of writing begins with English 201, which emphasizes close reading and acquiring a critical vocabulary and methodology; English 202, which examines contemporary theoretical contexts for studying literature; and English 205/206/207, each of which offers historical contexts. The 300/400 level courses are designed to follow up on these courses and also to prepare you for the long seminar paper required in every section of the capstone course, English 460.

ENGLISH 201:
Literary Studies: Analysis

Brandon Hawk TuTh 4-5:50
Close Reading the World
What does it mean to be an English major? How do we read, think about, analyze, and critically write about literature? How does close reading help us to engage with the world around us? These are just a few of the questions we will explore in this course, as we explore what “close reading” means for literary studies. Readings include poetry, plays, short stories, novels, and graphic novels, ranging from ancient bestsellers to recent releases. Requirements include engagement in class discussions, three close reading essays (4-6 pages each), and final exam.

Jennifer Holl TuTh 8-9:50
As an introduction to the English major, this course offers students practice and instruction in the strategies and critical vocabularies of literary studies. As we read works of poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction from various time periods and cultural contexts, we will hone our skills in close reading, analysis, and careful writing. Requirements include active class participation, regular informal writing, four papers, and an oral presentation.

Barbara Schapiro MW 4-5:50
The Pleasures of Deep Reading
How does a poem, a piece of fiction, or a play pull us into its imaginary world and tug on our feelings? Just how does literature work? Through careful attention to language and literary form, this course will introduce you to the pleasures of deep reading and close literary analysis. We will read works from a variety of genres and historical periods as well as consider film versions of some of the texts. The course will also focus on developing your ability to write clearly and critically about literature. Requirements include attendance and participation in discussion and small group work; three 4-6 page critical papers; final exam.

ENGLISH 202:
Literary Studies: Theory and Criticism

Zubeda Jalalzai MW 10-11:50
This course introduces students to the field of literary criticism and theory as well as to the various debates waged by literary and cultural critics about what constitutes effective and meaningful ways to read texts. In fact, many of these critics would disagree over the very definition of “text” itself. By the end of the course, students shall be able to identify the primary terms and underlying principles of certain schools of literary theory (including some classical theories, Formalism, Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, Psychoanalysis, Feminism, Gender Studies, Marxism, Postcolonial, and Cultural Studies). Students shall also be able to recognize what each theory offers and begin to understand what each might leave out. In this way, students will come to see that the foundational terms of a theoretical perspective construct particular understandings of reality. After learning about and applying particular theoretical frameworks to primary texts, students shall begin to develop their own critical positions regarding the study of literature as well as the issues raised by these approaches. You should be willing to wade through sometimes perplexing concepts that may at first confuse you. This course is an initial step in the process of understanding complicated ideas that you will encounter as you continue to analyze literature and the world. Requirements include active participation, two papers, presentation and midterm and final exams.

Anita Duneer TuTh 4-5:50
This course is an introduction to contemporary theoretical approaches to literary and non-literary texts, including visual and performance arts. Students will examine the assumptions readers make when encountering a text, and learn to read a text through the lens of a number of theoretical concepts. In addition, students will read and write about literary theory and literary criticism, and develop rhetorical strategies that will help them navigate an ongoing critical conversation within and beyond the classroom. Requirements include class participation, collaborative projects and presentations, three short papers (2-3 pages), two critical analyses (5-7 pages), a midterm, and a final exam.
ENGLISH 205:  
British Literature to 1700  
Gary Grund MTh 12-1:50  
This course is a survey of the most important British writers in verse and prose during the Anglo-Saxon period, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance/Early Modern period, and the Restoration. Some emphasis will be placed on the cultural and intellectual background of each period, as well as an investigation into the concept of periodization itself, but the goal of the course is to introduce students to the varied and changing modes of literary expression beginning with Beowulf and the earliest lyrics in English. Careful analysis of the material and participation in classroom discussion are essential. There will be three papers in the course along with three examinations.

