

Course Descriptions: Fall 2013 Semester

ENGL 601: BIBLIOGRAPHY

Tuesday, 7-9:45 p.m., Professor Danielle Spratt

This course will offer you the tools, resources, and methods to study English Language and Literature at the graduate level. We will discuss approaches to finding, evaluating, and employing primary and secondary sources for research, with a concentration on the following: critical bibliography and book history; archival research; textual and digital editing and annotating; scholarly writing for multiple audiences, from seminar papers to published articles; and other issues of professionalization, such as proposing and delivering conference papers. Most importantly, we will consider how research methods help us understand, intervene in, and further develop critical conversations about literature. Projects over the course of the semester will include annotating and editing an archival text; crafting an annotated bibliography; writing a conference paper proposal; and delivering a final conference-length paper.

ENGL 604: SEMINAR IN LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

Monday, 4-6:45 p.m., Professor Evelyn McClave

Everything you wanted to know about language structure but were afraid to ask! We will explore from a linguistic perspective the scaffolding of language and communication. Familiarity with the sound system of English at the micro-level will enhance your understanding of rhyme and meter. The word creation process will be examined from a scientific perspective, and an introduction to syntax will reveal the structure of an author's signature style, including your own. Become acquainted with the rules of African American and Chicano English, and learn how to write linguistically "authentic" conversations - if you dare.

ENGL 609: SEMINAR IN POETRY WRITING

Thursday, 4-6:45 p.m., Professor Leilani Hall

English 609 is a workshop designed on intensive practice of poetry. Based on a firm belief that reading improves writing, your work in this course will embrace both pleasures. Specifically, this course will improve your technical prowess in writing poetry as well as critical awareness of your own work within the poetic literary tradition. You will be asked to pay passionate attention to both craft and content. Over the course of the semester you will read, discuss, and utilize various poetic approaches, including lyric and narrative, as well as experimental forms. In our discussions, it will behoove you to recognize and actively respond to key concerns in both published and peer work: What is this poet's approach? How does this poem work? How does it progress? What does it want us to know?

This course requires your allegiance to others' work as powerfully as your own. Over the course of the semester, you will write a minimum of ten poems, five primary critical responses, and pick what's behind the door or the curtain. Your final portfolio will be prefaced by a defense of poetry (also known as an aesthetic statement). And then this: "Never again are you the same. The longing / is to be pure. What you get is to be changed." --Jorie Graham

ENGL 622: NEW POETRY, NEW POETICS

Thursday, 7-9:45 p.m., Professor Dorothy Barresi

Experiencing Post-Modernism, in Jean-Francois Lyotard's words, is to experience "the absence of a grand narrative." In this class we will be doing intensive reading in poetry and poetics to discover some of the ways new poetry subverts, dismantles, denies, re-purposes, or re-stages the "grand narratives" of Modernism by writing eccentric, self-erasing, temporary or indeterminate narratives of an unfixed (and broken?) moment. We will begin by reading a few key Modernist essays, then quickly move on to recent poetry and poetics, keeping an eye out for ways 21st century poets "make it new" (in Pound's words), but also for traits Post-Modernist poems share with the very poems they sought to overthrow. Finally, we will attempt to predict where poetry may be heading in the post-post-modernist future.

The requirements for the course are as follows: 1. An oral presentation with a brief written component that I will collect from you on the day of your presentation; 2. A "First Respondent" role once during the semester—meaning that you will be the resident expert, the go-to person, for a particular assigned reading; 3. A final written project (which will grow out of your oral presentation), to be turned in during Finals week. You will also be evaluated on the quality and consistency of your weekly verbal participation in class discussion, and on your record of attendance. Students who are taking the class for creative writing credit will be given poetry-writing challenges and/or opportunities to respond poetically to issues brought up in class.

ENGL 623: GIRLS' BOOKS?

