

Haverford College
English Department
Spring 2021 Course Guide



*Containing Descriptions of readings,
approaches and course conduct of all
department offerings.*

Major Requirements:

Admission to the major requires completion of at least two courses, one at the 100 level and 1-2 at the 200 level, by the end of the sophomore year; note: ENGL 150L may be counted as one 200-level course (since its rubrics are in line with 200-level materials).

In the total major requires eleven credits, including a .5 credit tutorial (298j) as part of Junior Seminar. Note 399F and 399B comprise a 1.5 credit course taken over the full senior year.

- Seven courses at the 100, 200 and 300 levels of which
 - At least two must be in literature written before 1800;
 - At least two in literature written after 1800;
 - At least one (and no more than two) must be at the 100 level; a minimum of two, preferably three, must be at the 200 level (WRPR 150 “Approaches to Literary Analysis” counts); and a minimum of two must be at the 300 level.
- ENGL 298 and 299, the two-semester Junior Seminar in English
- ENGL 298J, the .5 credit yearlong Junior Seminar in English
- ENGL 399F (Fall) and 399B (Spring) for a total of 1.5 credit Senior Conference

Note: The department will give major credit for one credit for one semester course in a foreign literature in the original language or for Comparative Literature 200. No more than four major credits will be awarded for work done beyond the Tri-College Consortium, whether abroad or in the U.S. Courses taken in the Bryn Mawr English Department, the Swarthmore English Department, and the U. Penn English Department may also be counted towards the major at Haverford.

Creative Writing Concentration:

Creative Writing courses at Haverford are open to all students. Only a handful of English majors per year, however, are accepted into the Creative Writing Concentration.

The Creative Writing Concentration entails:

- Two courses in creative writing (only one of which is counted toward the major).
- Writing a senior thesis composed of an original creative text (usually poetry, fiction or drama) and a rigorous critical introduction.

Students interested in completing a Creative Writing Concentration apply for acceptance in the spring semester of their junior year by submitting a portfolio of creative work to the department chair, Professor Asali Solomon, **by the Friday before Spring Break of their junior year (no extensions)**. The Departmental Concentration Committee will grant admission to students whose work suggests their readiness to generate a substantial literary project.

English Department Course Offerings Spring 2021

COURSE NUMBER	DIV. DIST. CROSSLIST	COURSE NAME	CLASS HOURS	LTD. ENROLL	INSTRUCTOR
ENGL 101B	HU	Theories of the Novel: Embodying Desire and Loss	M/TH 11:10-12:30		McGrane
ENGL 110B	HU	Reading Poetry	M/TH 1:10-2:30		Finley
ENGL 201B	HU	Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales	T/F 1:10-2:30		Watson
ENGL 216B	HU	In the American Strain: Music in Writing 1855–2014	T/F 1:10-2:30		Devaney
ENGL 238B	HU	Creative Non-fiction Writing	TH 1:10-4:00		Devaney
ENGL 247B	HU/VIST/CL	Planetary Lines in World Literature and Film	M/TH 11:10-12:30		Rajbanshi
ENGL 253B	HU	English Poetry from Tennyson to Eliot	T 7:10-10:00 p.m.		Finley
ENGL 270B	HU/AA	Portraits in Black: The Influence and Crucible of African American Culture	T/F 11:10-12:30		Zwarg
ENGL 274B	HU	Modern Irish Literature	T/F 2:40-4:00		Sherman
ENGL 292B	HU	Creative Writing Poetry II	T 4:10-7:00 p.m.		Devaney
ENGL 293B	HU	Introduction to Fiction Writing: Sounds of Experimentation	T 4:10-7:00 p.m.		Rajbanshi
ENGL 294B	HU	Advanced Fiction Workshop	TH 9:40-12.30		Solomon
ENGL 299B	HU	Junior Seminar	M/TH 11:10-12:30		Mohan/Stadler
ENGL 301B	HU/CL	Topics in Medieval Literature: Racing Romance: Black Knights and White Cannibals	M/TH 2:40-4:00		McInerney
ENGL 361B	HU/AA	Topics in African American Literature: Representations of American Slavery	TH 1:10-4:00		Solomon
ENGL 365B	HU	Topics in American Literature: Rock, Soul, Cultural Criticism	T 4:10-7:00 p.m.		Stadler
WRPR 150B	HU	Writing Program	T/F 9:40-11:00 T/F 1:10-2:30 T/F 9:40-11:00		Sherman Zwarg Watson

