Course Information: Spring 2012

English 17-99, Literature

ENG 0017-01
The Poem: Fundamentals of Poetry
Peterson, K

This course is a wide-ranging introduction to the fundamentals of poetry with an emphasis on lyric poetry, the ground of the solitary speaker. The intention is to give interested students an understanding of poetry and poetics that reaches across the centuries. Analysis and enjoyment are not mutually exclusive: we will learn a vocabulary of form, and strategies for comprehension. We will begin with an epic poem, and base our investigations in the original ground of poetry, the oral tradition. We will continue towards the present, considering major poetic forms including the ballad, the sonnet, the elegy, the ode, "game" forms (sestina and villanelle), blank verse, and free verse. Throughout we will consider ancient, modern, and postmodern poems side by side. Our discussions will be focused on how to read a poem closely, and well. Writing assignments will include poems in form and short papers. There are no prerequisites for this course.

ENG 0020-01
Black World Literature
Sharpe, C

This course is an introduction to African and African Diasporic literatures (from principally, though not exclusively, Anglophone African countries, the English-speaking Caribbean, and Britain). We will explore a variety of forms—fiction, memoir, film—and trace their transformation and transmission. The selection of films and texts is not meant to be exhaustive but aims to allow us to begin examining the possible political and cultural meanings of the "black" world. Texts may include: Things Fall Apart, Nervous Conditions, In the Castle of My Skin, The Lonely Londoners, Our Sister Killjoy, No Telephone to Heaven, Sugar Cane Alley, Life and Debt, and others.

ENG 0022-01
General View of English Literature II
Hofkosh, S

This survey provides an introduction to the poetry, fiction, and dramatic literature of Britain from the period of social and political revolutions of the late 18th Century to the World Wars in the first half of the 20th Century. We will take a "general view" of these one hundred and fifty years of British literature by tracing evolving themes and paying close attention to the formal features of individual works in the context of broad historical trends and recurrent cultural issues. Sampling some of the great literary highlights of the British tradition, including those which challenge the very notion of tradition (as William Blake or Oscar Wilde or T.S. Eliot so differently do), in this course we will also look at visual art, practice reading poems out loud to learn about prosody and meter, and consider various ways that this literature has been absorbed and transformed in contemporary culture, for example in parody or modern music.

ENG 0032-01
The Epic Strain
Genster, J

The course's title means to register two recurrent preoccupations of epic writers: first, the idea that the epic is a kind of writing with a particular history and second, that the genre asks a lot of those who aim to practice it. We will look at the epic's origins, the claims it makes on writers and readers, and the ways the form has been inhabited, and inhibited, in different historical periods. Our reading will take us through classical, Biblical, and English epic and mock epic, and into the novel and biography. Finally, we will look at some contemporary works which examine the intersections between modernity and epic aspiration. The authors whose works we may read include Homer, Virgil, Milton, Pope, Fielding, Rushdie, Walcott, and Robinson.

ENG 0034-01
The Nature of Gothic
Emerson, S
A study of Gothic literature haunted by paradigms from ancient Greek mythology and drama, the Bible, European medieval architecture and its nineteenth-century revivals. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century British fiction and poetry will be regarded in the light (and shadow) of the Book of Genesis; Milton's Paradise Lost; the aesthetic, social, and psychological criticism of Burke, Ruskin, and Freud. Category: This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

ENG 0037-01
20th Century African American Literature
Clytus, R

This survey is designed to familiarize students with those major authors, aesthetic debates, and key social and historical concerns that have defined African American literature since the mid-twentieth century. Topics will consider Cold War race relations, the Black Arts Movement, critical race theory and the idea of post-blackness. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

ENG 0046-01
Girls' Books
Genster, J

Judith Thurman's aunt came to a hospital nursery in 1947, to get a look at her newly arrived niece. Peering through the window, she saw her named and described on the placard in her crib: "It's a girl." Next to her lay an equally recent arrival, whose placard read "I'm a boy." What girls read about themselves shapes their ideas about who they are and how they may and should make their ways through the world. We will read a variety of texts describing girls' lives, ranging from 18th-conduct books to contemporary young adult novels. We'll consider the works as they describe, prescribe and proscribe. Texts may include Northanger Abbey, Jane Eyre, Little Women, The Secret Garden, The Girlhoods of Shakespeare's Heroines, Nancy Drew, A Wrinkle in Time, Roller Skates, The Witch of Blackbird Pond, and folk and fairy tales. The contemporary works will be chosen by a class vote on nominations provided by class members.

ENG 0050-01
Shakespeare I
Dunn, K

A study of eight Shakespeare plays: Titus Andronicus, Richard II, The Merchant of Venice, Much Ado About Nothing, Measure for Measure, Hamlet, Macbeth and The Tempest. We will engage the plays in a variety of critical, historical and literary historical contexts.