Brandon Hawk TuF 12-1:50  
Remixing British Literature  
While touring the wide world of British literature through the medieval and early modern periods, we will encounter such sights as a talking tree, a headhunter heroine, Arthurian romances, raucous religious plays, a mad king, the world of faerie, a sympathetic devil, and at least one sexy flea. With works sometimes familiar and sometimes foreign, we will explore what literature reveals about storytelling, adaptation, cultural values, history, as well as past and present assumptions about the world. Readings will be in modern translation, although we will look at examples of Old, Middle, and early modern English along the way. Requirements include engagement in class discussions, close reading essays, a research essay (6-10 pages) as well as midterm and final exams.

ENGLISH 206:  
British Literature Since 1700  
Stephen Brown MW 6-7:50  
Students will survey major texts of British literature from the early eighteenth century to the present. Some attention to historical and cultural contexts, as well as to literary history as defined traditionally through periodization and through genre distinctions, will help students create a conceptual framework for the literature. The broad mapping of the later periods of British literary history will also help students choose areas for study in future courses or in their preparation to teach English literature. Requirements include regular attendance; reading quizzes; response writing; a course paper written in several steps, ultimately integrating critical reading with historical re-search; and a final exam.

ENGLISH 207:  
American Literature Beginnings to Present  
Stephen Brown MTh 12-1:50  
Students will read significant texts from the history of American literature, colonial era to the present, representing canonical as well as “marginal” literary voices. The course cannot pretend to “survey” 400 years of our national literature, but we will consider a number of works within a rich cultural and historical context, with particular attention to the role of literature in negotiating and interrogating American national identity. Requirements will include frequent reading quizzes; brief response papers; two essays, one critical and one based in historical research, and a final exam.

Alison Shonkwiler TuF 12-1:50  
This course aims for the impossible: to survey American literature from the colonial period to the present. We will take a sampling of voices, touching on some (but not all) key texts and authors, emphasizing what one writer termed the “trans-national” character of our national literature and national identity. Students will be introduced to major literary movements and historical contexts of the seventeenth through twentieth centuries, including Puritanism, colonialism, Native American contact, eighteenth-century republicanism, Transcendentalism and Romanticism, slave narratives, American poetic voices, Realism and Naturalism, the Harlem Renaissance, Modernism and Postmodernism, and finishing with literary responses to the Vietnam War, the conflicts of the 1960s, and their cultural resonances today. Requirements include a substantial amount of reading; regular attendance; reading quizzes; a multi-step course paper that integrates critical interpretation with historical research; and a final exam.

ENGLISH 210:  
Children’s Literature  
Susan Abbottson MTh 12-1:50  
Interpretation and Evaluation  
Over the semester we shall look at a variety of texts produced for children, including poetry, fairy tales, picture books and novels, and consider, throughout, the authors' attitudes toward and depictions of children, alongside issues of identity, gender, and race. As a literature course, the primary aim is to help you develop the necessary critical understanding and skills to allow you to examine and evaluate children's literature on your own, and to reach a better awareness of how our culture views, and, in a sense, creates the child. Requirements include active attendance, reading quizzes and response papers, 2 critical essays (4-6 pages), short class presentation, midterm and final.
ENGLISH 220:
Introduction to Creative Writing

Staff MW 6-7:50
This course is an introduction to the crafts of poetry, fiction, nonfiction prose, and drama. Students learn the fundamentals of imaginative writing by writing in each genre themselves, by sharing and critique of student writing in workshop, and by reading and discussion of published writing. Regular attendance, active verbal and written participation, revision of written work, and peer critique through workshop are required elements of this class. At the end of the semester, students will turn in a portfolio of their best writing.

