Course Information: Spring 2017

English 100-199, Creative Writing

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 0117-01
The Age of Unreason
Keiser, J.

The "Age of Unreason" (1660 – 1790) began roughly twenty years after a revolution unseated England’s king. While the aristocracy eventually returned safely to England, the country continued to experience a series of violent upheavals in its thought, culture, and literature. This course examines these revolutions by attending to the poems, plays, art, and philosophy of the eighteenth century. During this period, we encounter early experimental novels, black comedies, scandalous love poems, and some of the most formally inventive literature ever written.

The course begins with fire, plague, and catastrophe. When London was ravaged by a plague (1665) and then a fire (1666), writers like Defoe and Pepys attempted to represent the scope of destruction by forging a new genre: literary non-fiction. Meanwhile, poets like Behn and Rochester sought to shock and tantalize the public with frank depictions of erotic courtly life. The middle of the course will explore colonizing dreams of escape and exploitation. Heading out for the territories, English subjects imagined great rewards in the new world, rewards that often eluded them and almost always depended upon the slavery of others. We will read Behn’s Oronoko, a novel about a slave rebellion in Surinam, and Gulliver’s Travels, Swift’s subversive retelling of the colonial story, one wherein the quintessential English traveler encounters everything from gentle giants to a race of genocidal talking horses. The final third of the course will return to England. We'll read texts extolling the birth of science alongside attacks on experiment and reason. We'll take a look at the great poetic satires of Swift and Pope, analyze one of the earliest and most shocking novels with Eliza Haywood’s Fantomina, and peek into the lives of London’s criminal underworld with Gay’s riotous Beggar's Opera. We'll also consider the unsettling power of the imagination, the pleasures of beauty and sublimity, and the madness that seems to attend the poetic mind when we read aesthetic works by Addison, Johnson, and Burke. Our tour through the “age of unreason” concludes, naturally, with the first instances of the horror novel in the English language. This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement.
ENG 0129-01  
The Booker Prize and the Contemporary Novel in English  
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 given to a writer from the British Commonwealth, the Republic of Ireland, Zimbabwe, and, recently, the US, for the best full-length novel published that year. 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 the 2014 winner, Richard Flanagan's *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*. 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 commercially-motivated 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 as we interrogate the place of the novel in a contemporary cultural sphere that seems to provide less and less room for "high literature." This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

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.

ENG 0150-01  
Cooper, Emerson, Thoreau  
Wolff, N.  

Explores the writings of James Fenimore Cooper, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry David Thoreau: authors known for exploring our relationship to the land and the natural environment, for a concern with the place of the individual in society, and for encapsulating conflicting impulses toward radical reform and stable tradition. Via Emerson and Thoreau, we'll consider the role played by transcendentalism in the abolition movement and, later, the civil rights and environmental movements. Via Cooper, we'll think about literature's role in nation formation, exploring how his romances of the pre-revolutionary period cultivated a new imaginative and emotional relation to U.S. history. This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement for majors.
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 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, 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, Audre Lorde, and Mulk Raj Anand. 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 Environmental Studies major, the Peace and Justice major, and the post-1860 requirement for the English major.

ENG 0162-01
Philip Roth and Company
Freedman-Below, 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, Indignation (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 0173-01
Literary Theory
Edelman, L.

This course, intended as a seminar for advanced students interested in literary theory, will focus on some major texts of deconstructive, psychoanalytic, feminist, queer, Afropessimist, and “ethical” theory from the mid-twentieth century to the beginning of the twenty-first. We will examine how various theorists conceptualize the relation between language and meaning, with a particular focus on “literariness” as an effect of figure, rhetoric, and the play of signifiers. By considering how structuralist, deconstructive, and psychoanalytic modes of analysis unexpectedly ushered in contemporary theory’s investigation of sexuality, identity, terrorism, radical evil, and political ideology, we will approach the question of whether or not “literature” has borders that can contain it. We will move from Barthes’ utopian hope of liberating language from the tyranny of the signified to more recent, and far more traumatic, encounters with the negativity of the death drive. Students should be prepared not merely to accept, but also, and more importantly, to revel in, the difficulties of the texts we’ll be studying and to engage them with all the passion and energy they bring to reading novels, poems, and films. They should also be prepared to work closely with the other members of the seminar in the protracted, intense, and rewarding project of thinking and conversing with each other. Authors whose works we’ll examine may include: Barthes, Saussure, Derrida, de Man, de Lauretis, Lacan, Gallop, Johnson, Žižek, Butler, Judy, Zupančič, and Badiou. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

ENG 0182-01
American Gothic
Wolff, N.