Cross-Listing Key: VIST = Visual Studies, AA= Africana Studies, CL=Comparative Literature; GS=Gender & Sexuality Studies; HLTH=Health Studies

L. McGrane
Engl. 101B
MTh 11:10-12:30

Woodside 202 – x1155
Office Hours: TBA
lmcgrane@haverford.edu

Theories of the Novel: Embodying Desire and Loss

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the genre of the novel in English with a focus on desire, loss, and literary form. In order to ask the questions, ‘Why and how do we read novels? What does this experience enable?’ we will interrogate theories of the novel, its early formation and contemporary forms. We will also consider changing cultural representations of subjectivity, nation, race, gender, and ways of reading. How is the reader variously constructed as witness to (and participant in) desire and its demise? How do developments in narrative voice influence the idea of fiction as a didactic, pleasurable, speculative and/or imaginative space? What is the novel’s role in effecting social change across centuries and geographies?

Open to majors and non-majors—no prerequisites. Limit: 15 students. Domains A/B

Course Requirements:

Students will attend all virtual and (hopefully!) face-to-face / hybrid class meetings and participate actively in discussions (15%). In addition to reading assigned novels and theoretical texts, students will write three short essays (45%), lead group presentations (15%) and write a final paper or creative project (25%). Students will also be asked to write brief reflections on readings.

Primary Readings:

Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*
Edwidge Danticat, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*
Eliza Haywood, *Fantomina*
George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss*
Ian McEwan, *Atonement*
Phaswane Mpe, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*
Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte Temple*
Brandon Taylor, *Real Life*

English 110b
M/TH 1:10-2:30 (Zoom)

Stephen Finley
Spring 2021

Reading Poetry

From lyrics of the thirteenth century to modern and contemporary poetry, this class will consider the great range of poetry, what Gerard Manley Hopkins said of the world's "Pied Beauty": "All things counter, original, spare, strange." Class meetings will be largely devoted to close examinations of individual poems, sometimes word-by-word. Our reading practices will embrace a number of analytical and interpretive modes, reflective of our current understanding of reading as a diverse, open-ended, yet not ungoverned interplay between readers (past and present) and texts. We will also be attending to the sound and voice of poetry, as well as studying the visual artifact of the poem itself upon the page.

Some general and theoretical essays will be a part of the course's armature. The course will be organized only partly as a chronological survey. It will draw, as well, from throughout the poetic canon, selecting and grouping readings by enduring themes and various verse forms, juxtaposing old and new. It will tend to favor modern and contemporary poetry in its selections, and the motive will often be that of metaphor. The syllabus was already inclusive, but a renewed effort will be made to discover and hear fresh voices that speak to this moment in our national history.

Our primary text will be the Norton Anthology of Poetry, Shorter Edition. This, not altogether happily, is a big, heavy book (and it's the shorter version!). But it has the merit of being quite comprehensive as well as having good notes and study apparatus. The anthology will be supplemented by ample Moodle documents and other supportive materials (theory and criticism). Each class member should hope to be involved actively in class discussions. There will be regular weekly (some in-class) analytical, interpretive/responsive, or creative exercises; a longer essay will be due at the end of term.

Students at every level are welcome to consider the course, but most especially first and second year students.

Writing Requirement: There will be six briefer essays/responses of 1-2 pages, one about every two weeks during term, and a final (as noted above) longer essay at term's end (4-5 pages), in place of a final exam. One hopes, as we work together, that we will find opportunities (as class size allows) for creative responses (some poetry exercises or sonnet writing possible!) and class presentations, perhaps, on individual poems.