Mark Anderson MTh 12-1:50
This course introduces the craft of fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry writing. The textbook will be the primary source of "how-to" instruction, and we will spend some time analyzing exemplary works printed there, but most of our class time will be devoted to workshop discussions of work by class members. Six writing assignments of about four single-spaced pages each, and two required revisions of the same length, will include both poetry and fiction or creative nonfiction. A journal will also be required. Service as a faithful and attentive member of the audience for fellow students is another requirement. Attendance and participation in the workshop will therefore have a substantial impact on final grades. Analyses of works from the text and by class members will utilize the techniques of literary analysis you learned in English 201. Require Text: Burroway, Imaginative Writing, 4th edition

Carrie Shipers TuF 12-1:50
This course introduces students to some of the basic elements of writing and reading creative nonfiction, fiction, and poetry. We will spend a lot of time discussing, studying, and practicing the five techniques essential to all three genres: image, voice, character, setting, and story. Students will complete six formal assignments that will be workshopped by the entire class and at the end of the semester will turn in a portfolio of polished final pieces. Attendance, thoughtful reading of assigned texts, drafting and revising, commenting on classmates’ work, and thorough revision are all required elements of the course.

Mark Anderson TuTh 10-11:50
This course introduces the craft of fiction, creative nonfiction, and poetry writing. The textbook will be the primary source of "how-to" instruction, and we will spend some time analyzing exemplary works printed there, but most of our class time will be devoted to workshop discussions of work by class members. Six writing assignments of about four single-spaced pages each, and two required revisions of the same length, will include both poetry and fiction or creative nonfiction. A journal will also be required. Service as a faithful and attentive member of the audience for fellow students is another requirement. Attendance and participation in the workshop will therefore have a substantial impact on final grades. Analyses of works from the text and by class members will utilize the techniques of literary analysis you learned in English 201. Require Text: Burroway, Imaginative Writing, 4th edition

ENGLISH 230:
Writing for Professional Settings

Staff
TuTh 8-9:50
MW 8-9:50
MTh 12-1:50
MW 6-7:50
TuF 12-1:50

ENGLISH 231:
Writing for Digital and Multimedia Environments

Mike Michaud MTh 12-1:50
If you have a smartphone or Facebook account, you are already engaged in digital and multimedia writing. Text messages, blogs, Facebook status updates, tweets, memes—these are the tools of 21st-century composers. ENGL 231 is designed to build on the knowledge you have already gained to help you become a more rhetorically sophisticated composer of digital and multimedia texts. You’ll write for a range of purposes and imagined audiences, gain experience navigating the world of online communication, and develop knowledge of how to communicate effectively in a globalized and visual world. Course requirements include frequent informal writing and a semester-long collaborative digital and multimedia project.
ENGLISH 262: 
Women, Crime, and Representation 
Maureen Reddy MW 2-3:50
This connections course examines representations—in fiction, non-fiction, film, and television—of women as criminals, as crime victims, and as detectives. We will consider texts of several national origins and time periods, paying close attention to the similarities as well as differences in their portrayals of women. We will draw on research and analyses done by scholars from a variety of fields, including film and media studies, gender and women’s studies, sociology, history, and literature to help us make sense of these representations and what they might tell us about our society and ourselves. Course format will be discussion, with occasional lectures by the professor and presentations by students. Each student will write two formal papers of varying lengths, participate in two group presentations, and be responsible for frequent informal writing assignments both in and outside class. Probable novels include Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*, Sara Paretsky's *Hard Time*, and Paula Woods's *Inner City Blues*.

ENGLISH 265: 
Women's Stories across Culture 
Barbara Schapiro MTh 12-1:50
In this course we will study contemporary stories by women from various world cultures and in various narrative modes, including fiction, film, memoir, and comics. We will look at the myriad ways women across cultures negotiate various conflicting claims, such as the pull towards family, tradition, and security vs. the desire for independence, freedom, and autonomy. The narrative form itself will be looked at as a means of constructing an identity, of discovering the story of one's self. Focusing on women's struggles for identity and agency within a global context, the course will compare women's diverse strategies of finding and telling their stories. Requirements will include frequent informal response writing, oral presentation, two formal critical papers (4-6 pages), and a take-home final exam.

