

Spring 2020 Graduate Course Descriptions

512 / The Writing of Fiction

Charlotte Holmes

T / 2:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. / 105 Ag Science & Ind Building

This seminar is designed to address the needs of students enrolled in the BA/MA Program, creative writers working on thesis material (or potential thesis material) in their first or second year in the program.

Most students in the workshop will be writing short fiction, but if you are working on a novel, or what Norwegian writer Karl Ove Knausgaard calls “auto-fiction,” your writing will add some variety to the format. You’ll have at least two pieces discussed in class. You’ll write about the work we discuss in class—both workshop pieces and the published writing—and complete weekly journal exercises, for which you will have a chance to design the prompts. For your final project in the class, you’ll revise one of your pieces that was discussed in workshop.

We will discuss several books over the semester, examining them in terms of craft. The reading list, still under construction, is likely to include five books, a mix of old and new—all writers whose work you need to know. *The Rings of Saturn* by W.G. Sebald, *The Waves* by Virginia Woolf, and *Spring* by Ali Smith will be three of those books, if you’d like to get a head start on the reading.

No exams. Intense class participation and your own writing—both critical and creative--will determine your grade in the course.

513 / The Writing of Poetry

Shara McCallum

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

This seminar is designed for students seeking to push themselves as poets, practicing in the art—students in the BA/MA program, students working on theses, and other students interested in developing their knowledge of and facility with poetic craft. Across the semester, students can expect to read 6-8 collections of contemporary poetry and engage in discussions &/or presentations of these collections, to write responsively to these collections (prose & ‘imitation’ poems), to draft at least one poem per week, to be continuously engaged in revision of their own poems, to provide written and oral critiques of their classmates’ poems, and to memorize a poem or two of their own choosing. Final assessment will be based on participation in the seminar and a portfolio of revised poems, which will include a prefatory artist’s statement.

543 / Studies in Early 17th-Century Lit: Manuscript Culture, Rare Books, Digital Archives, and Navigating Special Collections

Marcy North

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

In anticipation of the MA-level Folger Library workshop that Claire Bourne, Whitney Trettein, and I will be offering in June 2020 on Penn State’s campus, I am offering a graduate course in spring 2020 that draws on some of same material and instruction. I will be gearing the spring 2020 course more toward the 17th century and tailoring it to the manuscript resources in Penn State’s special collections and to digital archives available through our library and libraries such as the Folger, British Library, Bodleian, and Beinecke. The course will

involve rigorous skills acquisition (in the areas of paleography, codicology, dating, scribal and compilation practices, and book ownership) and grappling with the theories and practicalities of using digital resources. Graduate students will finish the course prepared to apply for archival fellowships, visit archival libraries, and navigate digital archives to find materials for their projects and dissertations. This course will be helpful to students studying any type of early literature or to students interested in the archives more generally.

"The Culture of Manuscripts" explores the intersection of bibliography, literary criticism, and cultural studies. It introduces graduate students to early modern literature outside of the edited anthology and author edition, it teaches them basic archival skills, it exposes them to theories of material culture, and it directs them to a body of manuscript literature where the dissertation opportunities are plentiful. This course invites students to ask how, exactly, the hand-written manuscript comes to form a *culture* in early modern England, especially a culture separate from the seemingly dominant print culture of the time. How does the obvious flourishing of this post-print manuscript culture pose a challenge to traditional Book History and modern canon formation? Why was manuscript the medium of choice for many court authors, university poets, and women authors, among them Queen Elizabeth, John Donne, Ben Jonson, Anne Southwell, and, of course, Anonymous?

