

Spring 2019 Graduate Course Descriptions

512 / Graduate Fiction Workshop: Developing a Personal Style

Elizabeth Kadetsky

R / 2:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. / 132 Burrowes Building

In this semester's offering of the graduate fiction workshop, we will focus on developing a personal style. As opposed to that old chestnut about "finding your authentic voice," a personal style is arrived at through a process of study, experimentation, paring down, and choice. George Saunders is an author who is perhaps best associated with style, and yet even he developed his, he has said, through a process of un-learning imitation. As an MFA student, real life "was nowhere in [my] stories. It was always someone trout fishing in Europe. And I'd never fished for trout." It took many years, he writes, to learn that "any vital creative process somehow involves arranging things so that intuition is given pride of place." In this course, students will examine elements of style in successful contemporary or classic works from the genres of the novel, the novella, the short story collection, and graphic fiction. Reading will be done with the aim of identifying the choices made by writers through the process of creating themselves as artists with an identifiable style. As part of this process, students will present their own works-in-progress to the group, in a workshop format, with an eye toward honing and choosing a style that feels fun and natural to produce, and that is ultimately effective for the reader to consume. Students should expect to give one presentation on an assigned work, read classmates' weekly workshop stories, present two to three workshop submissions, and carefully read and discuss all assigned works. Attendance and class participation are mandatory.

513 / Poetry and Place

Julia Kasdorf

W / 11:15 a.m. – 2:15 p.m. / 159 Burrowes Building

This seminar is a workshop for students seeking to practice the art of poetry—those enrolled in the BA/MA program, those working on theses, and others interested in developing their knowledge of and facility with poetic craft. Across the semester, students can expect to read several poetics essays and eight collections of contemporary poetry chosen because the books demonstrate an understanding of place—and a novel approach to it. Authors will include but not be limited to Daniel Borzutzky, Kimiko Hahn, Rebecca Gayle Howell, Judy Jordan, and Ada Limone. All students will offer a presentation on one of these collections, write responsively to each collection, draft at least one poem per week, work on revisions of their own poems, provide written and oral critiques of their classmates' poems, and memorize poems of their own choosing. Final assessment will be based on participation in the seminar and a portfolio of revised poems, which will include an artist's statement.

540 / Studies in Elizabethan Prose and Poetry: Early Modern Women, the Archive, and the Canon

Marcy North

T / 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. / 132 Burrowes Building

This seminar will allow students to study several of the women authors who are now regularly included in the canon of early modern literature, Mary Sidney, Isabella Whitney, Aemilia Lanyer, Elizabeth Cary, Mary Wroth, Margaret Cavendish, and Katherine Philips. Students will also explore the works of other women authors who appear less regularly in anthologies and textbooks, such as Mary Queen of Scots, Elizabeth Grymeston, Ester Sowernam, and A. S. This seminar poses the question, "Why do we find the first group in textbooks and not the second?" We will consider critically and sometimes skeptically the methodology and criteria for canon admission—early discovery of a woman author, an author's substantial print oeuvre, an author's engagement with literary tradition, proof of autonomous

female authorship, an author's ability to represent the condition of women through characters or personal experience, an author's use of a distinctly female voice, and an author's class status and level of literacy. What happens to the canon of women's literature if we apply different admissions standards, if we include manuscript sources, anonymous works, collaborations such as letters dictated by women and memoirs mediated by husbands, and women writing in the style of male authors? Can we expand the canon in these directions without losing the designation "woman writer?"

Interestingly, editors of women's literature have been very liberal in their inclusion of non-literary genres in the canon of women's literature such as letters, diaries, prayers, and mother's advice manuals. In the study of male authors of the same period, this type of material is less often included in standard teaching anthologies and editions, though it is available to advanced scholars. Students in this course will have the chance to consider how the generic breadth of the canon of early women's literature shapes our picture of women and their literature.

