Course Information: Spring 2016

English 17-99, Literature

ENG 0017-01
The Poem
Shapero, N.

This course will focus on the fundamentals of how to read and write poetry, looking at how poets transform kernels of observations and analyses into fully-realized works of literature, with an emphasis on sound structures, visual organization, and argument. Each week, we will investigate a different facet of how a poem is made – that is, how do poets negotiate sonic architecture, visual composition, intellectual through line, and imaginative locus at the level of the line? At the level of the stanza? The poem? The sequence? We'll engage in explication of the assigned reading, collective in-class exercises, and workshop days. Assignments include writing poetry, memorizing poems, and writing analytical book reviews. No previous experience with poetry needed.

ENG 0022-01
General View of English Literature II
Lurz, J.

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 0032-01
Epic Strain: Homer, Vergil, Milton & Co.
Genster, J.

A study of the epic as it develops from classical sources in Genesis, Homer, and Vergil, and moves in English poetry and prose. Writers to be studied may include Homer, Vergil, Milton, Byron, Robinson and Walcott. This course fulfills the pre-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 0069-01
Contemporary Multi-Ethnic Literature: How to Read the World
Sharpe, C.

In this course we will read a selection of late twentieth to current twenty-first century novels coming from the U.S. and Canada. What are the concerns of these authors? These texts? What are they writing into and out of? The seminar will consider how these texts map and navigate the social world, how that social world is constituted and represented, and how the bodies in and the body of the texts are located in this historical moment. The texts are: How to Read the Air - Dinaw Mengestu, The Secret History of Las Vegas – Chris Abani, What We All Long For – Dionne Brand, Never Let Me Go - Kazuo Ishiguro, The Round House – Louise Erdrich, The Gangster We Are All Looking For - lê thi diem thúy, These Dreams of You – Steve Erickson, Their Dogs Came With Them – Helena Maria Viramontes. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.

ENG 0080-01
Hitchcock: Cinema, Gender, Ideology
Edelman, L.

Alfred Hitchcock: the name is synonymous not only with cinematic suspense, but also with the appeal of film as both a medium of popular entertainment and the distinctive art form of the twentieth century. Hitchcock's undiminished appeal reflects our continuing fascination with the visual satisfactions classic cinema affords and with the possibilities inherent in the genres (thriller, suspense film, romantic melodrama) in which Hitchcock primarily worked. This course will explore the relation between Hitchcock's achievement of cinematic "mastery" and his constant, even obsessive, attention to questions of gender, sexuality, and socio-cultural authority—questions that underlie his explorations of narrative suspense. We will examine how "seeing" in Hitchcock's films is the join between politics and erotics, inflecting cinematic spectatorship in the direction of such erotic (and political) "perversions" as voyeurism, fetishism, sadism, and masochism—"perversions" that find expression in the stylistic falir of Hitchcock's films. With this in mind we will consider the pleasures that Hitchcock's style affords: Whose pleasure is it? To what does it respond? How does its insistent perversity affect our understanding of his work? We will try to answer these questions by reading a number of essays on Hitchcock and cinema, including recent interventions from the perspectives of psychoanalysis, feminism, and queer theory. In that sense, this course will introduce students to theories of cinematic interpretation. But our engagement with ways of reading film (in an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural framework) will be filtered through the close and careful study of some of the most complex, compelling, and influential texts in cinematic history. These will include The 39 Steps, Rebecca, Shadow of a Doubt, Notorious, Rope, Strangers on a Train, Rear Window, The Man Who Knew Too Much, Vertigo, North by Northwest, Psycho, and The Birds. Students will be encouraged to attend showings of the films on the library's large screen in Tisch 304, but they will be permitted to watch the movies on their own (before the day of class discussion, of course) if they cannot attend the weekly screenings. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement for English majors.
If you’ve ever been either attracted to or intimidated by the challenges and complexity of the European literature and film of the twentieth century, this course is for you. An introduction to the radically beautiful experiments in literary and cinematic form, this course offers students a way into the dazzling works produced throughout the last century by looking at a number of novels and a handful of films that either take place near or draw significant themes from proximity to a body of water. The focus on the motif of the sea will help us to get our bearings in the shifting depths these works present to us and offer opportunities to practice and develop critical reading skills that will be of use in approaching any literary text.

Throughout the course, we will be looking to the sea as a space that blurs boundaries and breaks down barriers to provide the authors and auteurs of this era an imaginative space in which to investigate a number of conventionally taboo topics. We will trace how the sea opens up questions of both hetero- and homosexual desire, questions of racial otherness and colonial violence, ruminations on time, memory and death, and investigations of morality and societal laws. We will be constantly attentive to the way these meditations also involve a play with literary and cinematic form, as if the consideration of these taboo topics demands a completely new vocabulary of expression.

This thematic will allow us to cross boundaries between nation and medium, as we bring texts from Britain together with those from France and Germany, while also looking at films from the Italy and Scandinavia. This course will thus expose students to more canonical texts while also making room for writers who do not appear as often on syllabi in the English department: novels by Woolf, Joyce, Proust, Conrad, Rhys, Murdoch, Sebald, Hollinghust, Banville; films by Rohmer, Bergman, Visconti.

This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement. The evening "recitation period," for the screening of our three films, will not be required every week.
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:


ENG 0092-03
Topics Lit & Culture: Colonialism and Decolonization
Lowe, L.

In this co-taught course (Prof Lisa Lowe, English and Prof. Amahl Bishara, Anthropology), we will consider historical and ongoing colonialisms, examining the political economy, discourse, biopolitics, military, and cultural practices of rule, as well as modes of resistance, and the intellectual and political responses of the colonized. Various units will focus on settler colonialism and indigenous critique, slavery and antislavery revolts, and militarism and resistance, in North America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and South Asia. Readings will include works by Marx, Fanon, Mamdani, Hall, Ileto, Chakrabarty, Mohanty, James, Du Bois, Mbembe, Simpson, Byrd, Goldstein, Roy and others. This course fulfills the post-1860 requirement.