Course Information: Spring 2012

English 100-199, Literature

ENG 0107-01
Chaucer
Fyler, John

This course explores the works of one of the three or four greatest poets in English. We'll read Chaucer in Middle English, but he is in almost every respect easier to understand than Shakespeare, who lived two centuries later. We will spend roughly half of the semester on the Canterbury Tales, the other half on Chaucer's most extraordinary poem, Troilus and Criseyde. Chaucer is primarily a narrative rather than a lyric poet: though the analogy is an imperfect one, the Canterbury Tales are like a collection of short stories, and Troilus like a novel in verse. We will talk about Chaucer's literary sources and contexts, the interpretation of his poetry, and his treatment of a number of issues, especially gender issues, that are of perennial interest. This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement.

ENG 0108-01
Vergil and Dante
Fyler, J

This course will focus on two major texts in the European literary tradition, Vergil's Aeneid and Dante's Commedia. The two are linked because Virgil is Dante's guide in his journey into Hell and up the mountain of Purgatory: he is the guide because Aeneid 6 describes an earlier trip to the underworld, but even more, because Dante has the whole Aeneid very much in mind throughout his own great poem. We will also look at a number of allusions to these works in English and American literature.

ENG 0110-01
The Renaissance in England
Haber, J

"All the world's a stage," says Jaques in As You Like It, "and all the men and women merely players." The theatrical attitude toward life evident in these lines was characteristic of the Renaissance. Not only was this the greatest age of the English theater, it was an age that was intensely theatrical: in both the "literary" and the "non-literary" texts of the period, the possibility repeatedly surfaces that everyone is continually playing a part - that each of our identities consists merely of a set of inconsistent roles. This possibility could be extremely liberating, permitting one to escape the confines of fixed social and gendered positions, and enabling the creation of "other worlds" - alternative societies or utopias. It could also, of course, be deeply frightening: taken to an extreme, it threatens the foundations of traditional beliefs about religion and society. We will examine how these conflicting attitudes manifested themselves in the non-dramatic poetry and prose of the period: we will begin with early humanist writings, look closely at the development of the lyric, and read prose and poetic romances, national epics and erotic epyllia (small epics). We will consider carefully the self-consciousness about representation that is evident in most of these texts, and we will explore their authors' ever-present delight in - and distrust of - the powers of language and art. Readings will probably include works by Thomas More, Erasmus, Castiglione, Thomas Wyatt, Louise Labé, Queen Elizabeth, Philip and Mary Sidney, Mary Wroth, Fulke Greville, Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, and William Shakespeare.

ENG 0131-01
British Modernism
Lurz, J

This course is an advanced undergraduate class devoted to a survey of British literature published between the years 1895, the year of Gerard Manley Hopkins' "God's Grandeur" whose "sprung rhythm" announces an experiment with form that will characterize many of the writers in this course, and 1951, the year of Samuel Beckett's Molloy, whose drastically pared down style becomes as much a reaction to the experimental excesses of the modernist period as it is itself an extreme investigation of form. By bookending the course with these two works, we will be expanding the temporal boundaries of what is normally considered as "modernism," a move which raises one of the main questions around which we will organize our inquiry: to what extent does modernist literature exceed the analytical categories by which we usually parse literary history? How - and, more importantly, why -- do these categories fail when applied to this literature? To that end, we will be reading widely in the literature of the early twentieth century and looking at
the ways these texts cut across the boundaries of period, nation and genre. We will even wonder how these works might question the category of the literary itself as they respond to the revolutions in media technology that occurred in the late nineteenth century. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

Texts:

ENG 0149-01
American Literature 1620-1815
Rosenmeier, J

"For we must consider that we shall be as a City upon a hill"--Governor John Winthrop, 1630.

"Today the eyes of all people are truly upon us-and our governments, on every level, national, state, and local, must be as a city upon a hill—constructed and inhabited by men aware of their grave, trust and their great responsibility" -- President-elect John F. Kennedy, 1960.

"Let us resolve that we did act worthy of ourselves, that we did protect and pass on lovingly that shining city on a hill"--President-elect Ronald Reagan, 1980.

"We will save America; we will save the world"--President-elect Barack Obama, 2008.


We will place these texts in the context of early American culture, including the displacement of native peoples, the puritans as immigrants, the beginnings of slavery, the longing for and yet never-to-be-realized American dream of a glorious future, gender relations, the growth of democracy, and the ever-present tension between individualism and community. A journal will be required. No exams.

Graduate students will be invited to participate in a separate section which will include additional readings.