This course is devoted to a careful examination of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (c.1387-1400). We will place Chaucer's work in the context of medieval history and culture and consider the responses of medieval readers and modern critics. We will examine Chaucer's authorial persona, his techniques for ventriloquizing the voices of others, and his exploration of religious, racial, and gendered alterity. In addition to investigating Chaucer and his world, we will devote a substantial portion of the course to analyzing modern adaptations of *The Canterbury Tales*, exploring in particular how women of color such as

Patience Agbabi and Jean 'Binta' Breeze have adapted the work of Chaucer.

Assignments will include two short papers, a creative adaptation, an oral presentation on a global adaptation of Chaucer, and a final project. The final project may take the form of a research paper or a creative project.

Partial Reading List:

Geoffrey Chaucer. *The Canterbury Tales* (Third Norton Critical Edition) (2018)

Patience Agbabi. *Telling Tales* (Canongate Books) (2015)

Jean Binta Breeze. "The Wife of Bath at Brixton Market" (2009)

Carissa M. Harris, "Felawe Masculinity": Teaching Rape Culture in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*" in *Obscene Pedagogies* (2018)

Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (1989)

Jill Mann, "Suffering Woman, Suffering God" in *Feminizing Chaucer* (1991)

Cord J. Whitaker, "Race and Racism in the Man of Law's Tale" (2017)

Manuela Coppola, "A Tale of Two Wives: The Transnational Poetry of Patience Agbabi and Jean 'Binta' Breeze." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* (2016)

ENGL 216B
T/F 1:10-2:30

Thomas Devaney
Spring 2021

In the Strain: Music in American Writing (1855–2014)

This seminar is an investigation of music in American literature through close study of significant texts and recordings. Walt Whitman was immersed in opera; Emily Dickinson was steeped in the hymnbook; Zora Neale Hurston in folksong; Amiri Baraka in the blues and bebop; John Cage in silence. First Nation artists Joy Harjo and Jack D. Forbes give voice to the living forms of their tribal heritages. We will explore how poetic music and music diverge, but also look at the ways in which songs and poetry have fed and inspired each other.

The course is an exploration of what Alice Notely calls, “musical closework.” We will chart the rich borderlands between music and speech, and pay close attention to how the breath and ear are used in the structuring of a poem, as well as explore how the breath-unit helps us experience the event of the text. The class will explore the roots of the lyric and the tradition of the single expressive speaker, as well as look at how voice and abbreviation are deployed and felt in poetry and prose. Further questions include: What is the relation of the body and the text? How do personal experiences of music inform how we listen/hear/interpret? Deeper thematic threads chart the profound strains and possibilities in texts, which embody a number of deep cultural strains; as historian Jill Lepore puts it: "A nation born in revolution will forever struggle against chaos."

ENGL 238B
TH 1:10-4:00

Thomas Devaney
Spring 2021

Creative Non-fiction Writing

This creative nonfiction writing workshop focuses on student work. We will read writers such as Alice Walker, Vivian Gornick, Loren Eiseley, and Hilton Als. Students will have the opportunity to expand their repertoire and gain a deeper understanding of creative nonfiction craft related to memoir, the essay, documentary projects, and story-telling for podcasts. A common thread will be stories where lives are at stake, and those which reverberate in larger, unexpected ways. We will continually interrogate where the stories come from and how they speak their truths. Our charge will be to traverse the often vexed and uncharted ground of untold stories and lives.

This course reads mainly Anglophone World literature and film with a focus on the Anthropocene. The materializing impact of environmental crises have an emerging aesthetic counterpart—whether these be realist representations of climate refugees in the Global South, eco-fiction works on dystopic survival, or visual renderings of a volatile and privatizing landscape. Course materials cover multi-genre depictions from North America, Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania of a human-impacted ecology; and course work encourages students to collaborate across linguistic and disciplinary interests. The question of “world” as universal and “planet” as material are considered, with an emphasis on lines of difference (gender, race, class, indigeneity, etc.) generating worlds in World and material predicaments (desertification, flooding, allocation of waste, etc.) re-mapping the planet.

Adjusted (online) for our COVID times, grading incorporates assignments connecting students’ experiences of pandemic to class materials: low-stakes blogs, weekly writing responses, and a final hybrid paper.

