Course Information: Fall 2014

English 100-199, Literature

ENG 0109-01
Ovid and the Ovidian Tradition
Fyler, J.

Ovid is the most powerfully influential Roman poet in European literature from the twelfth century on. His erotic poems—the Amores, Ars Amatoria, and Remedia Amoris—fully explore the pathos and comedy of love, and make Ovid the Freud of the Middle Ages: he provides the most elaborate and memorable terminology for describing the uncertain stability of the lover’s mind. The Metamorphoses, an epic or anti-epic, serves as a bible of pagan mythology for later poets. We will look in detail at these works and at some of the most memorable examples of their later influence. We'll read two French works in translation, the Roman de la Rose and Les Liaisons Dangereuses, as well as a number of shorter works in English. Authors to be studied may include Chaucer, Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Spenser. This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement.

ENG 0113-01
Renaissance Drama: Over-the-Top Performance and Radical Play
Haber, J.

The Renaissance is unquestionably the greatest age of the drama in England; Shakespeare's plays are only the best-known examples of the outpouring of theatrical activity that occurred during the period. In this course, we will read the always fascinating (and sometimes gruesome) plays of Shakespeare's contemporaries and successors, many of whom adopted more radical stances toward the major issues of their time. As we examine their presentations of various forms of power, their constructions of gender and sexuality, and their attitudes towards language and the theater, we will discover why many of these plays have been termed "oppositional drama" and "radical tragedy." We will begin by examining Christopher Marlowe's frontal assaults on contemporary orthodoxies, and we will consider the construction of sodomy in his plays. We will go on to explore the development of the drama of blood and revenge, which was introduced in The Spanish Tragedy, and which exploded in what has been called the "parody and black camp" of The Revenger's Tragedy. We will then explore the tensions which tear apart Ben Jonson's more conservative comedies. Finally, we will look at a selection of 17th-century plays about women: The White Devil, The Duchess of Malfi, The Roaring Girl, The Changeling, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, and The Convent of Pleasure. We will discuss their varying attitudes toward female autonomy and desire, and consider why women became such central figures in the drama at this time. Throughout the course, we will think about these texts' investment in their own (sometimes quite extreme) theatricality, and we will attempt to do justice to their pervasive sense of play. This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement.
ENG 0122-01  
Romantic Literature and Culture: 1810-1837  
Robbins, J.

This course will examine works by some of the best-known male and female writers of the latter half of the English Romantic period (roughly 1810-1837). We will explore these figures’ treatments of contemporary political and social issues, their place within the English literary tradition, how their works still resonate within contemporary discussions of art and society, and how they came to produce some of the most enduring poems, novels, and plays we have. While the class will engage broadly with the major figures of the Romantic movement, focusing on detailed textual readings of their works, it will take into special consideration how writers of the period treated newly emerging conceptions of science and technology. Doing so will not only help us to understand how science shaped these figures' writings, but also how these writers altered what we now know as science in turn. Readings to include Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, essays by Charles Lamb and Joanna Baillie, and poetry by William and Dorothy Wordsworth, John Keats, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, Anna Barbauld, Percy Shelley, and Charlotte Smith. This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement.

ENG 0158-01  
Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Faulkner  
Takayoshi, I.

A seminar on the works and lives of three influential story-tellers: William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. The works to be discussed include *Absalom, Absalom!, Light in August, Go Down, Moses*, and representative short stories by Faulkner, *This Side of Paradise, The Beautiful and Damned, The Great Gatsby, Tender Is the Night*, and representative short stories by Fitzgerald, and *The Sun Also Rises, A Farewell to Arms*, and major short stories by Hemingway. We will also read standard biographies of these authors. Our basic concern is threefold: aesthetic, biographical, and ethical. Aesthetic: what new techniques did these authors invent for effective story-telling? Biographical: how did these authors' lives and arts interrelate? Ethical: what questions of values did they seek to answer through their stories? Requirements: two presentations, two close-reading papers, a final paper. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

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 0164-01
Representing the Jew
Litvak, J.

Neal Gabler has argued that "the Jews invented Hollywood," and there is nothing inherently anti-Semitic in the observation that Jews continue to figure prominently behind the scenes of mass entertainment in the United States. But even in an age of multiculturalism, Jewishness, it seems, can never fully come out of the closet.