To begin to answer these questions, students will learn to read, handle, and interpret manuscripts available in Penn State's special collections library. Our rare books library has a number of manuscripts dating from the medieval period through the eighteenth century, among them, several seventeenth-century travel narratives; early copies of letters from Thomas Wentworth, earl of Strafford, to King Charles, from George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham, to Thomas Osborne, and from William Hooke to Richard Cromwell, and letters from Robert Barclay to William Penn; a contemporary manuscript account of Quaker Margaret Fell's 1697 talk to the Friends' Chamber in London; a collection of loose sheets that contain satirical verse copied between 1630 and 1688; a legal document copied for printer Richard Jones; a manuscript copy of Francis Bacon's will laid into *Baconiana* 1679; a mid-seventeenth-century treatise on British claims to the seas titled "Islands Arising in the Sea"; and a late seventeenth-century treatise on medicine, pharmacy, and anatomy. These manuscripts will offer students hands-on experience in the archive.

Students will also be exploring resources available digitally through several innovative online archives sponsored by the Folger Shakespeare Library, British Library, Beinecke Library at Yale, and Bodleian Library at Oxford. Digital archives offer students the opportunity to study early miscellanies of university and court poetry, John Donne anthologies, authorial drafts of verse romances, presentation copies of funeral elegies, political libels that circulated as separates, illegal Catholic literature, recipe books, diaries, and familiar letters. Rather than simply having students use digital archives to access primary materials, however, I plan to have them analyze the archives themselves—their structures, methodologies, search capacities, and technologies—and compare them to what they are finding and experiencing in the physical space of the rare book room.

Coursework will include several short paleography exercises, an informational review of a manuscript finding aid, a historical collation of a poem or short prose piece, a short paper defining "manuscript culture" or the "digital archive" in response to select criticism, a first-line index or bibliographical description of a manuscript, a class presentation of developing research, and a final project based on archival resources. Most of the small assignments build toward and overlap with the student's final project. I welcome students from a variety of periods and specialties who want to use this course to acquaint themselves with archival research more generally. The skills acquired here will have broad application, even if our focus is on early modern English manuscript culture.

545 / Chaucer: At Home and Elsewhere in Place, Time and Media

Caroline Eckhardt

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

Geoffrey Chaucer -- author of works ranging from comedy to tragedy, social critique, scientific prose, philosophical translation, dream-visions, and parodies of love and desire -- is among the most versatile and inexhaustibly absorbing writers in the English language. We will read a selection of his works, beginning with his earlier poems, such as the *Book of the Duchess*, including examples of his translations and philosophical and scientific prose, and then emphasizing the love-story *Troilus and Criseyde* (very different from Shakespeare's) and the *Canterbury Tales*. As we read the major Chaucerian works in their English medieval context, we will also consider (a) *Chaucer international*, recognizing his affiliations with the pan-European literary circulation of classical and vernacular texts and translations, genres, social and philosophical ideas, etc.; (b) *Chaucer transtemporal*, looking at the way his works challenge conventions of literary periodization, and also at Chaucerian afterlives from the fifteenth century and early modern period until today's graphic fiction; and (c) *Chaucer intermedial*, exploring adaptations into performance media, as well as Chaucerian textual transmissions from manuscripts to digital media. The balance among these elements can be partly determined by the interests of members of the seminar. Prior knowledge of Middle English is not needed.

Topics will include Chaucer's position as public poet and social critic, his sense of the past, gender issues, rhetoric, humor, his role in the circulation of European culture in England, and questions of literacy, language, power, and audience. We will consider whether late medieval England can validly be regarded as postcolonial, and the extent to which it shares the same literary discourses as continental cultures. We'll glance at Post-Chaucer Chaucer, or Chaucerian continuities in the early modern period (for example, Spenser, Shakespeare) and beyond. Since members of the seminar might someday teach Chaucer, for instance in survey courses, we will frequently ask, "how would you teach this?" In terms of skills, the class will include practice in peer review, analyzing a journal as a possible publication venue, and reading from manuscripts (this is exciting and not hard); we'll look at a sampling of actual medieval manuscripts in the library. **Course expectations:** active contributions in class, including brief presentations (~30%), and a project developed over the course of the semester in three forms of professional writing: first, a brief proposal in the form of an abstract for a conference (~15%), then a conference-style presentation (~25%), and at the end of the semester, a journal-article draft or an alternative writing project or teaching portfolio if approved (~30%).