Archival sources will give us a third way to look at canon formation. The body of women's literature has been changing almost yearly because of new archival discoveries and recoveries. Many of these newly found works challenge previous canon formation criteria and redefine the social restrictions that were long assumed to hold creative women back, but which ones will find their way into the Norton Anthology or other general early literature anthologies?

Students in this course will engage in debates about the early modern women's canon and the definition of "woman author," explore new archival and digital resources available for the study of early women authors, and pursue an independent research project that takes into account both new and old discoveries. Assignments will include a review of a modern textbook or anthology, an archival sources assignment, a secondary literature presentation, regular participation in class discussion and in Canvas forums, and a final project (that will include a bibliography, abstract, brief presentation, and complete project). The focus of the course will be from about 1560-1670, though students are invited to propose projects in adjacent periods, as long as they have the motivation and necessary expertise.

541 / Medieval Studies

Caroline Eckhardt

W / 2:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. / 159 Burrowes Building

Reading Troy, Arthur, and Medieval Drama: This seminar concentrates on two great secular narratives of the Middle Ages — the Arthurian legends and the Trojan War tales. These narratives complemented and contested each other in generating constructions of the past that were repurposed again and again for new contexts, whether as nostalgic precedents with implied critiques of the present, as ethical models for proper and improper behavior, or as political and nation-building frameworks and propaganda (for example, London was known as New Troy). We will also situate both of these narratives in relation to a third great body of traditional narrative, that of the Bible, as expressed in late medieval drama at the juncture of the medieval and the early modern eras. Further, we will briefly consider later medievalisms, such as nineteenth-century iterations of the Arthurian and Trojan legends. We will also become acquainted with manuscript archives, online and onsite, which offer extensive opportunities for research and discoveries. All medieval texts will be available in modernized or annotated versions; prior experience with Middle English or with manuscripts is not necessary. Course expectations include class participation, a short proposal in the format of a conference abstract, a 15-20 minute presentation in the format of a conference paper, and a final project that can be either (a) a journal article or (b) a teaching portfolio, for students who are not planning to focus primarily on medieval literature but may want to be prepared to teach its major works as part of broader courses.

564 / Studies in Nineteenth-Century American Literature: Pro-seminar in Nineteenth-Century American Literary Studies

Sean Goudie

T / 11:15 a.m. – 2:15 p.m. / 132 Burrowes Building

This course is designed to introduce students to the field of nineteenth-century American literary studies. Thus, we will read widely and broadly in the long nineteenth century, treating works authored by familiar and less familiar figures. A major preoccupation of the course will be to situate our readings in relation to several keywords that are guiding urgent critical discussions in the field today such as "period," "geography," and "performance"; "race," "disability," and "affect"; the "postsecular," the "visual" and "ecology." This course is relevant to graduate study not only in the field of nineteenth-century American literary studies but also complementary fields of research including (but not limited to) nineteenth-century British, early American, and modernist literary studies. Likewise, the course's "keywords" design makes it a useful introduction to the field for beginning graduate students and reintroduction to the field for more advanced students.

573 / Proseminar in Modernism

Janet Lyon

W / 11:15 a.m. – 2:15 p.m. / 132 Burrowes Building

Proseminar in Modernism

"Modernism" is a huge, ever-shifting field; we'll try to navigate it by way of some major hits, some minor treasures, some famous commentary, and some contemporary critical skirmishes. Expect extensive discussions of modernist style(s) and modernism's signature beehive sociability. We'll move through a variety of media--literature, dance, painting, theater, polemics, philosophy. Space and time confines us to (mostly) English-language productions. At least some of the following figures will figure in our studies: James Joyce, Mina Loy, Jean Toomer, Virginia Woolf, Josephine Baker, Isadora Duncan, W. B. Yeats, Gertrude Stein, Mary Butts, F. T. Marinetti, Wassily Kandinsky, Roger Fry, H.D., D. H. Lawrence, T. S. Eliot, Leonora Carrington, Henri Bergson, Djuna Barnes, the Ballets Russes, Theodor Adorno, Deleuze/Guattari, Nella Larsen, Jean Rhys.