In this course, we will try to understand the persistent anxiety attending Jewish self-representation in U.S. mass culture. Tracing this anxiety back to the 1927 film The Jazz Singer (Hollywood's first full-length "talking picture," and an apparent exception to the rule of the Jewish closet), we will look at a series of exemplary moments in the project of turning Jews into Americans. We will think about this project in relation to such contemporary figures as Jon Stewart, the Coen brothers, and Sarah Silverman. And we will examine a variety of works from the eighty years between The Jazz Singer and Sarah Silverman: fiction about Hollywood (Budd Schulberg’s What Makes Sammy Run?); Broadway plays (Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett’s The Diary of Anne Frank, Tony Kushner’s Angels in America); musicals (Fiddler on the Roof, The Producers); sitcoms (The Dick Van Dyke Show, Seinfeld, Girls); films (Charles Chaplin’s The Great Dictator, Woody Allen’s Annie Hall, Judd Apatow’s Knocked Up). We will consider the relations between Jews and other ethnic or racial minorities, and we will pay some attention to Jewish representations outside the United States (particularly in France and Israel). Readings will include theoretical essays by such authors as Hannah Arendt, Alain Badiou, and Judith Butler; and selections from cultural histories (Michael Rogin’s Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot; Jonathan Freedman’s Klezmer America: Jewishness, Ethnicity, Modernity). This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

ENG 0165-01
Perspectives on American Poetry
Bamber, L.

Many of the exciting innovations we associate with modernist or post-modernist thought and art, including the questioning of identity itself, have been brilliantly explored in the ancient, ongoing, living tradition of Buddhism. The Buddhist concept of the self as something that is continually arising, not fixed, allows us to drop our defenses and live more authentic lives. Dozens of contemporary American poets find inspiration in the Buddhist ideas of impermanence, non-dualism, and "the end of mind," as Wallace Stevens put it; and major poets from the American literary tradition take on a new interest when read in the light of Buddhist thought. In this class we will learn about Buddhist practice from Zen Master Shunryu Suzuki and then see how and where it applies to the poetry of such quintessentially American poets as Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens and many others. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.
Starting with Mary Wollstonecraft's pioneering struggle to articulate a feminist argument in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and her unfinished novel *Maria; Or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798), we will grapple with questions raised by feminism(s) historically and in the current moment. Reading a range of literary, critical, and theoretical texts, we will ask how feminist writing has addressed ideas about the social construction of gender, cultural formations of identity and community, the problem of translating theory into practice, and, perhaps most fundamentally, the category of “feminism” itself. We will look at the Anglo-American tradition of liberal feminism as it developed from Wollstonecraft in the 19th C and at a number of powerful challenges to its basic assumptions in the 20th C and more recently, including those by “French Feminists,” Black feminisms, post-colonial writers and activists, and queer theory. Texts will include fiction by Assia Djebar, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Toni Morrison, and Jeanette Winterson, and criticism and theory by Judith Butler, Helene Cixous, Donna Haraway, bell hooks, Luce Irigaray, Audre Lorde, Trinh Minh-ha, Chandra Mohanty, Gayle Rubin, Monique Wittig, Virginia Woolf, and other important thinkers about women, gender, and feminism. Open to ALL students. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

This course will focus on the texts, traces and testimonies of African insurrection in the Americas during the official period of “chattel slavery,” hemispherically. On the one hand, we will study what we have learned to refer to as “slave revolts,” the uprisings of those who resisted and refused enslavement and therefore organized themselves to overthrow “slavery” — daily, historically. On the other hand, we will study the practice of “maroonage” - or the “Maroons” who would escape enslavement, set up alternative African communities elsewhere (typically in the mountains or “hills,” not infrequently with “Indians” or indigenous peoples), while at the same time returning to plantations to register their opposition to enslavement as well. In the end, students should come to develop a critical familiarity with literary-critical discourses of slavery and anti-slavery; to expand their knowledge of maroonage and its relationship to uprisings; and, finally, to manifest a cultural literacy or counter-literacy from Haitian Revolution to Nat Turner, Stono and Denmark Vesey in the U.S. South to rebellions in Cuba and Bahia, Brazil, for example. We should all also pose and answer a number of crucial critical questions, such as: How does this literature of “slave revolts,” these texts of “grand maroonage” recast the fundamental assumptions of “literature” as well as “history,” “culture” and “politics,” among other things, both then as well as now? This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement.
ENG 0191-01
Seminar in English: Harlem Renaissance
Takayoshi, I.

A seminar on a wide range of African-American writers who were associated with "Harlem Renaissance" (1917-1929). The class will discuss poems, stories, novels, essays, and plays by W. E. B. Dubois, James Weldon Jonson, Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, George Schuyler, Jean Toomer, Jessie Fauset, Zora Neale Hurston, Alain Locke, Countee Cullen, Wallace Thurman, Nella Larsen, Carl Van Vechten, and more. Discussions will center around two questions: how these writers modernized American language and how these writers used literature to battle racism. Incoming freshmen are welcome. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

ENG 0191-02
Seminar in English: The Novels of the Brontes
Ullman, M.

