Course Information: Spring 2015

English 100-199, Literature Courses Above 100

ENG 0107-01
Chaucer
Fyler, J.

This course explores the works of one of the three or four greatest poets in English. We'll read Chaucer in Middle English, but he is in almost every respect easier to understand than Shakespeare, who lived two centuries later. We will spend roughly half of the semester on the Canterbury Tales, the other half on Chaucer's most extraordinary poem, Troilus and Criseyde. Chaucer is primarily a narrative rather than a lyric poet: though the analogy is an imperfect one, the Canterbury Tales are like a collection of short stories, and Troilus like a novel in verse. We will talk about Chaucer's literary sources and contexts, the interpretation of his poetry, and his treatment of a number of issues, especially gender issues, that are of perennial interest. This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement.

ENG 0108-01
Vergil and Dante
Fyler, J.

This course will focus on two major texts in the European literary tradition, Vergil's Aeneid and Dante's Commedia. The two are linked because Virgil is Dante's guide in his journey into Hell and up the mountain of Purgatory: he is the guide because Aeneid 6 describes an earlier trip to the underworld, but even more, because Dante has the whole Aeneid very much in mind throughout his own great poem. We will also look at a number of allusions to these works in English and American literature.

ENG 0134-01
James Joyce's Ulysses
Lurz, J.

This course will consist of a prolonged and meditative reading of James Joyce's Ulysses, considered by many to be the masterwork of 20th century literature. We will spend 10 weeks on the novel, reading a chapter or two each week in a way that approximates the book's original monthly serial publication in the avant-garde journal The Little Review. At the same time, we will be accessing and comparing the novel's serialization in the Modernist Journals Project in order to consider how this serial reading practice allows the novel, a paean to the everyday detail, to intersect with our own everyday experience. As we steep ourselves in the world of Ulysses, we will enrich our reading with judicious selections of classic and contemporary Joyce criticism as well as Richard Ellman's magisterial biography. In the last week of the course, we will take an initiatory probe into Finnegans Wake, a "book of the night" that Joyce saw as a complement to his attempt to capture the happenings of an entire day. The reading throughout will be challenging but exciting; previous knowledge of Joyce is NOT required. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

10/16/14
ENG 0151-01  
Poe, Hawthorne, Melville  
Wolff, N.

We will read major works from these three authors, paying attention to elements of genre and form (romance, gothic, allegory, the short story and the novel); intellectual traditions (Puritan theology, Enlightenment rationality); and we'll reexamine these canonical texts through a range of interpretive lenses (gender, sexuality, race, and class; psychoanalysis; historicisms new and old). This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement.

ENG 0154-01  
American Indian Writers  
Ammons, E.

Many people can name only one or two American Indian writers --if that. What does this erasure mean? How do Indigenous writers in the United States refuse and resist this erasure? We will begin with three late nineteenth-/early twentieth-century authors, Sarah Winnemucca, Luther Standing Bear, and Zitkala Sâ, and then concentrate on contemporary writers: N. Scott Momaday, Louise Erdrich, Leslie Marmon Silko, Simon Ortiz, Leonard Peltier, Sherman Alexie, and Wendy Rose. We will view and discuss films that focus on important issues and contextualize our study in historical and political questions still current in Native America. Major topics include: the politics of representation/self-representation; Indian resistance to white colonialism, exploitation, and theft; Indigenous people’s self-definitions and demand for sovereignty; the relationship between art and political struggle; and our own subject positions and responsibilities in relation to the material in the course. We will have a guest speaker, and the issue of activism will be an important part of our work together, as will active student participation. This course fulfills the World Civilization distribution requirement and counts toward the Women’s Studies major, the Environmental Studies major, and the post-1860 requirement for the English major. It is open to majors and non majors. All are welcome.

ENG 0159-01  
Contemporary Jewish Fiction  
Freedman-Bellow, J.

A look at novels and stories by authors whose work has reflected, challenged, shaped and altered contemporary Jewish consciousness. We'll read fiction by Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, Nathan Englander, Cynthia Ozick, Anne Michaels, Art Spiegelman, and others. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.
ENG 0160-01
Environmental Justice and World Literature
Ammons, E.

Who is most hurt by environmental degradation and abuse and who benefits? This course examines what contemporary world literature has to say about environmental racism, toxic colonialism, ecofeminism, homophobia and the social construction of nature, globalization, and urban ecological issues. We will ask: What analyses and insights can we gain? What is the role of art in the struggle for social change? Reading includes authors from diverse racial and national locations—Zambia, South Africa, multicultural U.S., India, Malawi, Nigeria, China, Guatemala; and primary texts include films, essays, poems, short stories, and novels. Authors include Helena María Viramontes, Zakes Mda, Marilou Awiakta, Mo Yan, Rigoberta Menchú, Louise Erdrich, and Jayanta Mahapatra. The goal of this course is empowerment for social change. How can each of us participate as a change agent in the struggle for environmental justice, locally and globally? How can our understanding of literature contribute? Group work, a field trip, one research paper, and active class discussion will be important parts of the course. Non-majors as well as majors are welcome. This class counts toward the Women's Studies major, the Environmental Studies major, the Peace and Justice major, and the post-1860 requirement for the English major.

ENG 0163-01
Speak Memory: Contemporary Memoir
Wilson, J.

