

English Graduate Courses

Spring 2015

511

Thesis Workshop and Professional Writing

John Selzer

M 9:05 a.m. – 12:05 p.m. / 1B 224 S. Allen Street

While English 511 will especially appeal to graduate students in English and while the instructor is particularly experienced in assisting English students in a variety of subfields, the course is designed to assist advanced students in all disciplines of the university, preferably students working on their PhDs, in developing their professional voices. The goal is to enable doctoral candidates to submit their work for publication and presentation with confidence and professional polish. Participants will get a sophisticated sense of the disciplinary conventions that are expected in their home fields, including favored lines of argument, kinds of evidence, organizational patterns, and academic style. Instruction will be adapted to students' individual needs and current projects, and we will attend in workshop fashion to special problems that pertain to writing in particular specialties and subfields. Workshops will be devoted to ongoing projects that you are writing--proposals, theses, reports, articles, conference presentations--but the key goal for most will be the completion and submission of a publishable article for a prestigious journal. Grades are based on the writing that is produced through the semester.

512

The Writing of Fiction

Elizabeth Kadetsky

T 12:20 p.m. – 3:20 p.m. / 1B 224 S. Allen Street

513

The Writing of Poetry

Julia Kasdorf

W 9:05 a.m. – 12:05 p.m. / 1B 224 S. Allen Street

This workshop will focus on the construction of poetry books. We will read books published early in the careers of well-known poets, including Robert Frost, H. D., Theodore Roethke, Adrienne Rich, and Rita Dove as well as first books by five award-winning graduates of the Penn State MFA program. We will consider the decisions poets make when they assemble collections. How does the title, order, arrangement into sections (or not) influence the movement and meaning of a book of poems? At what point does a writer begin to think beyond the individual poems and begin writing toward a greater whole? We'll consider journal and chap book publication as initial moves toward the first book. And we'll consider the relevance of poetry, and especially volumes of poetry, in our time and in our community. Students will read a great deal, write and workshop their own poems, and help to host a first book festival of readings and community workshops to be held in early April in State College.

543

Studies in Early Seventeenth-Century Literature

Marcy North

T 9:05 a.m. – 12:05 p.m. / 7A Sparks Building

The Exchange of Verse in 17th Century England: Donne, Jonson, Herrick, King, Carew

In Stuart England, much fashionable poetry circulated in hand-copied manuscripts before it ever reached print. The universities, Inns of Court (law schools), and London coterie served as networks for this lively cultural exchange. They encouraged their students and members to participate as both collectors and poets, to seek out the fashionable early verse of the newly appointed Dean of St. Paul's, John Donne, and to engage in the verse dialogues and debates that Donne and his contemporaries initiated. About a dozen authors are especially prominent in this culture, among them, Donne, Ben Jonson, Robert Herrick, Henry King, Thomas Carew, and several university poets. Their most fashionable verse reached as many readers as a printed work did. In the miscellany manuscripts that preserve their work, however, authorship is often secondary to the collectors' interests in certain genres, subjects, and verse debates. Only John Donne's poetry was regularly gathered together and copied into single-author anthologies. For the other Stuart poets, a handful of poems could mark an authorial cluster. Individual items were often copied next to and in conversation with works by minor and anonymous authors, where they contributed to thematic foci such as the death of a luminary, the question of women's constancy, or the problem of the king's favorite.

This seminar offers graduate students a chance to read these important Stuart poets in the manuscripts and early print miscellanies where they were first preserved. Our primary texts will include authorial manuscripts, print and manuscript poetic miscellanies, and first print editions. We will also be looking at a few prose satires and prose exchanges that will help to contextualize the exchange of verse and show how it fits into a larger disputational model.