Monday, 7-9:45 p.m., Professor Lauren Byler

By examining a number of Anglo-American texts written between 1818 and 2010, this course will ask what causes a book to be associated with girls. Is the designation a matter of audience, authorship, genre, or marketing? Should the word "girl" be understood as a noun designating people of a specific gender and age range, or should it be thought of as an adjective pointing to a particular set of interests or tastes? We will pose these questions about children's and adult literature written by male and female authors. Part of our project will involve taking seriously the silliness and saccharine sweetness often associated with the figure of the girl. This class will not be a no-boys-allowed club or a forum in which to squeal over "our" favorite childhood books. Rather, it will (among other things) inquire into the status of feminism in the new millennium, ask why some contemporary female essayists claim that girl power has emasculated a generation of young men, seek to understand why Jane Austen is perennially linked to girls, investigate how the Little House on the Prairie series influenced the rise of neo-conservatism in the 1970s and 1980s, consider how the American fascination with Indians is the other great love affair in the Twilight series, and contemplate why a Booker-prize-winning male author would write a meta-novel about authorship featuring an 13-year-old girl writer.

Tentative Reading List

Northanger Abbey—Jane Austen (1818)
Aurora Leigh—Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1856)
Little Women—Louisa May Alcott (1869)
Emily of New Moon—L.M. Montgomery (1923)
By the Shores of Silver Lake—Laura Ingalls Wilder (1939)
Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry—Mildred D. Taylor (1976)
Warriors Don't Cry—Melba Patillo Beals (1994)
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone—J.K. Rowling (1996)
Atonement—Ian McEwan (2001)
Eclipse—Stephanie Meyer (2007)
Mockingjay—Suzanne Collins (2010)

Suggestions

Because so many children's and young adult novels are constructed as series, it would be productive if students could familiarize themselves with other books in these series in preparation for the course. To some extent, I will assume that students will have read the entire Harry Potter, Twilight, and Hunger Games series. I'm particularly invested in discussing Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire and Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows in relation to the first book of the series, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. Students might also consider reading Little House on the Prairie (Book 3 in the Little House series) and The Road to Memphis (the concluding book in Taylor's Logan family saga).

Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* is a long poem (approximately 300 pages) that tells the story of a girl who aspires to become a poet. This text, often referred to as a "verse novel," will probably be the most difficult primary text reading of the semester. If possible, you may want to read it before the semester begins.

ENGL 6300M: OUR MONSTERS/OURSELVES

Thursday, 4-6:45 p.m., Professor Kent Baxter

The word "monster" is derived from "monstro," meaning to show forth. In this course, we will examine various monsters and decipher what they show us about the cultures they harass, frighten, fascinate, and from which they are almost always alienated. What do we define as (ab)normal? What is it in the monstrous other that both horrifies and fascinates us? What do we have to lose/gain by embracing or destroying those who differ from ourselves?

The course will analyze various types of monstrosity (the doppelganger, the unholy, the undead, scientific abominations, sexual predators, androids, aliens, freaks, and serial killers) in literary, filmic, and cultural texts. Applying various (Marxist, feminist, deconstructionist, psychoanalytic, and cultural

studies) approaches to the monstrous, we will see what it can reveal about nineteenth- and twentieth-century British and American cultural value systems and ourselves.

Readings will include:

Dick, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Harris, Thomas. *Red Dragon*.

Meyer, Stephenie. *Twilight*.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*.

Stevenson, Robert Luis. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*.

Strieber, Whitley. *Communion: A True Story*.

Wells, H. G. *War of the Worlds*.

Films will include:

Them! (1954), *Monster* (2003), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956 and 1978).