ENG 0153-01
American Realism
Ammons, E

This seminar examines fiction, prose, and film from 1880-1920, a period of unusual social upheaval and conflict that offers striking insights into a number of important issues today, including anti-immigrant policies and attitudes, modern feminism, contemporary racism and anti-Semitism, and changing sexual mores. Our study will be multicultural in focus—we will read works by African American, Native American, European American, Asian American, and Mexican American writers—and we will place major emphasis on analysis of social issues in the literature. Also we will study how narrative form was experimented with—questioned, altered, invented—as writers and early filmmakers helped generate what we now recognize as the modern period. We will ask: How do fiction and film operate as social criticism? Who gets to create art in America—and who does not? Class will be run on a discussion basis and authors will include Zitkala Ša, Henry James, W. E. B. Du Bois, Anzina Yezierska, Pauline Hopkins, Maria Cristina Mena, Charles Chesnutt, Edith Wharton, Sui Sin Far, and Upton Sinclair. Also, we will view and discuss D. W. Griffith's film The Birth of a Nation (1915); a contemporary film about American Indian issues during the period; and a documentary about Asian American immigration. Writing assignments will encourage students to do research and to experiment in one of the two papers with writing prose fiction.

ENG 0160-01
Environmental Justice & US Literature
Ammons, E
The U.S. consumes over 40% of the world's gasoline and more paper, steel, aluminum, energy, water, and meat per capita than any other society. Four additional planets would be needed if each of the Earth's inhabitants consumed at the level of the average American. This course examines the contribution of contemporary U.S. literature to the environmental justice movement, examining writers' treatment of environmental racism, global warming, ecofeminism, homophobia and the social construction of nature, toxic colonialism, and urban ecological concerns. What analyses and insights can we gain? What is the role of art in the struggle for social change? Material in the course is multicultural, foregrounding texts from diverse racial locations – Asian American, African American, Native American, white European American, and Latino/a; and reading includes Helena Maria Viramontes, Under the Feet of Jesus; Annie Proulx, "Brokeback Mountain"; Gloria Naylor, Mama Day; Karen Tei Yamashita, Tropic of Orange; Awiakta, Selu; Simon Ortiz, Men on the Moon; and poems by Audre Lorde, Janice Mirikitani, Richard Espada, and Adrienne Rich. Also we will view films and discuss key concepts in environmental justice theory. The goal of this course is empowerment for social change. How can each of us participate as a change agent in the struggle for environmental justice, locally and globally? How can our understanding of literature contribute? Group work, a field trip, one research paper, and active class discussion will be important parts of the course. Nonmajors as well as majors are very welcome. This class counts toward the Women's Studies major, the Environmental Studies major, the Peace and Justice major, and the post-1860 requirement for the English major.

ENG 0161-01
Memory for Forgetting
Sharpe, C

What does it mean to remember an event? Why are some events remembered and others forgotten? Through reading memoirs, graphic novels, novels/short stories, and viewing films and documentaries, visual arts, and critical/theoretical works about North American slavery and the Holocaust we will think about the processes of remembering. Class will be run on a discussion basis. We will read: Maus I & II, Auschwitz and After, The Kiss, My Bondage and My Freedom, "Man of All Work," Beloved, Property, etc. We will view: The Nasty Girl, Paragraph 175, Night & Fog, Africans in America (excerpts), Daughters of the Dust, and other film & visual arts.

ENG 0163-01
Speak Memory: Contemporary Memoir
Freedman-Bellow, J

We will look at a number of contemporary memoirs, paying particular attention to how each author sifts, sculpts and sets down his or her memories. Why tell the tale at all, and why tell it in just this way? What is exposed and what is masked, what retrieved and what invented? We grudgingly allow our novelists to forage in reality for their material, but would we grant our memoirists reciprocal rights in the realm of the imagination? We'll ask these and many more questions of Kovaly, Nabokov, Roth, Amis, Aly, Orwell and others. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

ENG 0172-01
War and American Values
Takayoshi, I

War is unique, in that it provokes Americans to ask fundamental questions about their nation's core values: what are Americans defending?; what are they defending them against?; in what respects are they vulnerable? This seminar will explore how major American authors in the twentieth and early twenty-first century worked out their answers to these questions. Our emphasis will be on some representative literary texts; we will explore to what extent war as the subject-matter compelled these authors to bend and renovate familiar rules governing the literary genres within which they worked. But, we will also freely range over other genres such as political speeches, moral philosophy, IR theory, cultural criticism, and strategic documents, in an effort to situate war literature in the total context of the nation's cultural response to the external enemy, national emergency, and extreme violence. Readings will include the novels by Trumbo and Heller, a variety of war poetry, the memoirs by Whitaker Chambers, speeches by Wilson, FDR, Eisenhower, LBJ, G. W. Bush, essays by Kennan, Niebuhr, Walzer, Mumford, Parsons, journalism, and excerpts from standard historiography. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