Reading and Film list examples:

Paolo Bacigalupi, *The Windup Girl* / (Thailand)

Helon Hebila, *Oil on Water* / (Niger Delta)

Karen Tei Yamashita, *Through the Arc of the Rainforest* / (Brazil)

AWAKE, A Dream from Standing Rock (dir. Jeff Fox, Myron Dewey, James Spione, 2017) / (Standing Rock Sioux Reservation / U.S.)

Anote’s Ark (dir. Matthieu Rytz, 2018) / (Switzerland / Canada / Kiribati)

Snowpiercer (dir. Bong Joon-ho, 2013) / (France / South Korea / U.S.)

Kathryn Yusoff excerpt, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*

Rob Nixon excerpts, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*

English 253b
Tuesday 7:10-10:00 (Zoom)

Stephen Finley
Spring 2021

English Poetry from Tennyson to Eliot

This course will be organized around the poetry of several major poets, beginning with Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Christina Rossetti and her brother, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. We will approach this poetry of the mid-century, in part, via the visual arts, reading its Victorian romanticism and Arthurian mythos in relationship to Pre-Raphaelite painting and book illustration. One of the salient aspects of Victorian culture was the remarkable interconnection of poetry and painting and other graphic arts (these later much more widely influential through technical advances in reproduction). We will turn to consider two very different poets, almost from different worlds: Robert Browning of the well-known dramatic monologues, a public figure via his elopement with and marriage to the famous Elizabeth Barrett; and Gerard Manley Hopkins, a poet forced to work in a private world of intense self-consciousness and spiritual struggle, and whose poems were published posthumously. His great sonnets of natural glory, as well as his later poetry of self-suspicion and despair, were claimed as “modern” when they were finally published in 1918, since his work had had only a very small or local Victorian audience. The course’s third movement will be a reading of Thomas Hardy, W. B. Yeats, and Wilfrid Owen; we will then conclude with T. S. Eliot. We will take a pathway, then, from Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* (1850) to *Little Gidding* (1942).

By beginning in the Victorian mid-century and journeying across the century mark into modern poetry, and, in Eliot, to one of the foremost critics and ideologues of modernism, and by studying Hopkins’s fate of Victorian obscurity followed by passionate, if posthumous, modern fame, the course tries to subvert the convenient opposition of Victorian/modern. This opposition had persistent vitality in both the academy and popular culture. Indeed, “Victorian” is still often taken to mean prudish, pious, and constrained, a thing of class and conformity. How utterly untrue! The erotic intensity of this poetry, its diverse sexualities, as well as its passional and devotional emphasis, can hardly be anticipated. Indeed, the Victorian visual arts provided enduring ideal figures for both men and women that remain ineradicable, exalted and alluring, whether for good or ill.

In our immediate acts of reading and rereading the poems, we will be guided by these concerns: the poet’s role in mediating/exposing a social order marked by repression and isolation; the relation between poetry and historical catastrophe (the terrible reality of war, for instance, is an abiding presence in many of these poems); the structuring modalities of lyric and elegy in a poetry of memory and mourning; and the embedding, the sedimentation of poetry in place, and place in poetry.

Readings:

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)

from *The Collected Poems*, including readings from *In Memoriam* (1850) *Maud* (1855) and *The Idylls of the King* (1859-1888) and last poems.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) and Christina Rossetti (1830 - 1894)
Selected Poetry, from DG's *House of Life*, and especially Christina's "Goblin Market" with DG's illustrations

Robert Browning (1812-1889)
Selected poems, including "My Last Duchess," "Fra Lippo Lippi," "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came," "Andrea del Sarto," "Love Among the Ruins," "An Epistle . . . of Karshish," "The Pope" from *The Ring and the Book*

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844 - 1889)
The Poems of Hopkins (1967, 1970)

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)
The Collected Poems, including poems, especially, from the following books:
Time's Laughingstocks and Other Verses (1909), *Satires of Circumstance* (1911-1914), *Moments of Vision* (1917), *Late Lyrics* (1922), and *Winter Words* (1928).
Selections by Moodle or shorter edition

