Course Information: Spring 2015

English 17-99, Literature Courses Below 100

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 great British poetry, fiction, and drama from the era of social and political revolution of the late 18th Century to the transformations of Modernism ushered in by the World Wars in the first half of the 20th Century. We will take a rather sweeping "general view" of the literature written during these one hundred and fifty years by paying close attention to aesthetic experiment and innovation in particular works within the context of persistent themes and broad cultural trends. Considering some of the highlights of the English tradition, including those which challenge or revise the very notion of Englishness and tradition, in this course we will trace evolving ideas about the function of the artist in society, practice reading poetry out loud to learn about meter and prosody, and look at some of the ways the literature of this period has been interpreted by and absorbed into the present, for example in parody, contemporary music, or the visual and graphic arts.
ENG 0030-01
Twice Told Tales
Genster, J.

If literature consists in a continuing conversation among authors and works, there are cases in which the exchange sharpens into a tête-à-tête. We'll look at a number of instances in which a later writer very explicitly pitches a tent on grounds earlier claimed by what J.M. Coetzee calls a "classic" work: Coetzee's own Foe as a response to Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe; Jean Rhys's The Wide Sargasso Sea as a reply to Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre, Jane Smiley's A Thousand Acres as a rewriting of Shakespeare's King Lear, and Peter Carey's Jack Maggs as the boomerang to Dickens' Great Expectations. The relations between texts may be aleatory, retaliatory, both, and everything in between. We'll try to think out the terms, the motives, the satisfactions and the challenges for readers and writers of such work, and to test our conclusions against other sets of textual relations in the works of Kipling, Ondaatje and Gordimer, and Tennyson and Munro. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

ENG 0046-01
Girls' Books
Genster, J.

Arriving at the hospital nursery, Judith Thurman's aunt saw her niece named and described on the card in her crib: "It's a girl." Next to her lay an equally recent arrival, whose card read "I'm a boy." She turned on her heel and returned with her natal gift: a copy of Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex.

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-century conduct books to contemporary young adult novels. We'll consider the works as they describe, prescribe and proscribe. We'll also look at some feminist theory as it bears on our reading and discussion. 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, Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry, and folk and fairy tales. Some of the contemporary works will be chosen by a class vote on nominations provided by class members. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.
ENG 0051-01
Shakespeare II
Haber, J.

In this course, we will undertake a careful study of nine of Shakespeare's plays: *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *King Lear*, *Coriolanus*, and *The Winter's Tale*. Although we will engage these plays in a variety of historical and theoretical contexts, our primary focus will be on close reading of the texts. Please note: Shakespeare II (this course) and Shakespeare I (English 50) are not a sequence; they are courses that present two different selections of plays, chosen from the entirety of Shakespeare's career. You are free to take both courses; you may not repeat either one of them. This course fulfills the pre-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 decentering 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, Joan Didion, Hunter S. Thompson, Renata Adler, Norman Mailer, Cynthia Ozick, Ishmael Reed, Gayl Jones, David Foster Wallace, Tom Wolfe, Thomas Pynchon. 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, jazz, 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. Three short papers and a final exam. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

ENG 0088-01
Film Noir and The American Tradition
Edelman, L.

This course will explore film noir as a distinctively American cultural product that emerges from a fascination with evil inseparable from the fantasy of America’s national innocence. We will consider film noir as the symptomatic expression of the contradictions America confronted when it tried to come to terms with its identity as a global military and economic power—contradictions reflecting an incoherent identity that produced, in film noir, a genre about incoherence, moral ambiguity, and the inevitability of interpretative doubt. The femme fatale, the figure on whom the crisis of interpretation tends to focus, will occupy a central position in our thinking. We will trace the insistence of sexual anxiety (the fears provoked by sexually aggressive heterosexual women as well as by sexually non-normative women and men alike) in narratives that express the fragility of community (especially as questions of ethnic or racial difference get joined to sexual difference). Linking these dark films of murder, betrayal, and forbidden desires to issues raised by feminist, queer, and psychoanalytic theory, this course will trace the inscriptions of anxieties that continue to shape our national psyche and to grip our cinematic imagination. Films to be studied may include Double Indemnity, Laura, The Big Sleep, Murder My Sweet, Out of the Past, The Crimson Kimono, The Woman in the Window, The Third Man, Odds Against Tomorrow, One False Move, Seven, Lost Highway, The Dark Knight, and The Departed. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.
ENG 0092-01
Topics Lit & Culture: The Booker Prize
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 founded to recognize a writer from the British Commonwealth, the Republic of Ireland, or Zimbabwe for the best full-length novel published that year. (It has recently been expanded to include novels from the US.) 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 a more recent recipient, including, potentially, the 2014 winner which is announced in October. 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." Potential authors include Iris Murdoch, Salman Rushdie, Kazuo Ishiguro, A. S. Byatt, Michael Ondaatje, Roddy Doyle, Ian McEwan, J. M. Coetzee, Arundhati Roy, Pat Barker, Alan Hollinghurst, Julian Barnes. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

ENG 0092-02
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 antiwar 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:

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; Rita Mae Brown, Rubyfruit Jungle; Bonnie Bremser, Troia: Mexican Memoirs; Toni Morrison, Sula. Thelma and Louise dir. Ridley Scott; Revolutionary Road, dir. Sam Mendes; The Stepford Wives, dir. Bryan Forbes. Poetry and essays 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.