Examines the gothic genre in 19th-century American literature. Associated in England with spooky castles, gothic fiction in America dramatized the dark side of U.S. history against backdrops ranging from the frontier wilderness to colonial settlements to urban slums. Challenging an idealized vision of democracy, these texts probe the racial violence, class antagonism, and gender exclusions that haunted the nation from its founding. And countering an Enlightenment faith in reason, they depict characters in the grip of uncontrollable desires and pervasive anxiety. The reading list includes authors both well known (Poe, Hawthorne, Melville) and less so (Lippard, Southworth, Hopkins). This course fulfills the pre-1860 requirement for majors.
ENG 0186-01
How Films Think
Edelman, L.

This upper-level seminar is intended for serious students of film who want to explore how cinema creates a complex language through which to think. Although we'll cover such specific aspects of the medium as montage, the long take, point of view, shot/reverse shot, framing, and other elements of cinematic rhetoric, we will focus more precisely on how specific directors deploy those devices to subjectivize the camera as the locus of authorship and thought. We will study, that is, how visual style produces, complements, reframes, and undoes a movie's surface narrative by generating the need to read that narrative in relation to the function of the camera. What does the movement of the camera do to the image that it depicts? How does it underscore, ironize, or "think" about the "content" of the image itself? To answer these questions we will focus on works by six American directors acclaimed for their mastery of cinematic style: Orson Welles, Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, Stanley Kubrick, Quentin Tarantino, and David Lynch. Films to be examined will probably include Citizen Kane, The Lady from Shanghai, Taxi Driver, Raging Bull, Goodfellas, The Godfather (Parts I and II), 2001: A Space Odyssey, Blue Velvet, Lost Highway, and Kill Bill (Volumes 1 and 2). Students must be willing to participate actively in conversation and intellectual exchange. They will be responsible for group presentations on a regular basis throughout the semester. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

ENG 0192-01
Seminar in English: The Body, the Visual
Sharpe, C.

In this course we will read literature, theoretical writings, and view work (photography, film, installation) largely from the mid-1980s onward that focuses on the body (most often Black) and on questions of the visual. From writings by M. NourbeSe Philip, Gayl Jones, Kellie Jones, Huey Copeland, Essex Hemphill, James Baldwin and Krista Thompson and images and video by Carrie Mae Weems and Glenn Ligon, to thinking through Black Lives Matter and No Selves To Defend this course will trace a line of writing, thinking, seeing, and hearing that is concerned with bodies and mattering. This course fulfills the post 1860 requirement.

ENG 0192-02
Seminar in English: Colonialism and Decolonization
Lowe, L.

This co-taught interdisciplinary seminar (with Professor Kris Manjapra, History Department) examines the political economy, biopolitics, discourse and epistemology of settler colonialism, colonial slavery, and overseas empire, and the variety of anti-colonial narratives, forms, and practices. We will consider primary and secondary historical texts, literary and cultural studies, to ask questions such as: In what ways are colonialisms central to capitalist modernity? How do we explain the endurance of colonial and imperial formations in the contemporary moment? What is the genealogy of the colonial state, and its relation to national security, bureaucracy, policing, and imprisonment? How does one read the colonial archive and engage the epistemology of documentation? What is the role of culture and narrative in countering colonial power? This course fulfills the post 1860 requirement.
This seminar will introduce you to modern Anglo-American poetry. The course will divide its time between two sorts of activities: 1) close reading of the representative works of major modern poets; 2) discussion of key concepts that provoked controversies, such as "modern," "new," "tradition," "classics," "free verse," and "imagination." The poets to be studied will include W. B. Yeats, Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, and Langston Hughes. Requirements: attendance, presentations, a substantial research paper (with two rounds of revision). This course fulfills the post 1860 requirement.