Course Information: Fall 2015

ENGLISH 17-99, LITERATURE

ENG 0017-01
The Poem
Shapero, N.

This class seeks to introduce interested students to the reading and writing of lyric poetry, a traditionally solitary form usually associated with the single speaker. The focus of the class will be on understanding the structures of poetry, reading for comprehension, and learning how to enjoy and remember poems. Lyric poetry also reminds us how closely and intimately we live with others, and much that is most vivid in contemporary writing has as much to do with the relationship between the self and others as it does with an idea of individual identity. Using vivid examples of American, Anglophone, and international verse, we will explore how poems make accessible both the terrain of the self and those vivid points of contact between us and other people, showing both to be familiar and unfamiliar. Writing responses will include a journal, exercises in poetry, short papers, and collaborations. Classroom activities will include seminar discussion, workshop, and memorization of selected poems.

ENG 0021-01
General View of English Literature I
Haber, J.

This course, a survey of early English literature from the beginning through the middle of the seventeenth century, makes an excellent introduction to the English major. It should also be of interest to any students who wish to increase their knowledge of earlier English literature and hone their skill in literary analysis. Readings will probably include Beowulf, selections from Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales and Milton’s Paradise Lost, lyrics by Wyatt, Sidney, Shakespeare, Donne, Queen Elizabeth, Amelia Lanyer, Ben Jonson, and Andrew Marvell, and plays by Marlowe and Webster.

ENG 0023-01
American Literature: First Contact to 1855
Ammons, E.

From the beginning, American literature has been multicultural, artistically diverse, and filled with debates about human rights, religion, gender equality, economics, race, personal freedom, and how to live in relationship with the earth. Bringing together Native American, white European American, African American, Latino/a, and Asian American voices, this survey mixes canonical and less well-known texts. We’ll read work by familiar writers such as Anne Bradstreet and Nathaniel Hawthorne as well as work by equally important but often less-familiar writers such as Handsome Lake, David Walker, William Apess, and Chinese merchants in California. We will think about the construction of literary history and the politics of representation. Who gets to speak? Write? Read? Who does not? Why does this matter in 2015? The class will include active class discussion and two field trips, one to the only known slave quarters still standing in New England, the other to the woods. There will be two papers and a final exam.
ENG 0029-01
Literary Studies
Bamber, L.

We live in an age of perpetual “disruption,” technological and otherwise; but even as print culture makes room for new media, we continue to be seduced by literary pleasure. What does literature have to teach us about some of New Media’s favorite moves: non-linear narrative, fragmentation, irony, formal and political subversion, etc.? And conversely, how can our media-savvy perspective enrich our reading of classic texts? In this class we will read works by the giants (Tolstoy, Shakespeare, Virgil, Virginia Woolf) and also by very recent authors who delight in the idiom of 21st century English (e.g., Ben Fountain and Tony Hoagland). As we discuss poetry, fiction, plays, movies, and some examples of New Media itself, a persistent question will be, What is specifically literary about literary works, whatever their “platform”? We will also discuss the way different artists negotiate the relationship between our political and our literary loyalties; and we will read love poetry, both playful and impassioned, throughout the semester.

ENG 0031-01
Underworlds
Genster, J.

In classical mythology, the underworld is the kingdom of the dead; for living mortals access is, except under extraordinary circumstances, strictly forbidden. The journey from upper to lower world involves danger, difficulty, and grief. In some works, the capacity to undertake the journey—to withstand and understand the revelations it offers—grounds and defines heroism. We will look at a number of underworlds and trace out an evolving view of what business the living might have in the world of the dead, and in what ways the underworld might invade the imaginations of the living. Writers to be studied may include Homer, Virgil, Dante, Milton, Gay, Radcliffe, Collins, Ellison, and Pynchon. This course fulfills the pre 1860 requirement.

ENG 0050-01
Shakespeare I
Genster, J.

A study of eight Shakespeare plays: Richard II, Henry IV, As You Like It, Much Ado About Nothing, Measure for Measure, Hamlet, Macbeth and The Tempest. We will engage the plays in a variety of critical, historical and literary historical contexts. This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement.
ENG 0054-01
Conrad, Forster, Woolf
Lurz, J.