W. B. Yeats (1865-1939)
Selected Poems and Four Plays (1962, 1996)

Wilfrid Owen (1893-1918)
Collected Poems (1965)

T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)
Collected Poems, 1909-1962 (1963)
from *Selected Prose* (1953)

Note: This reading list of principal works will be supplemented, throughout the term, by selections from essays both critical and theoretical, with an eye both to a new (freshly historicized) literary history of the two periods, as well as to significant challenges posed to received readings of the poems by new(er) theoretical models or approaches. One hopes to have an affordable text about Pre-Raphaelite art, with full color illustrations. If we can't find a reasonable option, we'll build up our own collection of images and graphic design from my library and from the web.

Course Requirements:

Class attendance, three shorter writing/reading exercises (1-2 pages), two longer essays (2-3, and final 5-7 pages).

**Portraits in Black:
The Influence and Crucible of African-American Culture**

This course will use the tools of literary history to examine the influence of African-American culture in the United States. Our focus will be on the events and writings of the nineteenth and early twentieth century when slavery and its legacy informed nearly every cultural production. Works from the old "canon" of American literature will be read in tandem with works from the African-American tradition in an attempt to explore how African-American writers simultaneously influenced, borrowed from, and improvised upon the perception of their world at work in the hegemonic culture of which they were a part. Such an approach will require an understanding of the "color line" and its permeable and impermeable borders. Readings will include discussion of "the problem of whiteness" and the challenges faced by authors attempting to dislodge the violence of blind privilege, sometimes including their own. When even the most sympathetic forces were contaminated by "pride and prejudice," as Du Bois would say, what creative energies flourished in the crucibles of survival?

In addition to critical essays, readings may include:

Frederick Douglass	<i>The Narrative of the Life of An American Slave</i>
Harriet Beecher Stowe	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>
Harriet Jacobs	<i>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</i>
Herman Melville	<i>Selected Stories</i>
Toni Morrison	<i>Beloved</i>
Zora Neale Hurston	<i>Mules and Men</i>
Joel Chandler Harris	<i>Uncle Remus</i>
Mark Twain	<i>Puddn'head Wilson</i>
Ralph Ellison	<i>Invisible Man</i>

Open to first-year students, no pre-requisites. Work may include two short papers, two sets of questions for our readings, and a take-home final, though our schedule will adjust to the challenges of Covid-19 and other unexpected and urgent considerations.

ENGL 274b
Spring 2021
103 Woodside Cottage, x1255

Prof. Debora Sherman
dsherman@haverford.edu
T/F 2:40-4:00

Modern Irish Literature

Language, that most innocent and spontaneous of common currencies, is in reality a terrain scarred, fissured and divided by the cataclysms of political history, strewn with the relics of imperialist, nationalist, regionalist and class combat.... Literature is an agent as well as effect of such struggles, a crucial mechanism by which the language and ideology of an imperialist class or region preserves and perpetuates at the ideological level an historical identity shattered or eroded at the political. It is also a zone in which such struggles achieve stabilization in which the contradictory political unity of imperial and indigenous, dominant and subordinate social classes is articulated and reproduced in the contradictory unity of a "common language" itself.

Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology*

History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.

Stephen Dedalus in Joyce, *Ulysses* (1920) 2.377

This course is concerned with Modern Irish literature as the politically articulate inscription of complex and multiple intersections of history, class and culture. Indeed, Irish history locates the modern Irish state in the political fact of appropriation by the Tudor kings in the 1600's, from which ensues those complicated doublings -- English and Irish, Anglo-Irish and Celt, landowner and tenant, colonialist and colonized, "West Briton" and insurrectionist -- negotiated in that literature. We will want to consider that achievement of identity both in terms of its figurative expression, that is, what tropes or figures can be considered intrinsically Irish, albeit expressed in an/Other language, as well as for its inscription of the cultural and political in contested and engaged identities. Throughout the course, we will pay attention to Irish history, particularly to the "The Great Hunger", the Irish Famine of 1847, as an episode of trauma, historical memory and literary investment.

The course will have three principle foci: the emergence of an Irish literature written in English in the late 18th c. against the background of a late-flourishing Gaelic or Irish literature; the various nationalisms proposed and critiqued in Yeats, Synge, and Joyce; and latterly, modern and contemporary Irish poetry and prose for its various recursions to and departures from a postcolonial mind.

Texts:

Selections from Irish poetry in translation from the 17th & 18th centuries

Swift: *The Drapier's Letters* (1724-25); *A Modest Proposal* (1729)

Edgeworth: *Castle Rackrent* (1800)

Yeats: *The Tower* (1928)

Synge: *The Aran Island* (1907); *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907); McDonagh,
The Cripple of Inishmaan (1996)
Joyce: "The Dead", *Dubliners* (1914); *Ulysses*, Ch. 1 (1922)
Flann O'Brien: *The Third Policeman* (1939); *The Poor Mouth* (1941)
Beckett: *Endgame* (1957)
Seamus Heaney: *Field Work* (1979)
Brian Friel: *Translations* (1980)

Requirements: 2 essays (6-8 pp.) and a final exam

Thomas Devaney
T 4:10-7:00 p.m.

ENGL 292B
Spring 2021

Creative Writing Poetry II

This is an advanced creative writing workshop. The workshop involves both reading and writing poetry. Students will have the opportunity to expand their repertoire by modeling their pieces in conversation with the work of various poets including: Ross Gay, Morgan Parker, Charles Simic, Natalie Diaz, and Ada Limon. We will analyze and investigate issues of form related to entire books and poetry collections. The class will workshop in both small and large groups. Students will come out of the course with a short collection of their individual work submitted as a final portfolio.

ENGLH 293
Introduction to Fiction Writing: *Sounds*
of Experimentation
Eng/Creative Writing

Reema Rajbanshi
Spring 2021
Tues 4:10-7:00 pm

This course introduces the basic elements of short fiction, including the innovative capacities of experimental techniques. Throughout, we consider the role of the sonic in storytelling, from incorporation of music as character and form to silence as poetics and drama. Readings include classics such as James Baldwin's *Sonny's Blues* in the first half and Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* in the last half, and have a global span. While traditional works model classic story elements such as plot, characterization, and setting, experimental works demonstrate what may be gained by engaging, for example, with pastiche, fabulism, and the non-linear. Writing exercises and workshopping are emphasized, a traditional and/or experimental story attentive to sound is submitted as the Final. Readings are discussed in class in terms of technique, experimentalism, and the sonic.

As an online course adjusted for once per week meetings, the majority of the grade rests on effective participation and workshopping. Asynchronous assignments include a discussion thread and periodic writing exercises, constituting about a quarter of the grade.

Sample readings include: Janet Burroway's *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft*, "Yesterday" by Haruki Murakami, "Recitatif" by Toni Morrison, and "The Library of Babel" by Jorge Luis Borges.

Advanced Fiction Writing

Students in the Advanced Fiction Workshop will not only continue to hone the basic elements of their fiction, including character development, dialogue, plot and prose style, but will focus much of their efforts on revision and the process of "finishing" a story. Other central themes of the course will be finding a form for the story you want to write and developing a distinctive voice. We will immerse ourselves in collections of short fiction, and work lurking at the boundaries of short fiction and novel.

Students in this course will read authors such as Edward P. Jones, Lorrie Moore, Danielle Evans, Flannery O'Connor, Henry James and Gwendolyn Brooks with an eye toward reading as writers, but the centerpiece of course meeting will be a fiction workshop where we respond to student drafts. Students will be responsible for drafting two 10-12pp stories for workshop, and submitting revisions, as well as completing a series of more informal exercises.

Attendance is crucial to the health of creative writing workshops. Students who already have conflicts scheduled with two or more meetings should consider enrolling in another class.

