Course Information: Spring 2012

English 200+, Graduate Seminars

ENG 0292-01
Graduate Seminar: The Literature of Advice
Dunn, K

"The worst vice ... is advice." "--The Devil's Advocate" (1997)

This course examines texts from antiquity and early modern England that describe, theorize or represent advice giving. So foreign to our own conception of the literary, providing counsel, the goal of a whole branch of rhetoric, the deliberative, was a central part of ancient, medieval and early modern conceptions of what literature could and should achieve. We will examine this literature, which includes both genres devoted to imparting advice (the mirror of princes, the apothegm) and those that stage, represent and reflect upon it (the utopia, tragedy), in a variety of contexts, from the uncomfortable relations of political counsel and sovereignty, to the problem of parrhesia or frank speech. The texts we will read include all or part of works by Plato, Plutarch, Machiavelli, Castiglione, Thomas More, William Baldwin, Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, Shakespeare, and Bacon. The theorists and critics we will consider include Timothy Reiss, Carl Schmitt, Giorgio Agamben, Michel Foucault, Eric Santner, Julia Lupton and Nancy Luxon.

ENG 0292-02
Graduate Seminar: The Language of Theory
Edelman, L

We will focus this semester on the trajectory that leads from Saussure's transformation of linguistic studies to the rise of post-structuralism and its subsequent migration into various modes of critical thought, including psychoanalysis, cultural studies, ethical criticism, and queer theory. If there is an overarching narrative here, a thread that connects the various critical modes we'll be exploring, it's an insistence on encountering the radically unknown at the core of what we think we know—and of what we think we are. Beginning with an exploration of that otherness as central to the engagement with literariness, the theories we study wind up conceptualizing the political, ethical, and cultural consequences of the encounter with our own non-identity. By the end of the semester it should not seem odd that grammatical and rhetorical analyses of language eventuated in a critical confrontation with the question of radical evil. Theorists whose writings we are likely to study include Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Levi-Stauss, Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, Barbara Johnson, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Jane Gallop, Slavoj Zizek, Alenka Zupancic, Leo Bersani, Judith Butler, Teresa de Lauretis, Alain Badiou, and Jacques Ranciere.

ENG 0292-03
Graduate Seminar: Art and Literature of the Black Atlantic World
Clytus, R

Concepts such as "diaspora" and "cosmopolitanism" have become integral to how scholars understand the question of modernity and national belonging in the art and literature of the Anglophone world. Following British theorist Paul Gilroy's charge that the "rootedness" and "dislocation" of black subjects in the West comprise a "specific counterculture of modernity," we will consider the ways in which cultural connections across the Atlantic Ocean have been fostered since the earliest slave narratives, and how writers and visual artists choose to evoke and represent ideas about citizenship, itinerancy, and transnationalism. Readings will include selections from Appiah, Glissant, Rushdie, Kumar, Shonibare, Copley, Derrida, Said, James, Du Bois, Walcott, Equiano, Rediker, and Gosh.