ENGLISH 267: 
Books that Changed American Cultures 
Alison Shonkwiler TuTh 10-11:50
What books captivated the American reading public and had a profound impact on the twentieth century? What can our reading of them tell us about the concerns of the time—and about our culture now? Beginning with Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, the novel that exposed the meatpacking industry to a revolted public in 1906, we will read selections from fiction and nonfiction bestsellers that changed the ways Americans saw themselves. These books taught skills of self-help (*How to Win Friends and Influence People*), exposed conditions of poverty (*The Grapes of Wrath*), confronted the effects of the atomic bomb (*Hiroshima*), attacked racial and social injustice (*The Fire Next Time*), inspired the modern environmental and feminist movements (*Silent Spring* and *The Feminine Mystique*), and fueled the “culture wars” on college campuses (*Cultural Literacy*). Class meetings will focus on the close reading of each text. We will analyze works for their meaning and significance and also consider secondary sources about their historical impact. Requirements include a regular reading and attendance; frequent Blackboard response postings; and a collaborative research report.

ENGLISH 326: 
Studies in African-American Literature 
Daniel Scott MTh 12-1:50 (hybrid)
Re-Inventing Black Realities
In this course, you will be introduced to a number of literary and critical texts that dream and invent and create African-American realities. The starting proposition of this course is that there are an infinite number of “Black Experiences” and an innumerable number of “Black Realities.” History, circumstance, injustice, racism, stereotype, and error are the foundational elements from which black artists and writers describe, create, and declaim their realities. Books include works by: Ishmael Reed, Langston Hughes, Toni Morrison, Noviolet Bulawayo.

ENGLISH 336: 
Reading Globally 
Anita Duneer TuTh 10-11:50
Narrative Experimentation and Global Identities
In our current age of economic and cultural globalization, postcolonial writers have been telling stories that experiment widely with narrative voice, perspective, and form. What do these postmodern narrative choices tell us about the intersections of global, national, ethnic, racial, and gendered identities? And in what ways is the prefix “post” helpful or inadequate as we consider the stylistic experimentation in a range of genres from around the world? Readings will include a sampling of poetry, short stories, novels, memoirs, and films by African, Caribbean, Native American, and Asian writers. Requirements include class participation, quizzes, informal writing, a group research presentation, and two papers (6-8 pages each).
ENGLISH 343:  
Recent Fiction  
Staff TuTh 4-5:50

ENGLISH 346:  
Shakespeare: The Tragedies and Romances

Jennifer Holl M 4-7:50  
This course approaches Shakespeare’s tragedies and romances through the lenses of both contemporary performance studies and the history and culture of the early modern English theater. As we read such plays as Macbeth, Othello, Antony and Cleopatra, Hamlet, The Winter’s Tale, and The Tempest, we will pay special attention to the ways that these plays interrogate their own theatricality, while we perform ample research into early modern theater culture, including staging conditions and conventions, antitheatrical debates, and the commercial aspects of playmaking. We will also consider the ways that performance perpetually allows these texts to evolve and respond to ever-changing cultural needs and conditions, and to that end, we will examine a number of adaptive and interpretive choices in contemporary film and theater. Course requirements will include active class participation, several short responses, a research paper, exams, and a group presentation.

ENGLISH 348:  
Early British Renaissance

Gary Grund MW 10-11:50  
This survey course examines the many voices in both poetry and prose that represent the first flowering of the Renaissance in England. We will pay some attention to the cultural and literary origins of the Early Modern period as it was fashioned by some Continental antecedents although the central focus will be on developing a sensitivity to and appreciation of sixteenth-century British language and style. Among writers to be studied will be the early humanists More and Ascham along with Wyatt, the Sidneys, Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare, to mention just a few. There will be two papers in the course, a mid-term, and a final examination. The course will be conducted as a lecture/discussion. Participation in class is essential.