The prerequisite for this class is a college-level creative writing course. This course has a limited enrollment of 15 students. In order to be considered for enrollment, you must submit a creative writing sample, 5-10 pp. On your sample, please include your name, year, major, and names of previous college creative writing classes you have taken. **You must submit this sample to asolomon@haverford.edu, by the end of the pre-registration period.**

ENGL 299B
M/TH 11:10-12:30
Spring 2021

G. Stadler
R. Mohan

Junior Seminar in English

This course is a two-semester Seminar required of all Junior English majors.

Through readings, class discussion, written assignments, and tutorials, students will become familiar with 1) a series of texts selected to represent a range of English language poetry and fiction; and 2) examples of critical writing selected to represent critical theory and practice as it has been influenced by linguistics, hermeneutics, history, sociology, psychology and the study of cultural representation. Junior Seminar aims to cultivate in the student some sense of the variety of British, American, and Anglophone literature and its criticism, and to introduce the student to the activity of criticism as it interacts with literature and the intellectual life of our time. This active criticism will lead students to grasp both the nature of literary convention and tradition and the perspectives that open up the canon to a richer diversity of voices and forms. Sections will follow the same syllabus, meeting together occasionally for joint sessions. For the most part the two sections will function as independent seminars, with each instructor responsible for a single seminar.

Students will be required to write three papers (5-7 pages) first term, with revisions in response to the critique each paper will receive in tutorial sessions, and take part in an oral examination at the end of the first semester. The second semester includes two longer papers (8-10 pages), and concludes with a comprehensive final examination that covers both semesters of the course. Regular attendance in both discussion and tutorial is required, and students are urged to prepare rigorously for class.

Readings: The first term is devoted to poetry, poetics, and practical criticism, and includes examples of Renaissance lyrics by Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton, complemented by contemporary American poetry; selected British Romantic poetry from Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats; nineteenth-century American poems by Whitman and Dickinson; and poetry by Yeats, Stevens, Bishop, and Walcott. The second term focuses on narrative and its theorization and criticism, and readings include George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, slave narratives by Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, stories by Edgar Allen Poe, and James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Topics in Medieval Literature
Racing Romance: Black Knights and White Cannibals

Memnon the Ethiopian fought in the Trojan war; his story was told in post-Homeric epic poem *Aethiopsis*, which is lost, but also in several later classical texts, and in Benoît de Sainte-Maur's sprawling *Roman de Troie*, a medieval best-seller, so why have we never heard of him? The Middle Ages are often presented as lily-white, not least by white supremacists who like to play at being Vikings. This course aims both to undo that misrepresentation by exploring the often erased presence of people of color in Medieval art and literature, and by considering the way race was constructed in the period. The questions we will pose may include but will not be limited to the following: what race were the Saracens? Can you get away with cannibalism if you're white? Why have we collectively forgotten the Black knight at King Arthur's court?

Our focus will be on medieval texts, some in Middle English, but no prior knowledge of Middle English is required.

Primary Texts:

Vergil, *The Aeneid*
Chanson de Roland
The Sultan of Babylon
The King of Tars
Benoît de Ste Maure, *Roman de Troie*
Richard Coeur de Lion
Sir Thomas Malory, *Morte D'arthur* (excerpts)

Critical Readings (excerpts):

Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades through Arab Eyes*
Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages*
Shirin A. Khanmohamadi, *In Light of Another's Word: European Ethnography in the Middle Ages*

Requirements:

1 short (4-6 page) essay on a Medieval text
4 short (1-2 page) responses to contemporary scholarly work (article, monograph, blog, etc.) on racism and the Middle Ages
1 longer (10-12 page) essay engaging both a medieval text and critical theory
1 oral presentation
Engaged participation.

Fulfills the pre-1800 requirement for English and the theory requirement for Comp Lit.

ENGL 361
Th 1:10-4:00 (on Zoom)

Asali Solomon
Spring 2021

Topics in African American Literature: Representations of American Slavery

For the past three centuries African American writers have mined the experience of chattel slavery in the cause of literal and artistic emancipation. Slave narratives, as well as poetry, essays and novels depicting slavery, constitute a literary universe so robust that the term subgenre does it injustice. In this work spanning the 18th-21st centuries, the reader will find pulse-quickenning plots, gruesome horror, tender sentiment, heroism, degradation, sexual violation and redemption, as well as resonant meditations on language and literacy, racial identity, power, psychology, democracy, freedom and the human character. This course is focused primarily on prose representations of slavery in the Americas. Our discussions will incorporate history, but will foreground literary and cultural analysis.