549 / Shakespearean Authorship: Faith, Fame and Freedom in the Poems and Plays

Patrick Cheney

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

This seminar reads Shakespeare's authorship—in both poems and plays—in terms of an unexamined interlock between three critical concepts central to Western identity and art: faith, fame, and freedom. Primarily, faith is a religious concept, and in Europe during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries it was the battleground for the Protestant Reformation. Fundamentally, fame is a philosophical concept, at the heart of Western thought about the substance and telos of life, from the Greeks and Romans through the Christian Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Foundationally, freedom is a political concept, and was at the center of Western debates about government, which, during the Renaissance, constituted two principal kinds: monarchy and republic. English 549 takes as its working hypothesis that faith, fame, and freedom provide a rich lens for viewing Shakespearean authorship in both the poems and the plays, including *Titus Andronicus*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, *As You Like It*, "The Phoenix and Turtle," *Henry V*, *Hamlet*, the *Sonnets*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *The Tempest*. The goal will be to read samples of Shakespeare's plays—comedy, history, tragedy, romance—and poems—minor epic, lyric, sonnet—in terms of early modern contests in the arenas of politics, philosophy, and religion. To augment the primary readings, we will read a set of secondary works in classical and Renaissance literary criticism, from Plato, Aristotle, and Longinus, to Sidney, Puttenham, and

Jonson. We will also read recent criticism in each of the major seminar areas, including work by Hannah Arendt, Stephen Greenblatt, Stephen Orgel, David Scott Kastan, Lukas Erne, Andrew Hadfield, Richard C. McCoy, Claire McEachern, Philip Hardie, and Helen Cooper. Weekly response papers to the primary readings; an in-class presentation on one Shakespearean work; and a final research project that consists of an abstract and bibliography, conference paper, and professional essay.

577 / Contemporary Fiction: Speculative Fiction

Tina Chen Goudie

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

Rather than tracing a genealogy for a specific set of variants within the larger generic category of speculative fiction, we will focus instead on wrestling with the possibilities and limits of “the speculative” as a literary modality and a critical approach. As such, we will read idiosyncratically in a variety of genres—science fiction, fantasy, horror, and magical realism—that have been associated with the speculative, the hypothetical, the weird, and the fantastic. Interrogating the categorical distinctions separating these genres from each other—and genre fiction from literature—we will pay attention to the various topoi that have become associated with these forms, possibly including but not necessarily limited to world-building, dystopias, apocalyptic futures, alien encounters, cognitive re-mappings and information technologies, artificial life, ghostly matters, and posthuman embodiments as figured by the dead, the undead, and the machinic. We will draw on theoretical discussion of genre, gender, posthumanism, ecology, and critical race studies to help frame our discussions. Requirements for the course will include short response papers, a book presentation, a keyword essay, and a final seminar essay. We will also supplement our literary and theoretical exploration with practical discussion about the profession of literary studies; students will get behind-the-scenes access to the work of the executive committee for the MLA’s GS Speculative Fiction forum and contribute to the work of constructing the forum’s sponsored panels for the 2021 MLA conference.

583 / Studies in Theory: The Question of Literature in the Age of New Materialism

Jeffrey Nealon

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

“Shall I project a world?”

--Oedipa Maas

In the stories we tell ourselves about the current “crisis of the English major,” no matter what we identify as the culprit bringing the enterprise down, the hero of those narratives remains the same: literature. Which is to say, the structure of those crisis narratives suggests that students (and the public) still love literature, but it’s only some villainous factor or factors – vocational rhetoric, ubiquitous screens, ballooning student debt, postmodernism, the breakdown of the canon (too much for some, too little for others), and so on – that get in the way of students doing what they really love: reading fiction and poems (maybe drama as well, but that largely belongs to other departments).

Taking some of its energy from environmental discourse (which has had to overcome the naïve belief that the earth’s future is secure to get on with its crucial business in the crisis-ridden present), this course will wonder how and if literature matters today, both inside and outside the academy.

The course has 4 movements or sites of analysis – fiction, reading, the linguistic turn, and new materialism.

Fiction. The course begins in a bit of blasphemy -- by wondering whether it's true that fiction is in fact a linchpin form of cultural production today. This is of course an old question or concern, and we'll start off by reading Don DeLillo's *Mao II* -- a novel which very effectively and ironically prosecuted this case against the novel nearly 3 decades ago. Turning to the present, and to literary criticism, we begin by looking at the continuing prestige of fiction in critical discussions of literature -- everywhere from the *New York Times Book Review* to academic fare like Amy Hungerford's *Making Literature Now* and Mark McGurl's *The Program Era*, both of which wholly conflate "literature" with "fiction" -- thereby tacitly arguing or agreeing that maybe poetry doesn't matter (anymore), but fiction is still alive and well.

Reading. And whatever one may think of the breathless hopes attached to re-thinking reading after the hermeneutics of suspicion (as in distant reading, post-critical reading, descriptive reading, reparative reading, surface reading, diffractive reading), it's worth noting that these post-suspicion paradigms all continue to take as axiomatic the fact that literature, and especially fiction, has enduring blue-chip value. These methodological squabbles merely argue about new approaches that might help us extract said value. But at that level, these debates are no different from the 1980s "deconstruction vs new historicism" showdown or some other literary critical paradigm war; they continue to take for granted the stability of the literary object and avoid the possibility that maybe literature itself has undergone a change in recent decades. Here, we'll read some of Walter Benjamin's work, and some of Pierre's Bourdieu's, on changes in modes of perception and subsequent changes in the art object. Ian Watt taught us long ago about *The Rise of the Novel*; maybe we're living through its fall?

The Linguistic Turn. We will then turn more specifically to the fate of literature within academic theory. First, we'll look at the work that literature did during the "linguistic turn" heyday of theory. If you say that language is the template for understanding everything else, then the centrality of literature (that place where we learn most intensely how language works) is assured. Here we'll be especially interested in Heidegger's work on language and literature, as well as the question of the projected (fictional) world in Derrida's reading of Heidegger. We'll look specifically at Heidegger's infamous 1929-30 lecture series on animality and "world" and Derrida's reading of that material in his final lecture series, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, where he pits *Robinson Crusoe* against Heidegger on the philosophical question of world and its relations to fiction.

New Materialism. We'll end with a look at the fate of that sense of projected linguistic "world" in new materialist thinking -- wherein the "world" is less a literary fiction projected by humans and more of a sticky, emergent mesh of (living and non-living) forms that all directly co-constitute one another. We'll look for example at the essays in Stacy Alaimo and Susan Heckman, *New Materialist Feminisms*, some of Karen Barad's work, and some essays in Afro-Pessimism, wondering all along how (or if) literature could be central to such "after the linguistic turn" projects.

Our simple guiding question will be: once you turn away from language as the primary template for understanding and projecting a world, and away from the hermeneutics of suspicion that saw hidden meanings everywhere, toward a series of "new materialist" or "realist" discourses, then what use is literature?

Readings could include Ian Watt's *Rise of the Novel*, Don DeLillo, *Mao II*, Amy Hungerford, *Making Literature Now*, Mark McGurl, *The Program Era*, Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, Franco Moretti, *Distant Reading*, Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique*, Heidegger's *Poetry, Language, Thought and Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude Solitude*, Derrida's *The Beast and the Sovereign* lectures, Stacy Alaimo and Susan Heckman, *New Materialist Feminisms*, and/or essays by Walter Benjamin, Bruno Latour, Heather Love, Karen Barad, N Katherine Hayles, Fred Moton, and others.

584 / Rhetoric, Imagination, Method

Debra Hawhee

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

This seminar will showcase examples of and identify useful tools for working imaginatively in rhetorical studies. How do scholars fill seemingly unfillable gaps, say, when they are composing histories of materials that are either ephemeral or have been deliberately obscured? What role might speculation play in the work of theory, particularly when writing about the past or making a future? What conceptions of imagination lend themselves to useful method? The aim of the seminar is to activate our scholarly imaginations, to dislodge ourselves from “tried and true” methods and to see about asking questions that demand that we fashion new ones. We will read a good deal about imagination in a variety of traditions and work together to think about limits of existing methods / materials and ways to move beyond those limits.

597.001 / Late Romanticism: Blake to Badiou

Claire Colebrook

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

Contemporary literary theory often seems indebted to the literary avant-garde, but is perhaps better read as a continuation of the Romantic problem of the relation between life and inscription. This course will examine the lyric tradition in theory and poetry from the nineteenth to twentieth centuries. Texts to be studied include the poetry of William Blake, Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Wordsworth, Jori Graham, Claudia Rankine and Elizabeth Alexander, and the philosophy of Jacques Derrida, Alain Badiou, Gilles Deleuze and Fred Moten.

597.002 / Rhetoric and Public Controversy

Anna Cooke

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

Public discourse is fraught with controversies; they arise over issues ranging from medical treatment of bodies to gun control to the global climate. How and why do controversies develop? How should we define and theorize them? How do they unfold, dissolve, or become resolved? How and why do different discourse actors – experts, academics, policymakers, members of the public at large – participate in controversy, and what is at stake in their participation?

This seminar will investigate frameworks for public debate and controversy and apply those frameworks to understanding contemporary scientific and technical controversies. Readings will introduce rhetorical models of controversy (such as distinctions between the personal, public, and technical spheres of argument) as well as scholarship that complicates those models. Through readings and analyses of contemporary case studies, we will engage with questions such as how and why controversies develop, how we can study their genres, networks, and discourses rhetorically, and will investigate models for how they do and don't resolve. We will ground our inquiry by analyzing specific technical and scientific controversies, such as debates over climate change and the role of algorithms and AI in contemporary discourse. These case studies will give us common ground for developing approaches to analyzing controversy; students will then draw on these approaches for a project that engages with a controversy of their choice.

597.003 / US-Caribbean Regional/Modern

Sean Goudie

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

In recent years, scholars have questioned the boundaries between US regionalist and modernist writings. Nineteenth-century regionalist literature, once thought to be unconcerned with a more serious and sophisticated modernity, is now explored for its intimate connections to the “city” and “nation.” In turn American literary modernisms are no longer thought to be separate from, but exist in interdynamic relation with, the “traditional,” or developments occurring in the “rural,” “local,” and “regional.” Likewise, scholars working in “transnational” and “hemispheric” American literary studies have further unsettled assumptions about the time-space coordinates of would-be discrete regional and modernist US and non-US American literatures and cultures. Put differently, just as adjacent regionalist and modernist US literary traditions are being explored for their permeability, so too scholars are seeking to understand how US modernisms and regionalisms form themselves in relation to transnational political, economic, social, and cultural developments—developments that unfold not only according to an east-west axis (US-Europe), a heretofore dominant way of mapping transnational influence, but also a north-south one (US and the wider Americas). This course focuses especially on how received ideas and assumptions about regionalism, modernism, and the transnational—both in the US and in the Caribbean—are unsettled, or remade and re-remade, from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries in the context of a dying European colonialism on the one hand, and a rising US imperialism and expansionism in the Caribbean on the other hand. We will treat a full range of recognizable and less well-known US regionalist and modernist writers and intellectuals with Caribbean affiliations (e. g. Sarah Orne Jewett, William Carlos Williams, Zora Neale Hurston, William Faulkner, and Kate Chopin), as well as Caribbean writers with North American affiliations (e. g., José Martí, C. L. R. James, Louise Bennett, Claude McKay, and Cirilo Villaverde). We will examine these writings alongside theorists and critics of what we might provocatively term “Caribbean American” literary aesthetics, figures like Edouard Glissant, Sylvia Wynter, and Antonio Benitez-Rojo. This course is especially relevant for graduate students working in modernism, nineteenth-century American, ethnic American, and comparative Americas.

~~**597.004 / Computing Studies**~~ **Course Cancelled**

~~**Brian Lennon**~~

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

Readings of recent work in the humanities-based or humanities-adjacent study of computing, computation, and computational media, at intersections with the categories of race, security, and labor. Readings may include Meredith Broussard, *Artificial Unintelligence: How Computers Misunderstand the World*; Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*; James W. Cortada, *The Digital Hand: How Computers Changed the Work of American Manufacturing, Transportation, and Retail Industries*; Martin Paul Eve, *Password*; Virginia Eubanks, *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor*; Aden Evens, *The Logic of the Digital*; Marie Hicks, *Programmed Inequality: How Britain Discarded Women Technologists and Lost Its Edge in Computing*; Yasha Levine, *Surveillance Valley: The Secret Military History of the Internet*; Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*; Cathy O'Neil, *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy*; Trebor Scholz, ed. *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory*; Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism*; articles by Lisa Nakamura, Blake Hallinan and Ted Striphas, and others.

597.005 / Unfolding Modernity: Reason/Race/Religion**Aldon Nielsen****W / 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. / 132 Burrowes Building**

American readings of the postmodern have tended to root themselves in symptomatic chartings of style. But what happens if we reread the arguments C.L.R. James and W.E.B. DuBois made in the 1930s that the global slave trade and New World Black life were the very conditions of possibility of modernity? And what happens if we conjoin that argument to Lyotard's assertion that what we term the postmodern was already present within modernity as its condition of possibility? Both Randall Jarrell and Charles Olson were writing about "postmodernism" as early as 1948, though they clearly had something quite different in mind. For Jarrell, it was a generational description for the then-new writers following Pound, Eliot, Woolf, etc. For Olson, though, the term designated a turning against anthropocentric and humanist assumptions he found still at work in the Moderns. That primal division animated the most intense of the poetry wars and theory battles in the decades that followed, visible in the writings of Amiri Baraka and others, leaving an embattled legacy not only in philosophy and literature but in our contemporary politics. We will be reading both literary and critical texts, stretching from 1948 to the present.

597.006 / Strategies for Teaching Literature**Lisa Sternlieb****W / 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. / 132 Burrowes Building**

This course will give graduate students the opportunity to teach novels, short stories, poetry, and drama before taking on classes of their own. We will cover a wide variety of material from different centuries and countries. Writers may include Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, Tennyson, Charlotte Bronte, Melville, James, Wharton, Joyce, Flannery O'Connor, Stoppard, Munro, Zadie Smith, and Ian McEwan. Students will have the chance to help design the syllabus based on their own interests and areas of expertise. We will practice lecturing and leading seminar discussion. We will discuss strategies for teaching undergraduates how to write about literature, and we will learn how to constructively criticize other graduate students' pedagogical techniques. The goal of the course is to help students become better undergraduate teachers and to make them more desirable candidates on the job market.

597.007 (ENGL)-597.001 (AFR) / Intro to the Post-Colonial World**Cheryl Sperling****W / 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. / 159 Burrowes Building**

The term post-colonial within itself has manifold meanings and implications. It is also considered a controversial term as many wonder exactly what is post to colonialism. This course is an in-depth exploration of post-colonial theory, with occasional reading of African novels and viewing of films. We will debate key issues and arguments in post-colonial studies such as: How did the colonial encounter reshape the lives of "native" peoples? In what ways did these imperialists succeed in constructing themselves as "masters" and those they subjugated as "inferiors"? How were colonized peoples instrumental in their own subjugation? How did the colonial enterprise end? Did it really end? And, of course, exactly what is the meaning of the term post-colonial.