In class, we will discuss the extent to which patterns of verse exchange, processes of manuscript and printed book production, and competition between the print industry and manuscript collectors enabled and encouraged the broad dissemination of some poems. We will analyze how the culture of collecting and debating both celebrated and rendered trivial early notions of authorship and discouraged collectors from assembling single-author manuscript anthologies. We will study early modern practices of disputation, commonplace collecting, elegizing, male-female dialogue, and libeling to observe their influence on the organization of poetry in manuscript and print collections. And, we will situate these poets in their respective literary and political communities to determine how they contributed to their own legacies in manuscript and print. Students will have the opportunity to acquire skills in paleography, textual studies, and archival research and to focus their final projects on material that is not available in modern editions. Our secondary readings will include a few studies of individual authors and much newer work on the politics and practices of verse collecting, verse exchange, and even libeling.

554

Studies in Early Seventeen-Century Literature

Carla Mulford

R 9:05 a.m. – 12:05 p.m. / 7A Sparks Building

English 554: "Race, Environment, Enlightenment." The course will examine British and American Atlantic writings (in North America and the Caribbean) by settler peoples, Africans and African Americans, and Native Americans. We'll examine and attempt to account for the different ethnic and racial constructions created by settlers, Natives, and Africans in America in light of the then-competing standards of ethnicity, race, and culture in written and visual media. Among our concerns will be an investigation of how eighteenth-century natural scientists employed an environmentalism derived from their own "enlightened" racialist standards. Students will also learn about how recent challenges to "top-down" Enlightenment studies have enabled scholars to look at these materials from interesting and new vantage points. Writers likely to be included: the writers in the anthology, *Caribbeana*; Mary Rowlandson; William Bartram or John Woolman; John Marrant; Ignatius Sancho; Olaudah Equiano; Jupiter Hammon; Phillis Wheatley; Samson Occom; Thomas Jefferson; Benjamin Franklin; Leonora Sansay; Charles Brockden Brown. NB: This course fills the pre-1800 graduate course distribution requirement.

562

Studies in Literature of Victorian England

Lisa Sternlieb

F 9:05 a.m. – 12:05 p.m. / 1B 224 S. Allen Street

In his preface to *The Aspern Papers* Henry James writes movingly about how he experiences the age of Byron: “I delight in a palpable imaginable *visible* past – in the nearer distances and the clearer mysteries, the marks and signs of a world we may reach over to as by making a long arm we grasp an object at the other end of our own table. The table is the one, the common expanse, and where we lean, so stretching, we find it firm and continuous. That, to my imagination, is the past fragrant of all, or of almost all, the poetry of the thing outlived and lost and gone, and yet in which the precious element of closeness, telling so of connexions but tasting so of differences, remains appreciable.” For the past 25 years some of our best novelists have tried to reach across the expanse of the 19th century and grasp its tangible remains as well. In this course we will read Victorian literature (and some Romantic literature) alongside of neo-Victorian fiction that reimagines it. We will consider the ways in which this new and ever-expanding body of fiction is in itself a form of literary criticism. Readings may include:

Margaret Atwood, *Alias Grace*; A.S. Byatt, *Possession*; Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*; Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*; Michel Faber, *The Crimson Petal and the White*; Kate Grenville, *The Secret River*; Henry James, *The Aspern Papers*; Will Self, *Dorian*; Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia*; Colm Toibin, *The Master*; Sarah Waters, *Fingersmith*; Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Poetry by Lord Byron, John Keats, William Wordsworth, Robert & Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Christina Rossetti, Matthew Arnold

Prose by Charles Darwin, John Ruskin, John Stuart Mill, Florence Nightingale; History and Criticism by Gillian Beer, Drew Gilpin Faust, Graham Good, Robert Hughes, Ruth Richardson