We will look at a number of contemporary memoirs, "fictional memoirs," and occasional works of fiction paying particular attention to the blurring of borders between the genres. Readings will include Sophie Calle's The Appointment, Kathryn Harrison's The Kiss, Jamaica Kincaid's My Brother, Darin Strauss's Half A Life, Greigore Bouillier's Report on Myself, Alison Bechdel's Fun Home and other texts. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

ENG 0170-01
Modern European Novel
Cantor, J.

Something happened around 1900 to 1939. C.S. Lewis wrote, "I do not think any previous age produced work which was, in its own time as shatteringly and bewilderingly new as the Cubists, the Dadaists, the Surrealists and Picasso have been in ours. And modern poetry is not only a greater novelty than any other 'new poetry' but new in a new way, almost in a new dimension." And what of the novel, what Lawrence called "the bright book of life"? Did it, too, become new in a new way? We will look at works by Joseph Conrad, Thomas Mann, Franz Kafka, and James Joyce. We may take a sidelong glance at Sigmund Freud, and at modern art and philosophy. Is the work really as new as Lewis describes? And why? What changed in the world so much that the novel in order to do its jobs--to educate, entertain, enlighten and terrify--had to become so damn different from the works of the past? Students are advised (but not required) to have taken a good background in the novels preceding our period. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.
Psychoanalysis has had a profound effect on the culture and the reading practices of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As the first discourse to put erotic attachment at the center of human experience, psychoanalytic theory has affected our understanding of sexuality, gender, narrative, social relations, and meaning itself. This class, intended as a tightly knit seminar for students interested in literary and cultural theory, will focus on major psychoanalytic concepts (the unconscious, fantasy, sexual difference, jouissance, the transference, and the death drive) in works by Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Alongside these primary texts we’ll put read writings by cultural critics who are likely to include Leo Bersani, Judith Butler, Jane Gallop, Barbara Johnson, Adam Phillips, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Slavoj Zizek. In relation to these theoretical engagements with psychoanalysis we’ll study some mainstream cultural responses to psychoanalytic thought to see how psychoanalysis troubled and titillated the popular imagination. These works will are likely to include films (by Alfred Hitchcock, John Huston, and Brian de Palma), novels (by Alison Bechdel, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ishmael Reed), and popular non-fiction (by Janet Malcolm and Stephen Grosz). No previous study of psychoanalysis or critical theory is required, but students should be prepared for a rigorous critical dialogue about sexuality, interpretation, theory, and culture. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

American Culture during the Great Depression
Takayoshi, I.

This course will examine American literature and cinema during the Great Depression for what they reveal about the driving spirit of the age. How did the exceptionally complex, and enduring works of art explore important ideas and feelings that informed the ways in which Americans experienced the Great Depression? The seminar aims to answer this question through close analysis of literary works (Raymond Chandler, Big Sleep, Dashiell Hammett, The Maltese Falcon, Nathanael West, The Day of the Locust, Richard Wright, Uncle Tom’s Children, Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God, Mike Gold, Jews Without Money, John Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath, James Agee and Walker Evans, Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, Djuna Barnes, Nightwood) and three cinematic genres (gangster movies, screwball comedies, and musicals). Requirements: three presentations, two close-reading papers, a final paper. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.
ENG 0192-01
Seminar in English: Decolonization & Postcolonial Thought
Lowe, L.

In this co-taught course, we will study colonialism and empire in a variety of historical settings, cultural modes of resistance, and the intellectual and political responses of colonized peoples. We will examine and distinguish, e.g., settler colonialism, colonial slavery, imperial trade, military occupation, and the rise of modern global empires – with attention to the varieties of literary and philosophical discourses that justified imperial intrusions as well as those that provided critical counter-formations. The course will include close readings of works by Marx, Fanon, Gramsci, Said, James, Du Bois, Robinson, Foucault, Hall, Guha, Mamdani, Mishra, Chen, Mohanty, and others, in the analysis of capital, racial colonialism, biopower, gender and sexuality, and the politics of culture. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

ENG 0192-02
Seminar in English: Fanon and Black Textual Revolution
Thomas, G.

The marvelous texts of Frantz Fanon have preoccupied and even mesmerized a wide range of critical thinkers and political activists, for decades now. He was a Black psychiatrist, writer and revolutionary born in Martinique; formally schooled under French colonialism in the Caribbean as well as France; and converted to “African Revolution” in Algeria after his initial request to serve in the French Civil Service in Sénégal was refused during the presidency of Léopold Senghor. Fanon would author four phenomenal books worth of material by his untimely death from leukemia – on December 6, 1961, at the age of 36 – in CIA custody in Bethesda, Maryland, USA. They are Black Skin, White Masks (1952), A Dying Colonialism (1959), The Wretched of the Earth (1961), and, posthumously, Toward the African Revolution (1964). Many of these texts would help shape the modern Black Power Movement of African-America as well as anti-imperialist liberation struggles in continental Africa and the “Third World” at large – before the strictly academic theories of “post-coloniality,” several decades later. This course will study Fanon’s whole revolutionary body of work with some regard to those related “Black [textual] revolutions which take root in his tradition. We will ask a series of crucial questions, of necessity: Why does Fanon remain so unique and important a figure, worldwide? What is the difference between academia’s Fanon and Black or anti-imperialist revolution’s Fanon? How do different translations of Fanon from French to English affect past and present interpretations of Fanon? Why is it important to speak of “Black [textual] revolutions, after Fanon,” both politically and artistically, at this specific point in global historical time? This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.