ENGL 630TT: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Tuesday, 4-6:45 p.m., Professor Scott Kleinman

“Textual Analysis in the Digital Age” will introduce you to the methods of literary analysis associated with the emerging field of (the) Digital Humanities. Although we will place a special focus on the analysis of literary texts, these methods are widely used in other disciplines and in the business world, and our discussions and reading will therefore range widely. Using Stephen Ramsay’s *Reading Machines: Toward an Algorithmic Criticism*, we will examine closely the theoretical and epistemological questions raised by the use of computational methods to understand literary history and meaning. The use of computers allows us to explore possibilities of generating insight into thousands of texts, more than we can possibly read in a lifetime (let alone a semester). We will examine Franco Moretti’s concept of “distant reading” in *Graphs, Maps, and Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* to examine the potential uses of computers to examine literary texts at scale. The course will involve a large group project making use of an existing corpus of texts published before 1923 (because of copyright laws). Along the way, we will examine various technologies used in the digital representation and manipulation of texts—markup and natural language processing—and test out some cutting-edge techniques currently being developed by digital humanists. You will learn some basic programming skills in this course, but no prior knowledge of programming is required.

ENGL 638: CRITICAL APPROACHES TO LITERATURE

Wednesday, 7-9:45 p.m., Professor Nate Mills

This course will be an introduction to some of the major lines of inquiry and methodological innovations of critical theory and literary and aesthetic criticism. Emphasis will be on sustained engagement with major individual works from the canon of critical theory, perhaps including texts by thinkers like Kant, Marx, Freud, Benjamin, Lacan, Derrida, Althusser, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, Spivak, Butler, Spillers, Badiou, Munoz, etc. The focus of the course will be less on mastery than on exploration, discovery, and critique: students will explore and seek to define the role theory will play in their scholarly work. The purpose or necessity of theory, what it means to "do theory," the question of theory's place within the field of literary studies, and the question of what role theory plays in the academy at large, will be examined throughout the course.

ENGL 638: CRITICAL APPROACHES TO LITERATURE

Friday, 10 a.m. – 12:45 p.m., Professor Ranita Chatterjee

This course will introduce you to various schools of literary and critical theory. Critical theories analyze the complex interconnections among readers, writers, and texts. These critical theories wrestle with such questions as: What assumptions do we bring to our reading? What ideologies (gendered, racial, sexual, class-based, and other) enable our act of reading? What is the relationship between reading and interpretation? Can a text be any set of signs that can be read such as bodies, advertisements, and films in addition to novels and critical essays? How do the desires of the reader affect the reading process?

Through our reading of various "classic" and contemporary works from Anglo-European philosophers, theorists, linguists, literary critics, and other cultural thinkers, we will explore these and other questions about the activity of reading. Unlike your other English literature courses, you will spend the majority of this course reading theory. In order to examine what an application and awareness of a particular school of critical theory can bring to our understanding of a text, we will discuss novels, poetry, films, and one play. In other words, we will strive to understand theory through our use of theory in a variety of contexts.

ENGL 654: RHETORIC OF SCIENCE

Wednesday, 4-6:45 p.m., Professor Steven Wexler

Despite its objective reach and universal aspirations, science is always-already rhetorical, a political, cultural, and economic activity that promotes a spectacle of authority. Biology, chemistry, psychology, and physics are products of history and human relations. Each yields epistemic realities that shape everything from education to health care to subjectivity. A rhetorical understanding of science, then, could reveal the ideology and materiality behind the pursuit of truth, "specialization" to be a value-laden division of labor.

This graduate seminar examines the rhetoric of science through readings and discussions organized around five central, overlapping questions:

What are the implications of Cartesian certainty for the project of Modernity?
What are the limits to Darwinian Theory and a science of race, gender, and intelligence?
What are the ethics of genism (e.g., genetic testing and cloning)?
What does the debate between quantum non-locality and Einstein locality suggest about Western culture?
What are the rhetorics of informational dis/embodiment?

REQUIRED TEXTS (Tentative)

Aczel. Entanglement

Gould. The Mismeasure of Man

Hayles. How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics Toulmin.

Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity Watson. The Double Helix

REQUIREMENTS

Discussion Pair Presentation

Midterm Project

Final Project

Fall 2013 Undergraduate Courses

The following undergraduate courses might be of interest to graduate students. Please note that 400-level courses may not be used for required graduate level (500-600) literature courses. Students may take up to two 400-level courses with the approval of Dr. Baxter via the “400-Level Consent Form.”

ENGLISH 455: LITERACY, RHETORIC, AND CULTURE

Tuesday/Thursday, 11 a.m. – 12:15 p.m., Professor Irene Clark

English 455, “Literacy, Rhetoric, and Culture,” will explore the meaning of literacy in our culture, the role of rhetoric in creating culture, and the relationship between literacy and power. It will examine concepts such as academic literacy, social literacy, visual rhetoric, literacy for second language and non-standard English students, and the “new” literacy of technology. It will also consider the implications of these issues for current educational practices. Through lively discussion and reading, we will address questions such as What is literacy and what does it mean to be literate? Who in our society is literate and who is not? How do people become literate, and why doesn’t everyone? How have our definitions of and understandings about literacy changed and expanded from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century?

ENGL 457EXP: EXPERIMENTAL POETRY

Tuesday, 7-9:45 p.m., Professor Dorothy Barresi

English 457EXP is a reading- and writing-intensive course in “experimental” poetry and poetics. Our time will be divided between discussion of assigned readings and writing workshop. Our reading will span the early twentieth century to today, from Gertrude Stein to Rae Armantrout, with the goal of investigating

evolving avant garde aesthetics with a focus on how and why disruptive style means, and what kinds of political engagement a particular poetry form seeks. Naturally we will also investigate what constitutes “poem-ness” when the typical markers of lyricism or rhetorical order are subverted. Additionally we will be looking at some alternative book forms (such as Ann Carson’s accordion book *Nox*, or Claudia Rankine’s lyric essay *Don’t Let Me Be Lonely*) in order to speculate about the ways experimental literary platforms enforce and/or complicate meaning. Students will write 5-7 of their own poems over the semester utilizing different experimental approaches inspired by our reading. The final project will require each student to create an alternative “book” to showcase his or her poems.

ENGL 492: FROM VIETNAM TO IRAQ

Monday/Wednesday, 12:30-1:45 p.m., Professor Scott Andrews

The Vietnam War is commonly understood as the first “postmodern war.” In his introduction to *The Vietnam War and Postmodernity*, Michael Bibby writes: “Literary and cultural images of the war played a significant role in postmodernity’s attempts to rethink and rearticulate key problems of subjectivity, memory, and history” (xiii). Our class will examine some important works (poetry, fiction, autobiography) about the Vietnam War through a lens of postmodernism, and then we will see whether those observations are transferrable to texts about another American war that might be labeled “postmodern”: *The War in Iraq*. If you wish to start your reading early, please obtain *America’s Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* by George C. Herring. The 1985 or 2001 editions are fine; the earlier edition is readily available for a penny on Amazon.

ENGL 495ADS: THE AMERICAN DETECTIVE STORY

Monday, 4-6:45 p.m., Professor Sandra Stanley

Focusing upon narratives of crime and detection, this class will primarily explore the genre of the American detective story from nineteenth century tales by Edgar Allan Poe to the contemporary murder mystery. While we will examine the detective story form (e.g., classical, hard-boiled, metaphysical, police procedural), we will also examine why our culture seems to crave and consume stories of crime and detection. Drawing from theoretical criticism concerning race, class, sexuality, and gender, we will examine the American detective story not only as a genre, but also as a means of critiquing the psychological and social anxieties rendered in this popular mass media form.

ENGLISH 495CSA: CULTURAL STUDIES APPROACHES

Tuesday/Thursday, 2-3:15 p.m., Professor James Solomon

This course will be an advanced cultural studies course, focusing on popular culture and studying in depth a variety of cultural studies approaches to popular culture, including the Frankfurt School, Marxism, Feminism, Semiotics, and Postmodern developments. Students will write a major researched term project applying one or more of these critical perspectives.