567

Thematic Studies in African-American Literature

Aldon Nielsen

T 9:05 a.m. – 12:05 p.m. / 1B 224 S. Allen Street

This seminar will offer an intensive and extensive exploration of the rhetorics, evolution and hermeneutics of African American writing. While no previous experience of the texts on the syllabus will be assumed, it will be expected that all participants in the seminar (including the instructor), no matter how widely read, will find something new here. We will engage the selected texts much more deliberately than is possible in a standard survey, yet we will cover more ground than would be possible in most graduate seminars. Beginning with texts from the era of colonialism and slavery, the readings will chart a course through Antebellum Abolitionism, through Reconstruction and the post-Reconstruction nadir marked by *Plessy v. Ferguson*, on to twentieth-century modernity and the Harlem Renaissance, the radical era of the Depression, mid-century Civil Rights era texts, the Black Arts Movement and eventually into the contemporaneity of African American writers sometimes considered postmodern. Though we clearly will not be able to consider all literary phenomena from Equiano to Tracie Morris, we will explore the critical implications of varied ways of periodizing our studies of black writings. The readings will include fiction, poetry, non-fiction and criticism. The course of our discussions will follow the lesson offered by such recent critics as Stephen Henderson, Cornel West, bell hooks and Hortense Spillers, whose works suggest that our subject is not so much a particular object of study as it is a series of vital questions. Our work will prepare us for broader discussions and explorations of African American cultural history but we will often, even when reading the best-known among the authors, take the path less traveled by reading the texts less frequently assigned. Seminar participants will make oral presentations to the group based on the readings, and each student will prepare two written exercises: (1) an annotated bibliography on an aspect of African American literature chosen by the student with the instructor's approval, and (2) a review of one critical text in the study of African American letters.

573

Studies in Twentieth-Century British Literature
Modern Poetry
John Marsh
W 3:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. / 308 Boucke Building

Modern poetry is one of the major cultural achievements of the twentieth century, but you would not necessarily know that from recent course offerings and syllabi, where poetry has for the most part lost out to prose. In this seminar, we will survey the modern poetry written in English between roughly 1890 and World War II. Our discussions will mostly focus on the poems themselves, while your seminar paper will dive into the existing scholarship with the hope of surfacing with a publishable essay.

583

Studies in Critical Theory
Claire Colebrook
W 6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

Who Comes After Posthumanism?

This course will read three strands of theory related to Posthumanism: 1. The Nietzschean legacy of the end of Man, 2. Positive claims for Posthumanism as a liberation from human finitude and species-boundaries by way of digital media, cognitive enhancement and other technologies. 3. New claims for human exceptionalism - including theories of a specifically human destructiveness

From the earliest critiques of humanism, such as Heidegger's 'Letter on Humanism,' Derrida's 'Ends of Man,' and Foucault's '_The Order of Things_', the idea that the concept of the human could simply be willed away was always deemed to be naive and ultimately thoroughly in tune with humanism. More recently new forms of human exceptionalism have challenged the anti-humanist tradition. These range from Nick Bostrom's claim for post-human enhancement to Quentin Meillassoux's retrieval of the task of thinking liberated from human finitude.

Key readings will include:

Friedrich Nietzsche '_Genealogy of Morals_'
Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism,'
Jacques Derrida 'Ends of Man,'
Michel Foucault, '_The Order of Things_'
Donna Haraway 'Cyborg Manifesto,'
N. Katherine Hayles, 'How We Became Posthuman,'
Nick Bostrom '_Superintelligence_'
Bernard Stiegler '_Taking Care_'

584

Studies in Rhetoric – Comparative Rhetoric

Xiaoye You

M 12:20 p.m. – 3:20 p.m. / 1B 224 S. Allen Street

For the past few decades we have seen a growing trend in the field of rhetorical studies to interrogate and broaden dominant rhetorical paradigms and to study non-euroamerican rhetorical traditions on their own terms and in their own contexts. The emergence of comparative rhetoric as a subfield is an integral part of this trend as it engages different, non-euroamerican rhetorical practices across time, place, and space and as it shines a new light on dominant rhetorics through a comparative lens. Situated in this context, ENG597 aims to further contribute to this comparative turn by focusing on both the methodologies and actual practices of comparative rhetoric.

We will begin this endeavor by first connecting comparative rhetoric to contrastive rhetoric and intercultural rhetoric. Thanks to Robert Kaplan's work in the 1960s and, in particular, to his insight that different cultures have different rhetorical tendencies, attention to and interest in non-euroamerican rhetorical practices began to emerge in English Studies, though the focus then was largely limited to helping to understand and improve the discursive practices of ESL students in the United States. In spite of this narrow and flawed focus, it was in part Kaplan's insight that gradually led rhetoricians and writing specialists to begin to study other rhetorical traditions on their own terms and in their own contexts.

We will then explore, among other issues, on-going tensions underlying the pursuit of comparative rhetoric between the disciplinary desire to search for a Theory of Rhetoric (Kennedy) and the need of any comparative endeavor to challenge such a desire and to develop local terms and grids of intelligibility, and between an appeal to the dominant paradigms of logic and rationality and a call for aesthetic, analogical, or other explanatory frames of ordering (Hall and Ames). We will investigate what it means to represent "the native's point of view" and to search for a "third" in comparative work (Mao). We want to consider such questions as: (1) how knowledge gets produced and disseminated at points of comparison; (2) what are the possibilities and impossibilities of studying the other on its own terms and in its own context; and (3) how the art of recontextualization can serve as a productive heuristic in the global contact zone where boundaries of all kinds are being blurred, conflated, and/or recreated.

In the first half of the semester, we will read studies on the rhetorical practices of ancient Chinese, ancient Egyptians, American Indians, and Mexican migrant workers. Students taking this class will not only learn about non-euroamerican rhetorical traditions but also be asked to study rhetorical practices in a community or a culture related to these traditions for their seminar papers. These rhetorical practices could have taken place in the distant past or are unfolding in the cybernetic present. In the second half of the semester, the class will workshop on their chosen topics with the intention to develop them into publishable papers. Students will pick both primary and secondary sources related to their topic and distribute them in class. The class will then analyze these materials together to experience the methodological challenges involved in comparative studies.

596

Independent Studies

597A

Literacy and Mobility: Studying Traveling Texts

Athelstan Canagarajah

T 6:35 p.m. -9:35 p.m. / 319 Willard Building

Critiquing models of autonomous literacy that defined texts as self-standing, recent scholars have defined texts as situated in social contexts. Such models are variously labeled social literacies, vernacular literacies, and new literacies. However, there is a realization now that scholars have localized and spatialized the text too much. We must explore new ways of conceptualizing traveling texts. While this concern is of considerable theoretical significance, it also has practical and educational implications. In the age of migration, people are traveling with their literate practices, genres, and resources. The extent to which these literacies are successful in new migrant contexts is unpredictable. This exploration will also help us reconceive the challenges for international and minority students in writing in schools, professions, and higher educational institutions.

597B

Literary Aesthetics

Robert Caserio

W 9:05 a.m. – 12:05 p.m. / 502 Keller Building

Is English studies a discipline of its own in part because fictions figure prominently in its domain? Do fictions have a special nature of their own? Are fictions the basis of differentiating “aesthetic” or “literary” discourse from other discourses (history, political science, sociology, psychology, philosophy, ethics, etc.)? Should doctoral studies in English maintain a focus on the differences between fictions and other discourses?

Claims and counter-claims that answer such questions will be surveyed in this seminar. It will examine a broad range of meditations on fictions and aesthetics. The range will draw on readings in philosophy (Plato, Aristotle, Longinus, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, R. G. Collingwood), in Marxism (Lukacs, Althusser), and in psychoanalysis (Freud, Melanie Klein, Fanon, Lacan); it will consider ideas of fiction by practitioners of Anglo-American modernism (Henry James, Wyndham Lewis, H. G. Wells, Rebecca West, Virginia Woolf, Laura Riding), and by thinkers who influence current literary studies. There will be collateral readings drawn from the domain of visual aesthetics (Clive Bell, Adrian Stokes, T.J. Clarke, Mieke Bal).

Readings per week will be limited to 200 pages of theory and specimens of narrative, lyric, and dramatic fiction. As touchstones of the debates concerning literary aesthetics the following fictional works will be read: Sophocles, *Philoctetes*; Shakespeare, *Hamlet*; Mme. De Lafayette, *The Princess of Cleves*; Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*; Scott, *Chronicles of the Canongate*; Howells, *A Hazard of New Fortunes*; Oscar Wilde, “The Portrait of Mr. W. H.”; Conrad, *Nostromo*; Dorothy Richardson, a novel from the *Pilgrimage* series; Robert Frost, *North of Boston*; Melvin Tolson, *Harlem Gallery, Book I, the Curator*.