Proseminars emphasize reading over writing. In addition to plenty of reading, you'll submit a 250-500 word response every other week, and compose a conference paper-like document in two drafts.

574 / Studies in Twentieth-Century American Literature: Contemporary American Poetry

John Marsh

T / 2:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. / 132 Burrowes Building

In this seminar, we follow American poetry from after the Second World War to the present. However much damage it might do to the singularity of poets, we will—for the most part—take a schools and movements approach to the period: the Beats, the Confessionals, the New York School, the Black Arts poets, the New Environmentalism, poetry protesting the Vietnam War, the New Feminism, John Ashberry (a school and movement unto himself), the L=A=N-G=U=A=G=E poets, and the opening of the American poetry scene to new identities and perspectives that, perhaps unfortunately, went under the heading of Multiculturalism. We will devote the last week or two of the seminar to figuring out what has happened since the 1990s, when the critical consensus about which poetry now matters has largely broken down. Our discussions will concentrate on the poems themselves, while your final seminar paper will dive into the existing scholarship with the hope of surfacing with a publishable article. The seminar is designed for those who plan to work in the fields of twentieth or twenty-first century American literature, but its emphasis on close

reading will help anyone who wants to improve at reading and writing about literature. The seminar would also be of use to practicing or aspiring poets—anyone, that is, seeking to understand where American poetry has recently been and where, perhaps, it is going.

576 / Studies in 20th-Century American Fiction: Contemporary American Political Novels

Benjamin Schreier

F / 11:15 a.m. – 2:15 p.m. / 132 Burrowes Building

Look, I'm going to level with you: I don't really know what a political novel is, or at least I don't feel entirely confident organizing a course around a secure or self-evident definition of the category *political novel*. I'm slightly more confident about the categories *contemporary* and *American*, but not by much. But as my dissertation advisor once exuberantly told me when I expressed doubts about something or other I was writing, "It's not a bug, it's a feature!" Our point of departure in this seminar will be the fact of this categorical instability, therefore, and we will operate under the practical assumption that it's a productive rather than a paralyzing instability. We're going to survey a number of more or less recent novels (a very few *really* less) with an eye toward theorizing something we might call *the political*, specifically as it circulates within the register we are more or less comfortable calling *the literary*. For lack of a better methodology, we'll direct our attention at once toward novels that are, for lack of a better term, *about* politics and toward novels that, for lack of a better term, *are* political. We'll take neither these terms nor the work they purport to perform for granted. We'll therefore contest the assumption that "political" literature necessarily maintains a recognizable and/or representational relationship to its "political" field of exercise. We'll also question how effectively "identity" operates as a proxy for "politics," as well as the politics of this assumed proxy relationship itself. And in search of a form of thinking other than the capacity to parrot orthodoxies, we'll emphasize close analysis of texts. Authors will likely include folks like Didion, Butler, Beatty, Roth, Morales, Yamashita, Spiotta, Sittenfeld, Delillo, Gyassi, etc. (Finally, I will express some surprise that the powers that be chose "Studies in 20th Century American Fiction" as the rubric under which to mount this course given that the lion's share of novels organized by the administrative concept of the contemporary in 2019 will necessarily be from the 21st century; this is perhaps quibbling, but it's admitted in the interest of truth in advertising.)

ENGL 580 (VSTUD 580) / Comics and Graphic Novels

Scott Smith

T / 11:15 a.m. – 2:15 p.m. / 159 Burrowes Building

This seminar surveys the creative medium of comics and graphic novels, as well as the growing field of Comics Studies. The course provides instruction in the form and history of the comics medium, and the traditions of its criticism and scholarship. Covered writers, genres, forms, and traditions may vary. Creators might include Alison Bechdel, Chris Ware, Lynda Barry, Art Spiegelman, David Mazzucchelli, Phoebe Gloeckner, or Charles Burns; some traditions, forms, or genres might include memoir, graphic medicine, underground & alternative comix, web comics, superhero comics, travel writing, or journalism. The course considers significant methodologies and theories in Comics Studies, with attention to current and historical approaches. Finally, students read a selection of criticism and scholarship keyed to assigned primary texts and topics.