ENG 0177-01
Feminism, Literature, Theory
Hofkosh, S
Starting with Mary Wollstonecraft's early struggle to articulate feminism in both *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and her unfinished novel *Maria; Or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), we will read a range of literary texts in conjunction with theoretical writing to explore what feminism(s) is (are): how it has understood and represented the condition of women over time and in different cultural contexts; how it raises and tries to answer questions about biological difference and social construction, about identity and community, and about the very category "woman." We will look at the Anglo-American tradition of liberal feminism as it developed from Wollstonecraft and at various challenges to and revisions of its basic assumptions by women of color, "French Feminists," and non-Western writers and activists. Readings will likely include short novels by Assia Djebar, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Toni Morrison, and Jeanette Winterson and feminist criticism and theory by Judith Butler, Helene Cixous, bell hooks, Luce Irigaray, Audre Lorde, Trinh Minh-ha, Chandra Mohanty, Monique Wittig, and other recent thinkers about women, gender, and feminism. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

ENG 0186-01
*How Films Thinks*
*Edelman, L*

This upper-level seminar is intended for a small group of serious students interested in studying the representational practices by which a film teaches us how to read it. Although we will attend to such cinematic features as montage, the long take, point of view, shot/reverse shot, and other aspects of cinematic rhetoric, we will be more focused on how specific directors deploy these elements to produce what we'll be discussing as filmic thought. We will study, that is, how visual style produces, complements, reframes, and undoes a movie’s surface narrative by generating the need to read that narrative in the context of the camera. What does the movement of the camera do to the image that it depicts? How does it underscore, ironize, or "think" about the "content" of the image itself? To answer these questions we will focus on works by American directors acclaimed for their mastery of cinematic style and we will see how these specific styles mark distinctive ways of thinking in film. The three main directors on whose works we will focus are Orson Welles, Martin Scorsese, and David Lynch, but we are likely to look at works by Francis Ford Coppola, Quentin Tarantino, Stanley Kubrick, and Terence Malick as well. Films to be examined will include *Citizen Kane*, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, *Taxi Driver*, *Raging Bull*, *Goodfellas*, *The Age of Innocence*, *Blue Velvet*, *Lost Highway*, and *Mulholland Drive*. Additional films may include *Kill Bill*, *The Godfather*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and *Days of Heaven*. As a seminar class, this course is intended exclusively for students who will participate actively in conversation and intellectual exchange.

ENG 0192-01
*Seminar in English: Dickens & Company*
*Genster, J*

Charles Dickens did not aim for economy of statement. He produced long, character-crowded, complexly plotted, improbably coincidental fictions, the kinds of works that Henry James had once described as "large baggy monsters." They are also great antic fun, and we’ll spend the semester unpacking Dickensian bags and considering Dickensian monstrosities as we try to come to terms with Dickens and his populous and compellingly imagined world. We’ll consider Dickens as satirist and sentimentalist, and discuss him in relation to the culture he registered, sometimes scorned, and certainly shaped. We will also look at some of his contemporaries, including Wilkie Collins and Elizabeth Gaskell. We will definitely read *David Copperfield*, *Bleak House*, *Great Expectations*, *Little Dorrit* and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (which Dickens was working on when he died), and we will probably read excerpts from other works.

ENG 0192-02
*Seminar in English: Imagining Haiti*
*Leger, N*

Plagued by poverty and unrest, Haiti has long been synonymous with heart wrenching tragedy. And yet while that is so, its past revolutionary triumph continues to inspire artists and thinkers the world over just as it did following its national independence in 1804. The American William Faulkner, Frenchman Victor Hugo, Englishman William Wordsworth, German Georg W.F. Hegel, Martinican Maryse Condé and the St. Lucian Nobel Peace Prize winner Derek Walcott (among many others) were all artistically moved by the nation's unprecedented 1791-1804 slave led Revolution. In this course, we will explore the rich literature sparked by Haiti's triumphs and tragedies. Thematically progressing through key issues shaping popular perception of the nation, we will look closely at what writers of the African-American and Caribbean literary tradition have to say about Vodou, the Revolution, poverty and the nation as a signifier of disaster and contagion. In doing this, we will gain greater insight into a nation that is far more than simply, "the poorest country in the Western hemisphere."
This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.