Course Information: Fall 2015

ENGLISH 100-199, LITERATURE

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 0119-01
18th Century English Novel
Keiser, J.

A shipwrecked adventurer who encounters a single footprint on a seemingly deserted island, a race of hyper-rational genocidal horses, a woman who adopts a variety of disguises in order to seduce her immoral lover, a curiously talkative gold coin, a recluse who cannot differentiate the fiction she obsessively reads from real life, and an orphan who sets off to discover his origins (and almost sleeps with his own mother in the process)—these are the subjects of the early English novel. Before the novel became a respectable literary form, it was the place for radical and often shocking experiments in the eighteenth century. This course examines these early experimental novels by attending to their formal innovations, their challenges to social and literary conventions, and their commitment to capturing the complexities of a world quickly plunging into a frightening new modernity. We'll see how these novels responded to some of the key obsessions of the eighteenth century: madness, imperialism, religion, science, and sex. We'll also consider how these works anticipated the contemporary novel by flaunting their fictional status, thereby forcing their readers to recognize the thin line separating reality from literary representation. Writers will include Aphra Behn, Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Eliza Haywood, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Charlotte Lennox, and Laurence Sterne. This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement.
ENG 0123-01
Frankenstein’s Sisters: Jane Austen & Mary Shelley
Hofkosh, S.

Between 1811 and 1818 Jane Austen published six books known as domestic fiction or novels of courtship, each of which focuses on the interior life of a young woman falling in love in the proper, limited, provincial world of the English gentry. Starting with Frankenstein in 1818, Mary Shelley wrote books about misshapen monsters, forbidden passions, war, betrayal, suicide, and plague. What do these two apparently so different writers share? With some attention to context and recent critical approaches to the early 19th Century novel, and especially to women’s writing during that period, we will explore the issues and interests that link Austen and Shelley as creators of “subjectivity” or what could be called “the human,” from the nightmare fantasies of Austen’s Northanger Abbey to Shelley’s representation of the end of the world in The Last Man. This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement.

ENG 0136-01
Irish Literary Renaissance
Ullman, M.

In this course, we will consider, and perhaps stretch, the idea of the Irish Literary Renaissance that is generally thought of as occurring in the late 19th century and early 20th century. We shall be looking at major writers: the reading list will include Yeats, Synge, Joyce (Dubliners and Portrait). Others may be Oscar Wilde, Lady Gregory, Shaw, Elizabeth Bowen, and George Moore. I am particularly interested in the interplay of specifically "Irish" culture and politics and literary traditions, and the internationalist leanings of some of these figures. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

ENG 0155-01
American Women Writers
Sharpe, C.

What is American Women’s writing? Who is an American Woman writer? The texts in this course will emphasize the heterogeneity of American women's writing by reading a variety of texts that trace and retrace the contours and concerns of race, nation, belonging, and representation from the end of the nineteenth-century to the present. Texts may include but are not limited to: Kate Chopin's The Awakening; Nella Larsen's Quicksand and Passing; Sui Sin Far's Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Stories; Toni Morrison's Beloved; Helena Maria Viramontes's Under the Feet of Jesus; excerpts from Anna Julia Cooper's A Voice From the South; Dorothy Allison's Bastard Out of Carolina; Dionne Brand’s In Another Place, Not Here; Alison Bechdel's graphic novel/comix Fun Home; feminist manifestos, polemics, and more. This is a seminar. Class will be run on a discussion basis and active student participation is required. In addition to reading novels we may also view film and other visual arts as we think through “American women writing” and the practice, poetics, and politics of representation. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.
ENG 0162-01  
*Philip Roth & Company*
*Bellow, J.*

We will take a tour through Philip Roth's fiction reading his work alongside that of a number of writers whom he has either influenced, parodied, refracted, obsessed about or appropriated. Texts may include: Portnoy's Complaint, The Ghost Writer, American Pastoral, The Human Stain, The Dying Animal (all by Roth), Gogol's "The Nose," Kafka's "Metamorphosis", Henry James's "The Lesson of the Master" and Saul Bellow's Henderson the Rain King. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

ENG 0176-01  
*Earth Matters: American Literature & the Environment*
*Ammons, E.*

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. In this course we will think about human beings' relation to the earth, the welfare of all life on the planet, and—most pressing—climate change. Reading is 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 Bill McKibben to Octavia Butler, Rita Wong 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 Environmental Studies major, the American Studies major, and the English major, where it fulfills the post-1860 requirement. It is also open to all students.