ENGLISH 355:  
Victorian Literature & Culture

Russell Potter TuTh 6-7:50  
The Victorian era, uncannily kindred to our own and yet conceived of as impossibly old and distant, is for both these reasons a rich ground for literary and cultural study. Like Vincent Price’s mansion in Edward Scissorhands, it looms over our placid, suburban worldview, appearing only when our rear-view window is askew, and yet like that image, far closer than it seems. We will spend this semester investigating the texts, the images, the sounds, the media, and the mindest of this period, seeking at all times to maintain a broadly panoramic frame (and indeed, as we will see, the very idea of the “panorama” was yet another Victorian invention). We will read the texts of some of the more distinctive literary writers of the era – Dickens, Carlyle, Morley, Eliot, Hopkins, and Stevenson – alongside visual artists such as Turner, Landseer, Selous, and Cameron. We will also examine the decorative and domestic arts, stroll under the glass arches of the Crystal Palace, take in a balloon ascent at Vauxhall Gardens, and attend lectures at the Royal Polytechnic; we will listen to street ballad-singers, squeeze onto a bench-seat at a ragged school, and thumb through the pages of Punch and the Illustrated London News.

ENGLISH 371:  
Advanced Creative Writing: Fiction

Karen Boren MTh 12-1:50  
This course focuses on the craft of fiction writing. The primary texts will be student-produced fiction, which we will use to explore various techniques, such as characterization, scene construction, plot, diction, point of attack, dialogue, symbol, imagery, and language precision. In addition to student work – work in progress – we will also examine non-student, published work. Regular attendance, active verbal and written participation, revision of written work, and peer critique through workshop are required elements of this class. At the end of the semester, students will turn in a portfolio of written work. (Prereq. Eng. 220)
ENGLISH 372:
Advanced Creative Writing: Poetry

Carrie Shipers TuTh 4-5:50
This advanced poetry workshop will focus largely on the work written by members of the class. In addition, students will work in small groups to facilitate discussion of recently published books of poetry, with attention to individual poems as well as how those poems are arranged into a satisfying full-length collection. Attendance, thoughtful reading of assigned texts, drafting and revising, commenting on classmates’ work, and thorough revision are all required elements of the course.

ENGLISH 373:
Advanced Creative Writing: Nonfiction Prose

Karen Boren M W 2-3:50
The creative nonfiction form attempts in whatever way it can to grab hold hard and sure its subject in any manner possible,” writes Bret Lott in “Toward a Definition of Creative Nonfiction.” This semester we will explore the many variations of creative nonfiction’s form through the reading and writing of literary nonfiction. Because most students are unfamiliar with the form, we will, to some extent, learn by reading. Primarily, students will produce creative nonfiction writing of their own, which will be submitted for peer workshop review. Revision will be stressed as students experiment with aspects of craft such as narrative distance, scene construction, style, and voice. (Prereq. Eng. 220)

ENGLISH 375:
Shoreline Production I

Mark Anderson Th 4-5:50
Selection and Editing
In this course, students will learn and practice the elements of publishing a literary arts magazine, focusing this semester on solicitation of manuscripts and artwork, selection of material for the magazine, and editing. Requirements include attendance, active participation in discussion and in selecting and editing works to be published in the magazine. Much of your work for Shoreline will occur outside of the class meeting times, so you’ll need to allow time outside of the classroom to do the work required.

ENGLISH 378:
Studies in Composition

Becky Caouette W 4-7:50 (hybrid)
Five Different Ways to Insult Someone: Multimodality and Persuasive Possibilities
When you send a text or post on social media, how do you know what will be the most effective way to convey your message: an emoji, a meme, a gif, some words, a video, or an audio clip? Have you made choices that were not as persuasive as you had hoped—for example, sending a poop emoji (or worse) in the wee hours of the morning? In this course, we’ll talk about the concept of multimodality—that is, the idea that we persuade our audience in multiple ways: aurally, gesturally, spatially, linguistically, and visually. We’ll begin by analyzing different modes and consider particularly powerful examples of successful and unsuccessful modal choices. Since our assignments will be project-driven, our group shall experiment with different modes in our own composing, and we’ll consider how multimodality is the future of writing. Students should plan to do some reading, invest heavily in class discussion, and spend time composing in all the modes. No prior experience needed for this course. This course helps fulfill one of the 300-level requirements for the Rhetoric and Writing minor as well as the English B.A. major.