597.1 / Professional Writing and Rhetoric: Theory and Practice

Stuart Selber

M / 11:15 a.m. – 2:15 p.m. / 132 Burrowes Building

This seminar, Professional Writing and Rhetoric: Theory and Practice, will investigate the landscape of professional writing as both an academic enterprise and workplace practice. In 2017-18 there were over 100 jobs in this ever-growing area in English studies, an area that encompasses technical writing, business writing, and computers and writing. What do jobs in professional writing entail? What are the theories and practices that inform research and teaching? What approaches do people use to produce knowledge? We will answer these questions and others by considering histories, rhetorical perspectives, ethical and power issues, research methods, workplace studies, online environments, and pedagogical directions. We will also discuss career options in professional writing outside of academia.

597.2 / Special Topics: Race, Gender, Medium

Matthew Tierney

W / 2:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. / 132 Burrowes Building

This course examines theories and expressive practices of medium and mediation. The very word "medium," as it turns out, need not be constrained by the influential definitions given to it by Marshall McLuhan and Clement Greenberg. Attending to a wider and more political genealogy of the term, from Waldo Frank and Mary Douglas to Nancy Fraser and Jacques Rancière, we will explore the term's applicability to contemporary struggles over race and gender. Entering the terminological flux, we will read foundational readings of digital and visual media (like those of David Marriott, Lisa Nakamura, Elizabeth Grosz, and Fred Moten) alongside significant recent work (like that of Mel Chen, Sara Ahmed, W.J.T. Mitchell, and Ashon T. Crawley). We will see what happens when an object or substance that is familiar to the study of race and gender (like land or body, archive or university, death or breath) gets re-imagined as a medium.

Please email the instructor for the preliminary reading list.

597.3 / Special Topics: Caribbean Literature and the Twilight of Empire: "Is Massa Day Dead?"

Aldon Nielsen

W / 11:15 a.m. – 2:15 p.m. / 303 Rackley Building

The Caribbean writer Edouard Glissant comments that "Island civilizations have so evolved that they acquire a continental dimension."

It could also be argued that North American civilization has evolved in such a way as to carry within it, like a repressed memory, its island origins. That Glissant has published a book titled *Faulkner, Mississippi* and that Langston Hughes was among those who translated Caribbean writers for a North American audience are only two of many instances in the interweaving of Caribbean and North American cultures. In the second edition of his monumental history *Black Jacobins*, historian and philosopher C.L.R. James argues that it was in the moment of the Haitian revolution that diasporic and colonial peoples spread across the islands began to think of themselves as Caribbean peoples. For James, this is a mark of the unique modernity of the West Indies. Nearly all Caribbean writers since James, from Severo Sarduy to Maryse Conde, from Jamaica Kincaid to Derek Walcott, have contended with the linguistic and cultural questions connecting the islands and connecting them to what is so carelessly termed the mainland. Kamau Brathwaite, in the opening poem of *Words Need Love Too*, conjures an imaginative future anterior in which an advance party, an avante garde, of space travelers made a postmodern/premodern visit to the Caribbean basin prior to the Columbian rediscovery. Now that, to quote from Eric Williams, "Massa day done," what will the antillité of the new day be? What

will be the “nation language” of islands that are home to French speaking Chinese, Spanish speaking Africans, Hindus who have never seen India, white Creoles and descendants of the indigenous peoples who have left their name to these islands? When Caliban is on the computer, what will he post? What will be the poetics that will take us from “what the twilight saw” to “morning yet on creation day.” All readings will be in English, though we will read texts from the French, English and Spanish speaking Caribbean.

597.4 / Special Topics: Comparative Rhetoric

Xiaoye You

M / 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. / 132 Burrowes Building

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, this course 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. 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).