Course Information: Spring 2015

English 200+, Graduate Courses

ENG 0291-01
Graduate Seminar: O, Democracy
Wolff, N.

“For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve you ma femme!” Whitman’s famous ode makes explicit the theme that, in F.O. Matthiessen’s seminal account, defines all of the major works of the American Renaissance: a “devotion to the possibilities of democracy.” Recasting Whitman’s “O” as both an ecstatic outburst and a doleful lament, this course explores the ways canonical and lesser-known 19th c. U.S. authors articulated exuberant visions of an ideal democracy, as well as vehement critiques of American democracy’s failings. We will ask how, or whether, these texts are “democratic,” exploring issues of representation, mediation, authority, sovereignty, and the public sphere. We will consider critical perspectives drawn from studies of race, class, and gender inequality, as well as various -isms and -ocracies that constitute variants of, and threats or alternatives to, U.S. liberal democracy: republicanism, populism, socialism, cosmopolitanism, aristocracy, ochiocracy, plutocracy, theocracy. Authors studied include Alexis de Tocqueville, Margaret Fuller, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Martin Delany, Frances Harper, and Mark Twain. ***Note: As we will discuss Moby-Dick in week 3, students are strongly encouraged to purchase and begin reading the Norton edition over break. ***

ENG 0292-02
Graduate Seminar: Romantic Narrative
Hofkosh, S.

Though British Romanticism has long been understood as nearly synonymous with the lyric mode and until the late twentieth century the Romantic novel was considered a debased or alien creation, in this course we will explore some of the many forms of narrative literature written between 1780 and 1830 (or later), including narrative poetry, historical fiction, romance, autobiography, and other hybrid or evolving genres. The material we will consider may include works by Austen, Byron, De Quincey, Equiano, Godwin, Hazlitt, Lewis, Scott, and Mary Shelley.

10/27/14
ENG 0292-03
Graduate Seminar: Radical Comedy
Litvak, J.

“A modern comedy,” Alain Badiou writes, “should tell us where we are in terms of what is socially serious and in terms of its dissolution.” Modern comedy, in this view, should be radical comedy. We will consider the challenges and possibilities of radical comedy, beginning with Badiou’s comic play, Ahmed the Philosopher, and then looking back at a series of earlier comic texts, mostly theatrical but with some digressions into film. Readings are likely to include: Wilde, The Importance of Being Earnest; Feydeau, Going to Put (On purge Bébé); Brecht, Mr. Puntila and His Man Matti; Beckett, Waiting for Godot and Endgame; Genet, The Balcony; Albee, Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?; Orton, Loot and What the Butler Saw; Weiss, Marat/Sade; Churchill, Cloud 9; Notage, Fabulation, or the Re-education of Undine. Films may include Modern Times, Dr. Strangelove, The King of Comedy, and Richard Pryor: Live in Concert. Theoretical texts by Badiou, Bergson, Freud, Horkheimer and Adorno, Zupančič, and others.

ENG 0292-04
Graduate Seminar: Global Eighteenth Century
Lowe, L.

In this seminar, we will read transatlantic literary works like Aphra Behn’s Oroonoko and Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe, autobiographical narratives of Equiano and Mary Prince, and postcolonial novels Patricia Powell’s Pagoda and Caryl Phillips’ Crossing the River, along with secondary and primary histories, political philosophy, and literary and cultural criticism, to arrive at an understanding of the relationship between literary texts and the global social and historical conditions of the eighteenth century. To this end, we will consider transatlantic studies (Nussbaum, Linebaugh and Rediker, Doyle), studies of colonialism and postcolonial theory (Chakrabarty, Stoler), literary theories of the aesthetics of globalization (Spivak, Moretti), liberal political philosophy (Locke, Rousseau), historical analyses of the slave trade (Smallwood) and slavery (Gikandi, Hartman), indigenous critiques of settler colonialism (Hulme, Jackson, Miles), East Indies trades (Yang, Liu, Fichter) and Asian indenture (Jung, Look Lai).