In this class we will read three authors - Conrad, Woolf, and Forster - whose work has come to represent some of the exemplary moments of literary modernism. Because each author has a distinct and internally complex style, we will try to build our questions from the texts themselves, working towards a consideration of how style works, what it is, and how we understand its distinguishing marks. At the same time, we will follow crucial threads that run throughout the works: contested constructions of masculinity and femininity; the framing of power, authority and the possibilities for social change; the place of art, the artist and the artist-hero within modernity; representations of belonging and alienation, home and exile, metropolitan and colonial space. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

ENG 0058-01
Short Fiction
Bamber, L.

Some of the stories we will read in this course will be straightforward narratives, but many will be quirky, unconventional or idiosyncratic. The emphasis will be on language and form as we interrogate the genre by exploring its margins. Many of the stories we will read have the linguistic density of poetry; others dispense with what we take to be the necessities of fiction – plot, character and action – in favor of formal experimentation. The stories vary in all sorts of ways: from the meticulous, self-effacing prose of Gustave Flaubert to the post-modernist self-indulgence of David Foster Wallace; from the political engagement of Langston Hughes to the aesthetic distances of Anton Chekov and Gabriel Garcia Marquez; from the slow, "old fashioned" style of Herman Melville and Sarah Orne Jewett to the intense, elliptical prose of Isaac Babel; from the extreme reliance on voice of Juno Diaz to the cool omniscience of Flannery O'Connor; from a novel-length story by Leo Tolstoy to a one-sentence story by Lydia Davis. (Actually a sentence fragment!) Students will be required to undertake a peer teaching project as well as to write the usual papers and response papers and to contribute in class. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.
This course explores the emergence and character of American modernism, the self-conscious intellectual and aesthetic movement dating roughly from 1910 to 1945. We will study modernism in its experimental literary expressions; as a social period encompassing the First World War, women's suffrage, Prohibition and the Depression; as a period of diverse cultural expressions that include the Jazz Age, the Harlem Renaissance, European expatriation and urban bohemianism. We will focus on modernist writers' struggles to efface or subordinate plot or structure in narrative (an effort only more or less successful and oscillating in its visibility in texts under study); the condition of the modern subject, alienation; and representations of gender, racial designations, and sexuality, with emphasis on class across these categories and the difficulties attending ideas or efforts to achieve class mobility or economic self-sufficiency in this period. Texts will include: Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*; F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*; Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*, Jean Toomer, *Cane*; W. E. B. DuBois, from *The Souls of Black Folk*; Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; Nathanael West, *The Day of the Locust*; *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and selections from the writings of Gertrude Stein; William Faulkner, *The Bear*; James Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*, and others. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

This new course is designed to introduce students to the cinema of China and India. The aim of the course is comparative: through selected films and critical essays, we will examine how cinema in India and China has represented anxieties about colonialism, nationalism, revolution and globalization. What are the major pre-occupations of Indian and Chinese cinema in the modern era? What has been the role of this powerful cultural production in social transformation? In particular, we will be attentive to each cinematic tradition's engagement with issues of gender, class and erotic desire.

The course is in ENGLISH. No prerequisites. All majors welcome.

This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement of the English major. This course is cross-listed with ILVS0091-05 and CHNS0091-01 and counts towards the ILVS and Chinese majors.
Taking as a starting point Donna Haraway’s claim in “A Cyborg Manifesto” (1985) that “the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion,” this class will explore how the speculative, alien, or virtual worlds imagined in science fiction literature offer ways to see the familiar or conventional in our own world through new, critical eyes. We will read novels, stories, hypertext, and essays which grapple with a range of feminist questions, particularly questions about the construction and representation of sex and gender; modes of reproduction both biological and technological; and the politics of post- or trans-humanism. Texts may include writing by Margaret Atwood, Octavia Butler, Donna Haraway, Shelley Jackson, Ursula Le Guin, Joanna Russ, Mary Shelley, James Tiptree, Jr., among others. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement of the English major.