ENGLISH 433:
Modern English Grammar

Russell Potter Th 2-3:50 (hybrid)
This course, despite its official name, is not strictly speaking a course on grammar, though grammar will not be neglected. What it really is is an introduction to issues in the study and teaching of the English language to day, including (but not limited to) such matters as the acquisition of language, grammar, usage, the idea of the "standard," perceptions of "accent," the history of the language, and its inner mechanics (syntax, morphology, phonology). Throughout the course, by demonstrating that there is in fact a history to many aspects of our language -- particularly to the usage perceived as "correct" at different times and places -- we will be able to demystify some of its apparently arcane and troublesome features. We will also pay particular attention to current issues in the teaching of English; some attention will also be paid to the issues of language development, the psychodynamics of "correcting" student writing, and the ways in which new technologies of communication (satellite television, the Internet, the cell phone) have affected patterns and perceptions about speech.
ENGLISH 460:
Seminar In Major Authors and Themes

Magdalena Ostas TuTh 2-3:50
Writers of the Ordinary
This seminar explores representations of ordinary lives, everyday happenings, and unremarkable things in literary texts. We will focus on writers that give us a glimpse into the world not as we wish or imagine it were but as it is, writers that throw into relief what usually receives our daily inattention. We will concern ourselves with novelists, poets, playwrights, and filmmakers who cast light on what we are everyday, the unextraordinary things that surround us, and the apparently mundane matters with which we occupy ourselves. Underneath the invisibility of the habitual, we will learn to uncover tremendous moral weight, political charge, conceptual insight, and personal significance. Our texts, among others, will include original poetry (William Wordsworth, William Carlos Williams, Elizabeth Bishop), compelling fiction (Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf), and insightful films (Agnes Varda, Eric Rohmer) in addition to excurses into other media and traditions (philosophy, painting, photography) that will aid us in grasping the historical and conceptual dimensions of our interest in making ordinary conspicuous again. Requirements include short writing assignments, a final research paper, and regular active, engaged participation.

Maureen Reddy MW 4-5:50
The Dracula Culture Text
The Irish Tourism Council advertises a “Dracula Walking Tour” of Dublin. General Mills aggressively markets Count Chocula cereal in the weeks before Halloween each year. Generations of children learned their numbers by watching Sesame Street’s Count. An unskilled writer with no experience became a bestselling author with a YA book series that merges the vampire with romance conventions; Hollywood took note. Van Helsing is the now the hero of action films—two thus far, more probably on the way. Everyone “knows” Count Dracula...or do we? This course focuses on the culture text of Dracula—that is, the life of the novel apart from its original form. What is it about Dracula that has made it such an enduring cultural artifact? We will consider possible responses to that question as we examine both the original 1897 novel and some of its adaptations along with some criticism, two of the novel’s vampire precursors, and a recent novel. In addition to participating in class discussions, each student will write a short (4-5 page) paper, give a class presentation, prepare an annotated bibliography, and write a final seminar paper of about 15 pages.

ENGLISH 477:
Internship in Rhetoric and Writing

Mike Michaud TBA
What do English majors write after they graduate? What role does writing play in 21st century “knowledge economy” workplaces? What will you need to know to navigate the transition from writing-for-the-teacher to writing-for-the-boss? The Internship in Rhetoric and Writing is an opportunity for English majors to gain exposure to professional workplaces and professional writing. Students identify a site at which to intern, work with Dr. Michaud to secure a position, and then work 14 hours per week on writing projects at their field-site. In addition, they participate in a classroom component (2-3 hours per week) in which they keep an internship journal, read in the professional literature about workplace writing, and produce two short reflective reports on their learning. The classroom component of the course is conducted entirely online. If you are interested in an internship, please contact Dr. Michael Michaud (mmichaud@ric.edu) to set up an informational meeting during the semester BEFORE you plan to intern.