In her Shirley, Charlotte Bronte attacks the novels, criticism and society of her time, for the way they portray women: “If men could see us as we really are they would be amazed;...the cleverest and acutest men are often under an illusion about women; they do not read them in a true light; they misapprehend them, both for good and evil; their good woman is a queer thing, half doll, half angel, their bad woman almost always a fiend.” Her standard was what she simply called “the truth.” In this course we will read the seven novels published by Charlotte and by her sisters, Emily and Anne, both of whom died in their 20s, including the acknowledged classics, Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights, to try to discover the truth as these sisters saw it while acknowledging what Charlotte called the goal of literature: “to stir you; to give you new sensations...to make you feel your life more strongly.” We shall also read the biography of Charlotte by Rebecca Fraser. Students will be asked to write papers on each of the three authors. There also will be a final exam. This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement.
Many argue that environmental questions are the questions of the twenty-first century. Where are we now? How did we get here? What future will we choose? American literature offers crucial answers. It also offers much-needed vision and hope as we think about climate change, natural resources, human beings’ relation to the earth, and the welfare of all life on the planet. Our reading will be multicultural, bringing together Native American, African American, white European American, Latino/a, and Asian American perspectives, and texts include novels, poetry, prose, and film. Authors range from Henry David Thoreau to Octavia Butler, Karen Tei Yamashita to Simon Ortiz and Louise Erdrich. Our study will include a field trip and class-discussion forms the basis of the course. The class counts toward the English major, the Environmental Studies major, and the American Studies major. It is also open to all students. Everyone is welcome regardless of major. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

The “now” in the title of this course refers at once to our present, the 21st C culture in which we read (and reread) Jane Austen’s novels, and to Jane Austen’s own present, the specific cultural contexts within which she wrote, inaugurating a new mode of fiction. The “now” is about what is new or daring, but in that it is always “now” and so “now” is ongoing, it is also about history and tradition. Thinking about Austen in terms of the “now” opens questions about the continuing relevance of her work in our time and over time: to what current interests or concerns do Austen’s novels speak? how does writing so invested in representing the circumscribed here and now of contemporary life (especially for young women) appeal to a range of readers in other places and times? what can tracing the reception of her novels tell us about the function of literature in the construction of the personal, the social, and the political? We will read the six published novels as well as some of the unpublished writing along with various responses to her work beginning from its appearance in the early 19th C to recent critical approaches (including historicist, feminist, and queer) and popular adaptations in order to explore these and other questions about Austen’s originality and her persistent allure. This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement.
ENG 0191-05
Seminar in English: Nation & Narration: 19th Century U.S. Historical Fiction
Wolff, N.

In this course, we will read 19th c. U.S. fiction that engages with and transforms history, narrating and recreating a national past. Historical topics include first contact between Native Americans and Europeans, settlement, the slave trade, utopian experiments, the Civil War, westward expansion, and Reconstruction. From James Fenimore Cooper’s evocation of the savage frontier in his Leatherstocking Tales to Mark Twain’s satire of historical progress in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court, we will examine the uses and abuses of history in nineteenth-century American literature. Other authors may include Washington Irving, William Wells Brown, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Lydia Maria Child. This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement.

ENG 0191-06
Seminar in English: Writing Science from Newton to Frankenstein
Robbins, J.

The eighteenth century was the age of the Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution, and debates about the nature of the scientific method, the place of science within society, and the uses of experiment took center stage. It comes as no surprise, then, that the literature of the period was profoundly influenced by these new developments as well, in terms of both subject and form. Writers of all genres described surgeries, imagined anatomical dissections, and waxed poetic on the new ability of humanity to rise above the earth in balloons, all using language informed by an emerging awareness of the experimental nature of fiction. This course will examine some of the most influential scientific and literary texts from the long eighteenth century (1660-1800), spanning Isaac Newton, Alexander Pope, Robert Boyle, Jonathan Swift, Mary Astell, and Romantics such as William Blake, William Wordsworth, and Mary and Percy Shelley. In addition to considering the central place of scientific discussions within literary works of the period, we will also explore how the divisions between scientific and literary forms as we now understand them simply did not exist for these writers; for example, both Jonathan Swift and the instrument designer Robert Hooke viewed themselves as working on magnification, whether through constructing a microscope or a narrative. Reading these works will allow us to place our modern understandings of literature, technology, and science under the microscope as well, gaining a vantage point from which we can question how we now define these concepts. You will put this demolition of disciplinary barriers into practice at the end of the course by completing a research project using the online databases and research tools that we will employ during the term. This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement.