Course Information: Fall 2014

English 200+, Graduate Seminars

ENG 0290-01
Graduate Seminar: Pro-Seminar
Haber, J.

This course is required of all second-year students who entered without an M.A.; other English graduate students may audit individual classes, but they may not register for the course. Students will meet with a different member of the faculty every other week for an hour to discuss important topics in the areas of professionalization, pedagogy, and intellectual currents in our discipline.

ENG 0291-01
Graduate Seminar: Resistance: Theory and the Negative
Edelman, L.

This seminar will focus on the indispensable role that negativity plays in the work of recent literary theorists across a wide range of political, aesthetic, and ideological perspectives. Inseparable from the rise of dialectical thinking, negativity becomes a locus of resistance to identity, to the notion of coherence, that not only fuels the transformative possibilities of critical thought but also suggests an implicit relation between literariness and resistance as such. This is no more to say that resistance defines the literary, however, than it is to say that the literary necessarily resists definition. It is the tension between these two options and the specific forms that tension takes that we will examine this semester as we attend to theoretical works examining questions of textuality, subjectivity, and social identities (gender, sexuality, class, and race). Critics whose works we may study include Adorno, Badiou, Benjamin, Berlant, Bersani, Butler, de Lauretis, de Man, Derrida, Fanon, Freud, Gallop, Johnson, Lacan, Ranciere, Sedgwick, and Zizek (though this list is by no means definitive and time constraints will necessitate that some of these figures will have to be put to one side while others are brought to the fore).

ENG 0291-02
Graduate Seminar: Language, Desire and Play in Early Modern England
Haber, J.

This course will explore the twin Renaissance obsessions with language and erotic desire. We will consider sexualities both orthodox and marginalized, and examine early modern constructions of gender and the body. Simultaneously, we will examine contemporary hopes and fears about the power (and limits) of language, poetry, and the theater, and we will use current criticism to aid us in formulating questions about the intersections and conflicts among these various ideas. Readings will probably include poems and plays by the following: Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Mary Wroth, John Donne, Ben Jonson, John Webster, Thomas Middleton, and Margaret Cavendish.
ENG 0291-03
Graduate Seminar: American Realism
Ammons, E.

This graduate seminar focuses on US texts published during the late 19th-/early 20th-century. The course has two goals. First, it provides an opportunity to read a multicultural group of primary texts—Native American, African American, white European American, Asian American, Latino/a—and think about them in historical context, a time of dramatic upheaval and change in the United States in terms of immigration, race relations, women’s rights, labor issues, environmental consciousness, laissez faire capitalism, and imperialist expansion. Literature will include Henry James, Washington Square, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper,” Charles Chesnutt, The Conjure Woman, Sui Sin Far, Mrs. Spring Fragrance, Pauline Hopkins, Of One Blood, Edith Wharton, The House of Mirth, María Cristina Mena, Collected Stories, W. E. B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk, Zitkala Ša, American Indian Stories, Upton Sinclair, The Jungle, and Anzia Yezierska, Hungry Hearts. Second, the course will foreground a critical race theory approach, which will emphasize understanding the construction of blackness and redness as foundational in the US, reading whiteness as a raced category, moving beyond a black/white paradigm, and thinking about one’s own racial location in relation to anti-racist scholarship and teaching. Theorists will include Angelo Ancheta, Howard Winant, Ruth Frankenberg, Ian Haney Lopez, Beverly Daniel Tatum, Toni Morrison, and Robert Warrior.

ENG 0291-04
Graduate Seminar: Slave Revolts & Maroons
Thomas, G.

This seminar will focus on the texts, traces and testimonies of African insurrection during the official period of “chattel slavery” throughout the Americas. 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 this enslavement by organizing themselves to overthrow it – 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 militant opposition to enslavement as well. We will read political and historical as well as creative texts, including novels such as Martin Delany’s Blake; Monifa Love Asante’s Freedom in the Dismal; Dionne Brand’s At the Full and Change of the Moon; Toni Morrison’s Tar Baby; Ayi Kwei Armah’s Two Thousand Seasons. Ultimately, students should come to develop a vital familiarity with literary-critical discourses of slavery and anti-slavery; to expand their knowledge of maroonage and its relationship to Global African 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, just 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 narratives of “grand maroonage,” recast the fundamental assumptions of “literature” (literary “history,” literary “culture” and literary “politics,” beyond “history,” “culture” and “politics” in general), both then as well as now?