ENG 0064-01
American Fiction 1950-present
Johnson, R

American Fiction from 1950 to the Present: This study of diverse novels written after 1950 will focus on the emergence of the postmodern in U.S. arts and culture, with emphasis on formal developments, aesthetic consequences, and social implications. We will read a wide range of texts from a variety of American perspectives to explore the decline of canonical exclusivity and the rise of multicultural pluralism in American fiction. Our study will note the hybridization of forms and the appropriation of non-literary discourses to fashion fictive texts. It will consider as well the centering of the traditional subject and the configuration of numerous and diverse subjectivities newly empowered in literary discourse and through social change in this period—the period which has directly engendered our present moment. Reading the texts juxtaposed with and across each other, and in their moment of composition and publication, we will piece together an understanding of what it means to be "American" in the postmodern era. The course will ask you to think about whether, as it is already being said, we are in the post-postmodern moment, and, if so, what that could mean in terms of trends and preferences in forms and styles of contemporary American literature; and in values of and ways of life in the American twenty-first century.

Our readings will include authors such as Jack Kerouac, John Okada, Grace Metalious, Joan Didion, Hunter S. Thompson, Chuang Hua, Norman Mailer, Cynthia Ozick, Louise Erdrich, Andrew Holleran, Ishmael Reed, Edwidge Danticat, Jonathan Franzen, Tom Wolfe, Tim O'Brien. Please have read I Am Charlotte Simmons by Tom Wolfe before the start of the semester. It will be our last book in the course, and is quite long and I want to be sure everyone has adequate time to prepare it for class.
**ENG 0074-01**  
**Literature of the Jazz Age**  
**Takayoshi, I**

This course surveys the works of U.S. literati responding to the technological, economic, and social conditions of modernity. By radically renovating traditional literary forms, many key writers of the time searched for a matching representation for the novelties and complexities of modernity—most notably, total war, urbanization, the arrival of new immigrants, the crisis of public trust in the objectivity of news media, cinema, the jazz age, Fordism, the discovery of the anthropological notion of "culture," and the popularization of Freudianism. Our main object is to understand the origins, purposes, and effects of the wild spirit of experimentalism that suffused their work. For representative poetry, we will consider the works of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Hart Crane, Dorothy Parker, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Langston Hughes and others; for drama, the plays of Elmer Rice and Eugene O'Neill; for narratives, the novels and short stories of Faulkner, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Toomer and Cather. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

**ENG 0084-01**  
**Black Comedy**  
**Litvak, J**

In narratives called "black comedies," the comic effect of pleasure is inseparable from the supposedly uncomic experience of pain. Looking at various examples of black comedy, we will attempt to think about the relations between comedy and cruelty, between laughter and shame, between joy and fear, between escapism and satire, and between entertainment and insult. Although the course will not focus primarily on racial issues, one of our concerns will be the not-so-coincidental ambiguity whereby "black comedy" has also come to mean comedy by African Americans. The list of edgy entertainments we are likely to consider includes films such as Fargo, Dr. Strangelove, To Die For, Welcome to the Dollhouse, Bamboozled, Election, and The King of Comedy; novels such as Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita, Don DeLillo's White Noise, Evelyn Waugh's The Loved One, and Muriel Spark's Memento Mori; plays such as Edward Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? and Joe Orton's Loot, and television comedies such as The Sopranos and Chappelle's Show. Students should be prepared not only to attend frequent screenings outside of class, but also to read critical works about comedy's political and psychological implications. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

**ENG 0092-01**  
**Topics Lit & Culture: Writing in the Beat Generation**  
**Johnson, R**

The Beat Fifties were "cool," "hot," and "mad"—but what did hipsters mean by that and what meanings did it carry in Life magazine and for its Eisenhower era readers? Was "beat" really radical and, if so, for whom? How does it reprise and revise 19th-century American individualism and romanticism? Was "beat" an anticipation of the postmodern present? We consider the impact of the bombing of Japan and the Nazi Holocaust, jazz, the McCarthy HUAC trials, Abstract Expressionism, cross-cultural racial influences, and the nascent civil rights movement in the writings of authors associated with the Beat Generation—not only the ersatz canonical trinity of Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William Burroughs, but also writers who have been usually marginalized in commentary on Beat writing, such as Joyce (Glassman) Johnson, Hettie Jones, Diane di Prima, Anne Waldman, Janine Pommy Vega, LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), Ted Joans, Bob Kaufman and others.

The course examines how cultural meanings given to the category "beat" function as strategies for the marginalization or dismissal of the writers and texts of this movement. Through study of the literature, painting, and music of the Beat generation, we will consider rhetorical figures and discourses used to effect social and political dissent in the beat subculture and in mainstream U.S. communities, in particular those of addiction and madness, which slide and vary according to the race, gender, class, and sexual orientation of the trope's user, as LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka has framed it. We will focus on ways in which these elements played out to bring into being the politics and countercultural liberations of the 1960s.

We will read the writers through their own statements about writing, and juxtaposed with each other, with a view to assessing their formation of an identifiable school of writing. The course will attend to anticipations of the postmodern evident in the texts and in their contemporary reception. Topics will include: gender and race politics of the era and of the writing; canon formations; literary and sexual censorship; autobiography as impediment to and constitutive of fictive discourses and their interpretation, and the transformation of memoirs, journals, and letters in the production of
literary texts. There is a substantial body of film and audio recordings, and even music, produced by these writers, and we will sample that too.