Course Information: Spring 2013

English 17-99, Literature

ENG 0020-01
Black World Literature
Roy, M

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 era 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 innovations of individual works in the context of broad historical trends and recurrent cultural issues. Sampling a selection of the greatest literary works of the British tradition, including those which challenge or revise the very notion of tradition, in this course we will also consider the interface of visual art with literature, practice reading out loud to learn about meter and prosody, and look at some of the ways the literature of this period has been absorbed into and transformed by contemporary culture, for example in parody, modern music, or comic books.

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
Genster, J

A study of eight Shakespeare plays: Titus Andronicus, Richard II, As You Like It, 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 0054-01
Conrad, Forster, Woolf
Lurz, J

In this class we will read three authors - Conrad, Woolf, and Forster - whose work has come to represent some of the exemplary moments of literary modernism. Because each author has a distinct and internally complex style, we will try to build our questions from the texts themselves, working towards a consideration of how style works, what it is, and how we understand its distinguishing marks. At the same time, we will follow crucial threads that run throughout
the works: contested constructions of masculinity and femininity; the framing of power, authority and the possibilities for social change; the place of art, the artist and the artist-hero within modernity; representations of belonging and alienation, home and exile, metropolitan and colonial space. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

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. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

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 0092-01
Topics Lit & Culture: Philosophy and Literature in the Eighteenth Century
Haslanger, A

Tristram Shandy, the protagonist of Laurence Sterne’s novel of the same title, says that a man's body and his mind are like a jacket and its lining: "rumple the one--you rumple the other." This joke riffs on a long-running philosophical debate about the relation between mind and body; it is just one example of how eighteenth-century literature engages philosophy. This course looks at the relationship between literature and philosophy across the eighteenth century by pairing literary works with selections from the philosophical texts they respond to. Some of the questions we'll be examining include: How much control does the mind have over the body? Can perception be trusted? What obligations do we have to other beings? Are reason and feeling opposed? What makes a person the same person over time? Are people responsible for crimes they commit while asleep? Primary readings may include poetry by Dryden, Rochester, Pope, and Swift, and prose by Defoe, Johnson, Sterne, Mackenzie, Smollett, and Hays. Philosophical selections may be drawn from Hobbes, Lucretius, Locke, La Mettrie, Hume, Smith, and others. Though we will be working across disciplines, our primary focus will be on the literary works, and this course assumes no prior knowledge of philosophy. This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement.
ENG 0092-02
Topics Lit & Culture: The Booker Prize: The Novel in English from 1968-Present
Lurz, J

This course is an exploration of British fiction in the second half of the twentieth century through the lens of the Man Booker Prize, an annual award given to a writer from the British Commonwealth, the Republic of Ireland, or Zimbabwe for the best full-length novel published that year. We will study a selection of winners since the award was established in 1968, beginning with Iris Murdoch's The Sea, The Sea, which won in 1978, and concluding with the recipient of the 2012 prize (which will be announced on October 16). We will be using the cultural phenomenon of a prize that 2011 Booker winner Julian Barnes has described as "posh bingo" to examine the role played by literary innovation, authorial reputation, and literary canon building in late twentieth-century English language literature. Along the way, we will also be sensitive to the colonial history embedded in the international framework set out by the prize's rules in order to interrogate the place of the novel in a contemporary cultural sphere that seems to provide less and less room for "high literature." Lastly, we will take advantage of a similar course simultaneously being offered in the Comparative Literature Department at Harvard to broaden our discussion and add additional perspectives through guest lectures and a possible Tufts-Harvard student symposium.


ENG 0092-03
Topics Lit & Culture: Feminism in Twentieth-Century US Literature and Culture
Johnson, R

This course examines how the postwar U.S. women's movement for equality, born of the mid-twentieth century antiracism and civil rights movements, made civic, legal and ethical changes that are expressed in representations of women in literature and film, in mass and high cultures, and in women's experiences across race, class, ethnic, and sexual lines. We will study novels, poetry, and essays, as well as films, to explore the impact of second wave feminism on discourses of gender and women's sexuality. The course will cover critiques made by feminist writers with a view to understanding a central insight of feminism, that forms of knowing are not universal but culturally constructed, contextual, mutable; gendered. Second wave feminism coincided with and helped bring into being postmodernism in U.S. arts and culture. Our study questions how feminism is postmodern and speculates on how postmodernism is in part a feminist production; how the emergence of the postmodern fits with recognitions about gender and liberations of sex and sexualities in the postwar U.S. women's movement. Readings and screenings will include:

Marilyn French, The Women's Room; Alix Kates Shulman, Memoirs of an Ex-Prom Queen; Alison Bechdel, Dykes to Watch Out For; Chuang Hua, Crossings; Joan Didion, Play It As It Lays; Gayl Jones, Corregidora; Bonnie Bremser, Troia: Mexican Memoirs; Judith Rossner, Looking for Mr. Goodbar; Toni Morrison, Sula. Thelma and Louise dir. Ridley Scott; Revolutionary Road, dir. Sam Mendes; The Stepford Wives, dir. Bryan Forbes. Poetry by Adrienne Rich, Audre Lorde, Diane di Prima, Sonya Sanchez and Nikki Giovanni; essays by Kate Millett, Valerie Solanas, bell hooks, Danzy Senna, Alice Walker, Cherry Moraga, Gloria Anzaldua, and Shulamith Firestone. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.