ENGLISH 481:
Advanced Workshop in Creative Writing

Carrie Shipers MTh 12-1:50
This advanced workshop will focus largely on the poetry, creative nonfiction, and fiction written by members of the class, although we also will discuss some readings about the craft of writing. Because this course is designed to help students produce publishable work, students will become more familiar with literary publishing and in particular will read and discuss some recently published chapbooks. Attendance, thoughtful reading of assigned texts, drafting and revising, commenting on classmates’ work, and thorough revision are all required elements of the course.
ENGLISH 501:
Introduction To Graduate Study

Alison Shonkwiler W 4-6:50
This course serves as an introduction to graduate study in English, with a focus on literary theories and methods. We will survey some of the exciting yet challenging offerings of “theory” and consider how it relates to literature. The central goals of the course are for students to (1) learn to approach graduate study as professional training, substantially different from undergraduate study; (2) develop a working knowledge of issues and methods in literary studies; (3) and learn and practice essential research skills. Students will give in-class presentations, complete several short written exercises, and produce an end-of-semester paper that combines textual analysis with interrogation of a selected literary method.

ENGLISH 531:
British Literature 1660 to 1900

Magdalena Ostas M 4-6:50
Romantic and Modern Identity
What insights do Romantic and Modernist writers bring to the complex category of identity? This course explores representations of inner lives, public persons, and fabricated characters in poetry and fiction around 1800 and 1900. We will encounter a range of literary thinking about identity that will help us think about how selves are made, how they come to understand their own identities, and how literature serves as a unique field for engaging essential questions about who we are. We will read compelling and imaginative poetry (William Wordsworth, John Keats, John Clare, Emily Dickinson, Thomas Hardy, H.D.) and original works of fiction (Jane Austen and Virginia Woolf, among others) that will challenge us to think deeply and critically about the ways we construct identities in personal, historical, emotional, mental, social, creative, and everyday contexts. Requirements include one short paper, one presentation, a final research paper, and engaged, active participation.

ENGLISH 540:
Topics American Literature Before 1900

Zubeda Jalalzai Th 4-6:50
Gothic America
This graduate course examines the Gothic element in American history and letters that was in tension with other narratives like American exceptionalism, progress, and the American Dream. From Indian Wars to the Salem Witchcraft Trials to slavery, the nation’s founding occasioned tremendous human suffering. How did this history affect national consciousness and literature? Following Toni Morrison’s “Playing in the Dark,” the course investigates how various kinds of “darkness” informed American literature and how Gothic themes and works disclosed an alternate (spookier and less hopeful) America. Our list of authors will include Mary Rowlandson, Cotton Mather (Witchcraft Trials), Charles Brockden Brown, Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Edgar Allan Poe, Henry James, Harriet Jacobs, among others. We will also read a number of critical sources alongside the primary material. Requirements include attendance, active participation, class presentation, and a final seminar paper.

ENGLISH 581:
Workshop in Creative Writing

Mark Anderson Tu 4-6:50
Poetry
A graduate level creative writing workshop, this course is primarily devoted to the discussion of poems written by class members. Students will be asked to submit two poems or revisions each week, and to provide reading materials—other writers’ poetry and/or criticism—for at least two class discussions, which should deal with current issues in contemporary poetry and aesthetics. The aim will be to produce, by semester’s end, a body of work of “publishable quality.” Other requirements include attendance and active participation in workshop discussions.