Course requirements include three essays ranging from 5pp to 12 pp and several shorter writing assignments.

Octavia Butler, *Kindred* (1979)

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845)

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861)

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, *Iola Leroy* (1892)

Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1987)

Marlon James, *The Book of Night Women* (2009)

M. NourbeSe Philip *Zong!* (2008)

Dir., Steve McQueen, *Twelve Years a Slave* (film, 2013)

Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016)

Rock, Soul, and Cultural Criticism: A Seminar/Workshop

This course will examine disruptions of the categories of race, gender, and sexuality as represented in, and performed by, American and British popular music from roughly the mid-1960s to roughly 1990. More specifically, it will look at these issues through the lens of the vibrant, form-challenging critical writing it has inspired continues to generate today. Thus, it is a class about writing *and* music; reading and listening together, we will engage in an extended discussion of how writing represented—and represents—cultural conflicts over social power and authority in dialogue with music.

Through our readings, we'll seek to understand the connections between the music and some of the most important trends in activist politics of the time—the Civil Rights movement, Black Power, anti- War movements, feminism, LGBTQ rights, etc. While some of what we read and discuss will focus on music that explicitly addressed the politics of race, class, and gender, the bulk of it will look at the complicated representation and enactments of social power in the music's broader dynamics of production, performance, and consumption—what musicologist Christopher Small calls “musicking.” We'll also look closely at the emergence of new forms of criticism alongside political events and aesthetic developments in rock and soul (with excursions into reggae and disco). We will spend some time discussing the meaning of cultural criticism, but throughout the course we will presume that this is a shifting and productively labile category.

The last six weeks of the course will be run as a writing workshop, with students working together to develop their final written projects. The purpose of this unit is to extend inquiry into the matters discussed in the first part of the course; it is also to *enact* inquiry through considered and well-suited forms of writing.

In coming to understand ourselves as critics, we will ask questions like the following: What particular demands and opportunities does popular music place on writers? How does critical writing, a form we likely associate with cultivated dryness and restraint, approach material brimming with pleasure and other emotions that undermine the control of the will, meant to be consumed through the body and senses? And, of course, how do matters of race and gender (and, inevitably, class and sexuality) have impact on how we answer such questions?

The semester will feature some visits from critics who write for both scholarly and popular audience. With these visits we'll seek to extend our discussions but also to introduce the students to a number of eminent *practitioners* of the forms of criticism we are studying. That is, matters of practice will be a focus of our conversations with them.

Readings are likely to include:

Christopher Small, "Musicking"

Ann Powers, from *Good Booty: Love and Sex, Black and White, Body and Soul in American Music*

Jack Hamilton, from *Just Around Midnight: Rock and Roll and the Racial Imagination*

Daphne Brooks, "The Write to Rock: Racial Mythologies, Feminist Theory, and the Pleasures of Rock Music Criticism"

Alexandra Vazquez, "Toward an Ethics of Knowing Nothing"

Margo Jefferson, "Ripping Off Black Music"

Maureen Mahon, "Listening for Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton's Voice: The Sound of Race and Gender Transgressions in Rock and Roll"

Amiri Baraka, "The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Music)" (196?)

Elijah Wald, from *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock and Roll*

Carl Wilson, *Let's Talk About Love: Why Other People Have Such Bad Taste*

Joan Didion, from *The White Album*

Richard Dyer, "In Defence of Disco"

Sara Marcus, from *Girls to the Front*

Hanif Abdurraqib, *Go Ahead in the Rain: Notes to a Tribe Called Quest*

Emily Lordi, from *The Meaning of Soul*

Requirements:

Class participation

Reading and listening journal

Midterm analytical paper

Critical karaoke exercise (to be explained)

Pre-written questions for visitors

Final Project, and collaborative work in preparation for it