Course Information: Spring 2018

English 200+, Graduate Courses

ENG 0288-01
Colloquium
Ammons, L.

ENG 0292-01
Graduate Seminar: Resistances: Theory and the Negative
Edelman, L.

At a national moment when possibilities of political resistance are widely debated in popular and academic contexts alike, this seminar will focus on the indispensable role that negativity plays in the work of theorists across a wide range of political, aesthetic, and ideological perspectives. Inseparable from the rise of dialectical thinking, negativity becomes a locus of resistance to the stability of knowledges, identities, and communitarian practices. Even as the political forms of negativity fuel possibilities of critical thought, they also suggest a necessary link between literariness and resistance. The literariness of a text, the element that necessitates the interpretative labor of reading, is what resists both transparency and translation, making reading and theoretical analysis crucial sites for exploring the social, political, and philosophical operations of negativity. Literariness becomes the template for resistance to orthodoxy insofar as it renders such orthodoxy nothing more than an particular interpretation of things. In the course of the semester we will think with Paul de Man about the resistance to theory, with Sigmund Freud about the resistance to consciousness, with Sara Ahmed about the “feminist killjoy” and her resistance to normativity, with Angela Davis about the resistance of black women in ensuring spaces for social survival, and with Gayatri Spivak about resistance to the terroristic discourse of the nation’s resistance to terrorism. At the same time we will be looking at some literary and cinematic texts that show these notions playing out in ways that resist singular political or analytic appropriation. These may include works by Sophocles, Sade, Shelley, Melville, Jacobs, Frost, Sade, Lemmons, and Chabrol. Among the other critics and theorists we will study are Badiou, Benjamin, Bersani, Butler, Deleuze, Derrida, Fanon, Hegel, hooks, Johnson, Keeling, Lacan, Malabou, Ranciere, and Žižek.

ENG 0292-02
Graduate Seminar: Imagining Slavery and Freedom
Sharpe, C.

In this course we will read fiction, essays, poetry ‘about’ North American slavery and its afterlives. This may include: Beloved, At the Full and Change of the Moon, Underground Railway, Brutal Imagination, Counternarratives, Olio, and more. We will also read critical and theoretical writing by Michel-Rolph Trouillot (Silencing the Past), Saidiya Hartman (Scenes and The Terrible Beauty of the Slum”, Marisa Fuentes (Dispossessed Lives), Sarah Haley (No Mercy Here), Thaviola Glymph (Out of the House of Bondage), Édouard Glissant (Poetics of Relation) and more. We will also view still images and film and listen to music that attends to imagining slavery and something like freedom.

We will think about slavery, freedom, imagination, power, archives, narrative, and form.
ENG 0292-03
Graduate Seminar: American Women Writers
Ammons, L.

This seminar focuses on 20/21 century texts. The reading will be multicultural, bringing together Native American, African American, white European American, Asian American, and Latina perspectives; and we will pay particular attention to feminist, critical race theory, and ecocritical theoretical approaches. Authors include Pauline Hopkins, Edith Wharton, Louise Erdrich, Helena María Viramontes, Rita Wong, and Toni Morrison.

ENG 0292-04
Graduate Seminar: Fanon & Chester Himes: Psycho-Sexual Racism and Pan-African Revolt
Thomas, G.

Frantz Fanon and Chester Himes are both enormous intellectual figures in the Black radical tradition. A psychiatrist-cum-revolutionary, Fanon writes his way from Martinique to Paris and then Algeria while articulating a praxis of Pan-African liberation – that is, total decolonization and bona fide independence. A novelist and revolutionist – not to mention a "sensualist," Himes writes his way from U.S. incarceration to European exile or expatriation while articulating his insurgent ideas in the form of fiction, autobiography and a world-famous Harlem detective series featuring "Coffin Ed Johnson" and "Grave Digger Jones." Today, Fanon is typically read in academia as the author of Black Skin, White Masks (1952), not his other works: A Dying Colonialism (1959), The Wretched of the Earth (1961) and Toward the African Revolution(1964). The prolific Himes is rarely discussed at all in North America. This is true of his first published novel, If He Hollers Let Him Go (1945); his last novel, Plan B (1983); and everything he would publish in between. Yet and still, there is a striking, even uncanny similarity to be noted in the stunning oeuvres of Fanon and Himes, especially when it comes to the violence of oppression and the counter-violence of resistance. They highlight the structure of a "psycho-sexual" racism which is endemic to the "political economic" structure of white racist domination by the West. They expand the parameters of Pan-African revolt – to quote a paraphrased C.L.R. James. Indeed, they expand and recast in advance what might count as studies of gender and sexuality as well. This course will examine the writings of Fanon and Himes against the grain of critical neglect and distortion; it will focus on the sexual politics of race and empire which they meticulously expose, both at the level of institutions and identity or subjectivity; and it will consider how these literary-political writings should lead us to rethink many of the basic intellectual concepts afloat both within and outside their Black radical tradition.