597C

Yeats, Spirits, and the Poetics of Decolonization

Janet Lyon

R 9:05 a.m. – 12:05 p.m. / 7A Sparks Building

“Yeats and the Global Poetics of Decolonization”

Yeats’s literary career was entwined with the many phases of the Irish literary revival, the rebellions and civil war attending Ireland’s partial rupture from England, and the global deterioration of the British Empire. In post-colonial scholarship he has been alternately embraced as a poet of decolonization and dismissed as an elitist cosmopolite. The truth about Yeats probably lies somewhere in the middle, and cannot be fully considered apart from the occultist context in which he developed his poetics of decolonization. We’ll track the role of the ghostly/spiritual in Irish decolonization as we read most of Yeats’s poetry, many of his plays, and a fair share of his prose writings, including *A Vision*. We’ll also read some of his Irish, Indian, and West Indian contemporaries and poetic progeny including the lately-departed Seamus Heaney. Plus a raft of relevant criticism and theory. Bi-weekly writings and a seminar paper in two drafts.

597D

The Bloomsbury Group

Christopher Reed

R 6:35 p.m. – 9:35 p.m. / 1B 224 S. Allen Street

This course examines the Bloomsbury Group with emphasis on the connections between writers and artists. We will study the novels and short fiction by E. M. Forster and Virginia Woolf in the context of the art and aesthetic theory produced by their Bloomsbury colleagues. Depending on student interest, we may also consider recent reworkings of Bloomsbury novels in films and in novels such as Michael Cunningham's The Hours and Zadie Smith's On Beauty. The number and variety of these recent Bloomsbury-derived texts suggests how relevant Bloomsbury remains today, although – or because -- the implications of that relevance are contested. This course will foreground the issues that keep Bloomsbury on our minds: the interplay among the arts within the group as well as its members' pioneering engagement with modern(ist?) ideas about the nature and responsibility of the artist relation to other identities based on sexuality, gender, and political commitments.

Students are encouraged to communicate any special interests or perspectives they would like the course to cover to me in the Fall.

Students will be responsible for all assigned readings, for leading portions of seminar discussion, and for producing an original, researched essay on a topic of their choosing.

This course is interdisciplinary and may be appropriate for graduate students in disciplines outside English, including Art History and Women's Studies.

597E

Jewish American Literature and Criticism – Jewish American Novel

Benjamin Schreier

T 12:20 p.m. – 3:20 p.m. / 7A Sparks Building

This seminar has two complementary goals: (1) to orient graduate students in the field of Jewish American literature by surveying Jewish American novels from across the 100-year history of that genre; and (2) to theorize identity-based literary fields by thinking a great deal about the problem of categoricity. We will examine mostly canonical literary texts, touching on most of the heavy hitters and some more recent emergent writers, along with some critical texts in the context of an investigation of some of the important questions about this canon and its scholarly analysis. The seminar will in large part revolve around an analysis of identity's gravitational field and functionality in these literary and critical texts—how it becomes legible, what it does, who has it, when and why it is desired. Identity's metonymical lieutenants—categories like race, nation, culture, and ethnicity—will be put under erasure in order to see how they displace the question of identity. In a further effort to de-naturalize the category of Jewish American Literature, we will ask how successfully these texts can be integrated under other already legitimated literary historical fields—such as “modernism,” “Cold War,” “postmodernism,” or “ethnic literature.” Authors will likely include Abraham Cahan, Anzia Yeziarska, Henry Roth, Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, I. B. Singer, Philip Roth, Cynthia Ozick, Nicole Krauss, Steve Stern, Michael Chabon, and others.

597F

Seminar in African American Rhetoric

Raymond Gilyard

R 3:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. / 1B 224 S. Allen Street