Karen Boren M 4-6:50
This course focuses on the craft of fiction writing. The primary texts will be student-produced fiction and/or literary nonfiction (40-50 pages), which we will use to explore various techniques such as characterization, scene construction, plot, diction, point of attack, dialogue, symbol, imagery, and language precision. In addition to student work – work in progress – we will also examine craft by considering non-student, published work through the writer’s eye, discussing theories of narrative craft.
SELECTED 100– LEVEL COURSES

ENGLISH 120H:
Studies in Literature and Identity

Barbara Schapiro MW 2-3:50
Gender, Love, and Power in Literature
This course will focus on the interplay of gender, love, and power in literature. We will examine representations of romantic love and strife between the sexes through the ages, looking particularly at how these relationships are affected by socially constructed gender roles and norms. The texts will reflect a variety of genres and historical periods, ranging from ancient Greek plays to contemporary American short stories and films. The course will also emphasize critical thinking and writing skills. Requirements will include informal response writing, two 4-6 page critical essays, a midterm and a final exam. Texts: Euripides Medea; Aristophanes Lysistrata; Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale; selected Lais of Marie de France; Shakespeare Taming of the Shrew and Much Ado About Nothing; Ibsen A Doll’s House; Jones Dutchman; selected short stories of Kate Chopin, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, D.H Lawrence, Junot Diaz, and Kristen Roupenian. Films: Much Ado About Nothing; Dangerous Liaisons; Adam’s Rib.

ENGLISH 120:
Studies in Literature and Identity

Magdalena Ostas MTh 12-1:50
Literature and Everyday Life
This course will explore representations of everyday life in literature and art. Rather than investigate murders, betrayals, thrills, crimes, explosions, catastrophes, or dramas, we will explore the importance of the completely unremarkable. We will become interested in what mundane objects, ordinary lives, regular people, everyday places, and other seemingly trivial matters can tell us about ourselves and about the world. Our texts will include stories, poems, plays, essays, and films. Requirements include mandatory attendance, attentive and careful reading, informal writing exercises, two formal papers, and two written exams.

Alison Shonkwiler TuTh 6-7:50
Family Drama
A general introduction to the study of literature, “Family Drama” is organized around the themes of family relations, family conflicts, and family attachments. How do families shape our understanding of ourselves? Of our roles and responsibilities? How do family histories help determine our identities? Texts may include King Lear, Pride and Prejudice, The Metamorphosis, Beloved, and Maus.

ENGLISH 121:
Studies in Literature and Nation

Anita Duneer MW 2-3:50
Literature of the Contact Zone
In Imperial Eyes, Mary Louise Pratt defines “contact zones” as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other.” In this course students will encounter contact zones from a variety of time periods and perspectives, beginning with Columbus’s descriptions of America and Shakespeare’s imagination of the New World in The Tempest. We will then view the contact zone through the eyes of 20th- and 21st-century African, Caribbean, American, Native American, Asian, and Pacific Rim writers. Students will consider the particular and universal aesthetics of storytelling, as well as the power of stories to shape the way readers view themselves and understand people of other cultures. Requirements include participation, online discussion and quizzes, two papers (4-6 pages), and a final exam.

ENGLISH 122:
Studies in Literature and the Canon

Russell Potter Tu 2-3:50 (hybrid)
What is the proper function of literature? Is it to teach, to amuse, or both? Can literature change the world? Or can it at least change the course of one person’s life? And, if reading fiction and poetry has any potential whatsoever to perform any of these functions, which texts are the best ones to do so? The answer to this question has led literary critics and professors to create, and to question, all kinds of lists of readings, both prescribed (“it’s good for you!”) and proscribed (every list of Banned Books from the Spanish Inquisition the local school board). Through these processes, canons of literature – conceived of as a body of texts that offers the richest array of the sought-for merits – has formed over the past century and a half. The field of English is a young one, and yet many of its texts date to a far older period, before any broad consensus of the relative value of texts – other than sacred ones – even existed. In this, as the Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges put it, writers and critics have ‘invented their precursors,’ leaving their mark on the past, trailing texts behind them. In this class, we’ll trace the history of a literary canon as an idea, following its footsteps specifically via adaptations of canonical works. These materials will include radio plays, films, graphic novels, and other new media formats. We’ll also look at the question of adaptation itself; what is gained (or lost) when a written text becomes a graphical one? What’s the difference between mere illustration and actual transformation of the text? And what do the modes and styles of these graphic versions reveal about the original, the author, the artist, and ourselves.