In 2000 David Eng published an article on Deann Borshay Liem's First Person Plural (2000) her documentary on her transracial, transnational adoption. Eng argued that it might be useful to think through diasporas "not in conventional terms of ethnic dispersion, filiation, and biological traceability, but rather in terms of queerness, affiliation, and social contingency." In this course we will do both: we will trace out new forms of contingent kinships and we will think through racial diasporas and the ways that some racialized groups have been positioned as always already queer in the spaces—through diasporic dispersal—that they have come to occupy.

We may read and view work by Lorraine Hansberry, David Eng, Monique Truong, Piri Thomas, Cherrie Moraga, James Baldwin, Isaac Julien, Michele Cliff, W. E. B. DuBois, Dionne Brand, Jose Munoz, Cathy Cohen, Lisa Lowe, Jacqueline Goldsby, Robert Reid-Pharr, Gertrude Stein, Toni Morrison, Shane Vogel, Nella Larsen, Fae Myenne Ng, Omise'ek Natasha Tinsley, Claude McKay, & James Weldon Johnson.

Postcolonial theory has become an important and controversial new field in literary, cultural, and historical studies. The exact definition of the term, however, remains diffuse and is the subject of intense and often contentious debates. The purpose of this seminar is to develop historical and intellectual genealogy of the term and to acquire a sense of the central debates and ideas forming postcolonial theory. We will begin by examining the "origins" of the theories of colonialism and imperialism and move to discussions of the current disputes that have emerged in the field. Our understanding of the central issues of postcolonial theory will then be tested via readings of literary texts. We shall read the works of Aijaz Ahmad, Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak, among others. Literary texts may include novels by Jean Rhys, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Tayeb Salih, Amitava Ghosh, Salman Rushdie.

This seminar, restricted to graduate students, will be concerned with Chaucer before the Canterbury Tales, the courtly poet for whom French, Italian, and Latin literature are deeply influential. Our focus will be on Chaucer's greatest work, Troilus and Criseyde, its sources in Boccaccio and in the Latin epics of Vergil and Statius, and a close reading of its text. We will be concerned with a number of issues the poem raises, about narrative technique, historiography, gender, and the nature and meaning of love.

In his 1957 essay "Society, Morality, and the Novel," Ralph Ellison asserts: "if the novel had not existed at the time the United States started becoming conscious of itself as a nation […] it would have been necessary for Americans to invent it." While Ellison's provocative claim clearly evokes the longstanding belief in the moral tradition of the novel, it also posits a causative link between the social function of democracy and the genre's essential elements. Taking our cue from Ellison, this survey of the novel's first fifty years will consider the ways in which early American writers strove to imagine democratic consensus while confronting the realities of slavery and widespread social inequality. With an aim to understand the unique role of Christian humanism in both the origins of the nation and the novel, we will pay particular attention to how the various connotations of sympathy and acts of mutual recognition structure
republicanism and the fictional medium. Authors may include William Hill Brown, Charles Brockden Brown, James Fenimore Cooper, Catherine Maria Sedgwick, Lydia Maria Child, Robert Montgomery Bird, Herman Melville, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe, William Wells Brown, and Frank J. Webb. Theorists will include Elizabeth Barnes, Russ Castronovo, Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, Paul Gilroy, Dana D. Nelson, Robert Fanuzzi, Eric Slauter, and Michael Warner.