ENG 0191-01  
*Seminar in English: Metaphors of Globalization*
*Lowe, L.*

This course considers literature, films, and art that express the condition known as "globalization." Comparing explanations of globalization from sociology, political science, and economics, with those from expressive culture and in cultural ethnographies, we will explore how literature and culture may not only represent globalization differently, but may present a different hermeneutics, that is, another approach or poetics, for interpreting global conditions. Interdisciplinary materials include films ("Babel," "Dirty Pretty Things," "Life and Debt," "Maria, Full of Grace," "Happy Together"), novels (Yamashita, Adiga, Murakami), ethnographies (Rofel, Tsing, Kumar), and essays (Sassen, Appadurai, Harvey, Mamdani, etc.). This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.
Nowadays, many in and outside U.S. circles refer to “the prison industrial complex,” a phrase that literally comes from Wall Street imperialism itself. At least one scholar-activist has criticized this formulation for minimizing, even erasing the continued power of the military-industrial complex in its attempt to grapple with the explosion of prisons as an industry, federal and private, national and international. Before imprisonment would be defined according to recent economics, however, it had already been defined by Black Radical Tradition in terms of enslavement and re-enslavement – the material and symbolic reduction of enslaved Africans to “chattel” for a white world capitalist hegemony. The large-scale transfer of Black people from yesterday’s plantations to today’s prisons (where “old,” official slavery remains perfectly legal), this process might be recognized as an “internal slave trade” as opposed to slavery’s actual “abolition.” This course confronts the political problematic of prisons without losing sight of the connection between imprisonment and enslavement, past and present. We will focus on North America as a historic site of struggle for recent Black writing from and about prisons, confinement, incarceration, jailing, lock-up/lock-down, etc. Students should thus develop a critical literacy in the tradition of writing under study and consider how it redefines “reality,” “literature” and “politics” among other things. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

This course is a study of the Harlem cycle of Chester Himes, the Black “expatriate” writer who completed a series of nine novels of “detective” fiction (“crime fiction” or, in his words, “domestic fiction”) over three decades in France as well as Spain between the 1950s and the 1980s. Each novel is set in symbolic “Harlem” and features two black detectives of the racial status-quo, Gravedigger Jones and Coffin Ed Johnson. But the historic Black community at large is the major character of all these texts. The series begins with *A Rage in Harlem* and *The Real Cool Killers*, an allegory for the Algerian Revolution. The series closes in era of the modern Black liberation movement with *Blind Man with a Pistol* and *Plan B*, which imagines a revolutionary Armageddon in North America. While Himes is internationally esteemed for writing protest novels such as *If He Hollers Let Him Go* and various novels of naturalist fiction, these nine popular novels radically reinvent the politics of protest, the “crime” or “detective” fiction genre, and the protocols of Black representation, all from exile. Arguing with Albert Camus that “racism is absurd,” making life absurd for the victim and perpetrator of racism alike, the Himes novel of the Harlem cycle explores the terrain of “ghetto sur/realism” like no other body of literary work. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.
Edmund Spenser is probably the greatest poet of the sixteenth century; his epic romance *The Faerie Queene*--complex, wonderful, and occasionally raunchy--offers a particularly interesting access to Elizabethan literature and culture. We will read the poem in its entirety, with glances at Spenser's sources and literary context: above all, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Ariosto's comic masterpiece *Orlando Furioso*, and Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*, an urbane and highly influential discussion of the courtly ideal. We will also talk about the legendary history of Britain, with its origin in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s twelfth-century *History of the Kings of Britain* and its development into the mythology surrounding the figure of Queen Elizabeth I. This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement.