

Fall 2020 Graduate Course Descriptions

501 / Materials and Methods

Hester Blum

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

This course will introduce first-year students to the forms of graduate study in our present moment, in which a tenure-track academic job may be desirable but can no longer be the primary goal of earning a Ph.D. We will be attentive to the methodological and professional dimensions of graduate study in English, and our primary focus will be on how to perform research and circulate ideas, both practically and theoretically. In doing so, we'll also be thinking more critically about why to take a given approach to materials, how to determine the research methodologies of others and how to choose our own, and how to identify and enter critical conversations. Short writing assignments throughout the term will be tied to research exercises as well as to critical and theoretical readings. In this class we will study—and model—the kinds of critical conversations that enable individuals to succeed both in academic jobs and in humanities positions outside the conventional tenure track. We will conduct workshops (both class-generated and featuring guest speakers) on attending conferences, writing abstracts, applying for grants and residencies, entering into scholarly or creative collaboration, and circulating research in multiple forms.

511 / Thesis Workshop and Professional Writing

Kathryn Hume

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

This course helps graduate students from science and social-science fields develop a clear, professional, prose style. Every week participants give the instructor five or so pages of their writing and get detailed feedback. They learn a number of rules that greatly improve readability. Several times during the semester, their week's assignment is read and commented on by the whole class in workshop. By learning how to suggest improvements to their classmates, members learn how to see and fix their own writing problems as well. In addition to style, classes discuss organization, mechanics, formats, and any special problems pertaining to the students' projects and to writing in their specialties. Students must have approximately 25 pages of professional-level writing on hand to revise for this course. Evaluation is based on weekly assignments, on a test, and on a case study. Humanities students are advised to take English 586.

512 / Fiction Writing Workshop: The Stranger

Elizabeth Kadetsky

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

For this semester's offering of English 512, we will be considering the role of the outsider in writing and/or narrating fiction. While we will respectfully engage with the course readings, we will also critically assess the many ways of writing about, as, and from the adopted point of view of someone on the margins. In one sense, this could be said to characterize all literature. Isn't fiction the province of the singular point of view, the interior voice that feels separate and, thus, writes out of a need to document one's feeling of being an outsider? On the other hand, what are the limits of adopting a persona or writing a third person character different from oneself? At what point does the practice slide into appropriation, whether of culture, gender, or, simply, another person's experience? Students will be invited to submit approximately 60 pages of their own fiction, of any style and on any topic, for workshop by the group. Students will also be asked to engage with and present on assigned readings in the contemporary novel and short story, and one classic work—about five short books total.

513 / The Writing of Poetry

Julia Kasdorf

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

This seminar is designed for those enrolled in the BAMA program and other graduate-level students seeking a poetry workshop experience. Members of the class can expect to read 6-8 books by contemporary poets as well as several critical articles, to memorize published poems, and to write and critique new poems weekly. Readings will be chosen to support a conversation about ekphrasis and American poetry's conversation with the visual arts, including recent collections, The New York School, and Modernist roots. Students will be evaluated on their participation in the workshop and submission of a final portfolio of revised work.

515 / The Non-fiction Workshop

Charles Thompson

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

English 515, the nonfiction workshop, will concentrate on creative nonfiction and how we, as nonfiction writers, create. Techniques for mining memory, as well as for creating memorable stories, will be taught. Rites of passage, such as love affairs, family deaths, interesting jobs, great trips, various disorders and assets are possible topics. The line between nonfiction and fiction in creative nonfiction will be discussed. Several contemporary or near-contemporary texts will be read. One six-thousand word piece, due at the middle of the semester, and revised by the end, will be required. Or the student may choose to write a completely new piece for the second due date. Writing samples will be submitted and discussed on a bi- or tri-weekly basis.

Since this is a writing, not a literature course, readings will be assigned as the subjects they cover emerge in class; a rigid time frame for required readings is not practical.

There will be no examinations. Grades will be based on writing assignments, readings (short written reactions to texts will be required) and class participation.

Attendance at all classes is required.

521.1 with 497.1 / Old English Language

Scott Smith

T and R / 10:35 a.m. – 11:50 a.m. / 111 Sackett Building

This course introduces the vernacular language and literature of early medieval England. Students will acquire the basic linguistic knowledge necessary for reading Old English, working with short texts early in the semester and moving to longer prose and poetic texts after midterm. While this course is primarily dedicated to language learning, we will also discuss the texts we translate as literary texts. The course also considers manuscript issues, historical language change, the relationships between vernacular and Latin traditions, the practice of translation, and the aesthetics of early English literature. No prior experience with Old English is required.

546 / Liberty and Tyranny in Milton's England

David Loewenstein

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

In this seminar we'll consider the ways John Milton (1608-74) and his contemporaries redefined ideas of liberty, tyranny, and servility in an age unsettled by civil war and the political and religious upheavals of the English Revolution (1640-60). Concepts of liberty and tyranny were especially contested during this period. In this course we'll examine the ways Milton's major prose and poems reconceive ideas of civic, domestic, and religious liberty. How close are Milton's concepts to ours today and does it make sense to consider him a proto-liberal as some critics have suggested? Does Milton's strong sense of national exceptionalism clash with his ideas of liberty? Related issues—press censorship, religious toleration, and religious and political dissent—will likewise be important to our discussions. We'll also consider conceptions of liberty and tyranny in writings by such contemporaries as the Levellers, the Diggers, Lucy Hutchinson, and the poet Andrew Marvell. We'll consider too the ways Milton's greatest poems, including *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*, engage with issues that have broad public implications in Milton's time and ours: political liberty, tyranny, the bases of human government, the uses and abuses of political rhetoric, and conflicts of authority. As we study Milton and some of his contemporaries, we'll also address methodological and interpretative issues involved in reading early modern literary texts historically. Requirements include two papers (including a long-term paper demonstrating extensive primary and secondary research); a conference-style presentation on research-in-progress; a book review of a recent study related to the issues addressed in the seminar.

584.1 / Histories and Historiographies of Rhetoric: Evidence, Methods, and Methodologies

Cheryl Glenn

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

As its title suggests, English 584 will explore histories of rhetoric at the same time that it interrogates the writing of those histories (historiography). Historical narratives are primarily motivated to *do* something, and that something always has to do with contributing to the growth, the vitality, and the strength of *a* person, *a* people, *a* culture, often at the expense, erasure, or silencing of *another* person, *another* people, or *another* culture. Thus, historiography is always *partial* and *interested*, an interpretive enterprise, rhetorical through and through.

Anchored in pre-1800 rhetorical theories (those of Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, Quintilian, medieval, and early modern rhetoricians), this theories-and-methods course entails reading around in over three thousand years of rhetorical history to examine the methods and methodologies whereby those histories have been produced, reproduced, resisted, revised, and expanded.

You will go away with a pretty good foundation in the object under study (the broad sweep of rhetorical history) as well as in the discourse performing the analysis (the historiography). Just as important, you'll also go away with experience in conducting your own responsible historiography, based on facts, research, and primary materials. Besides learning how to *do* responsible historiography, your research goals might also include rediscovering or reinterpreting a text, deciding how things "really" were, or discovering ways in which to address the present meaningfully or announce the near future insightfully. Thus, you might decide to concentrate your semester-long research on a historical moment; a rhetorical figure; or a rhetorical art, theory, or practice. *This course fulfills a pre-1800 requirement for rhetoric students; literature students should consult with the DGS.*

597.1 / Special Topics: American Literature and the Problem of Justice

Michael Anesko

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

This seminar will explore the interrelation between American letters and American law. The redoubtable Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once described the law as a great anthropological document, a vehicle through which a culture testifies about itself and its values. Elsewhere he likened it to a magic mirror wherein we see reflected, not only our own lives, but the lives of all men that have been! As Holmes was shrewdly aware, the law can be seen as having both aesthetic and historical dimensions: its operations are both fictive and real, at once magical and documentary.

The seminar aims to introduce students to the interdisciplinary study of American literature. In many important respects legal writing and certain legal forms and practices are highly literary, and their literary qualities are critical to how law functions in society. (Why else would it be so important to get it in writing?) The social efficacy of law is largely dependent upon the literary techniques by which it expresses its authority; and, from the very beginning, legal writing has formed a significant part of America's literary heritage. At the same time, the law has been a central subject in American literature. The problem of justice has preoccupied many important writers who, while fascinated by the law, have also been suspicious of its claims to authority and yet eager to appropriate some of its power in their own literary expression.

Students will be expected to complete all of the reading in a timely fashion; to participate vigorously and show initiative in arriving at suitable topics for class discussion; to be willing respectfully to challenge one another in matters of taste and opinion; and, of course, to write a seminar paper of considerable depth and sophistication.

Readings will include important foundational documents (*The Federalist Papers*, the U. S. Constitution), cultural critique (*Democracy in America*), and works by Cooper, Hawthorne, Melville, Thoreau, Twain, Howells, Norris, and Dreiser.

597.2 / Special Topics: Reading Beyond Race: Contemporary Ethnic American Literature

Tina Chen Goudie

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

What does it mean to "read beyond race"? Is it ever possible? In this course, we will read broadly in contemporary Ethnic American literature but consider what it means when authors challenge the conventions of racial, ethnic, and cultural representation by 1) disrupting expected congruences between author and character; 2) destabilizing the borders of Ethnic American literary topographies; 3) appropriating elements from popular genres and incorporating them into "literary" works through the practices of "genre mixing" (Derrida), "generic troubling" (Huang), "genre poaching" (Lukin and Moffett), and "cumulative reuse" (Dimock); and 4) putting pressure on the relationship between a politics of representation and the representational politics of Ethnic literature. In addition to figuring out how these writers and texts might teach us to "read beyond race," we will contrapuntally explore a set of keywords— "representation," "identity," "bildungsroman," "authenticity," "transnationalism," "globalization," "genre," "form," "aesthetics," and "postracialism"—that have been important in the formation of Ethnic Studies.

597.3 / Special Topics: Green Archive, Cannabis Theory

Richard Doyle

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

It is this present half-developed state of ours which makes the infinitude of the hasheesh awakening so unendurable, even when its sublimity is the sublimity of delight. Fitz Hugh Ludlow, *The Hasheesh Eater, Being Confessions from the Life of a Pythagorean*, 1857.

Drawing on Penn State's rich trove of materials on cannabis prohibitionist Harry Anslinger, this course will contextualize and theorize the current planetary scale greening of global cannabis legalization and research within the diverse history and representation of cannabis in literary, philosophical, medical, scientific, and legal discourse. Our sources will include works by Anslinger, Baudelaire, Hakim Bey, Walter Benjamin, Baylee Brits, Thomas DeQuincey, Prudence Gibson, Timothy Leary, Fitz Hugh Ludlow, Norman Mailer, Terrence McKenna, Henri Michaux, Thomas Pynchon, Avital Ronell, Maria Sabina, and Alice B. Toklas. Our queries for this enormous archive - personal and professional correspondence, typescripts, 13 books, journals, publications, and photos, 6 audio cassettes, 21 negatives, and 20 reels of microfilm - will include:

- What are the biopolitics of cannabis prohibition (Anslinger) and medicalization (Pa Senate Bill 3, Folmer)?
- What resources do the history of literary and philosophical treatments of cannabis offer to a study of the phenomenology of medical cannabis and its use to treat disorders such as anxiety and PTSD? What techniques can be gleaned from these texts toward a mindful and "sublime" (Ludlow) use of cannabis?
- What are the effects of cannabis on writing, and how have these effects informed the history of literature and rhetoric?
- How does the raced history of cannabis (Anslinger) frame contemporary discourses on legalization and prohibition?
- How has scientific and medical discourse represented cannabis and its effects?
- What is the history of cannabis as a sacrament and adjunct to prayer and meditation?

Students will be responsible for short weekly response papers and a research paper or its equivalent. Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs, including those treated with medical cannabis. Every Penn State campus has an office for students with disabilities. The Student Disability Resources Web site provides [contact information for every Penn State campus](#). For further information, please visit the [Student Disability Resources Web site](#).

In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, [participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation](#). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your [campus's disability services office](#) will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.

597.4 / Special Topics: Recovering the Black Past: Writers, Artists and the Archive

P. Gabrielle Foreman

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

This interdisciplinary class examines the archival, theoretical and artistic challenges and opportunities created by Black archival absences, that is, by the historical scraps and languishing ghosts of an often irrecoverable Black past. Literary scholars and art critics have noted the “archival impulse” in recent African American poetry as well as the “historic turn” in contemporary art. We will be examining the work of cutting-edge contemporary Black poets, theorists and visual artists. The class will include some historical texts: slave narratives, early treatises, etc. alongside contemporary Black poetry and essays by writers such as Tyehimba Jess, Tiana Clark, Honorée Fanonne Jeffers, Kevin Young, June Jordan, Marilyn Nelson and more. We will also examine Black visual art by those who regularly mine and meditate on the Black past-present: Glenn Ligon, Theaster Gates, Carrie Mae Weems and Wilmer Wilson. In addition to archival work on significant but dis-remembered Black movements, we will read theorists and critics such as Christina Sharpe, Michel Rolph Trouillot, Huey Copeland, Marcus Wood, Tavia Nyong’o, Saidiya Hartman and Salamishah Tillet.

597.5 / Special Topics: Lyric Poetry in Theory

Christian Haines

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

This course serves as a graduate level introduction to theories of lyric poetry and to the relationship between lyric poetry and critical theory. In addition to considering lyric theory as a genre, the course examines philosophical inquiries into how poetry constitutes an experience of truth, a site of politics, and/or feelings of the beautiful and the sublime. Readings will include a mixture of poetry, literary criticism, and philosophy/critical theory. Some likely authors include Theodor Adorno, Audre Lorde, Jacques Rancière, Claudia Rankine, Rainer Maria Rilke, Virginia Jackson, Daniel Tiffany, Emily Dickinson, Aimé Césaire, Juliana Spahr, Fred Moten, Jonathan Culler, Charles Baudelaire, Giorgio Agamben, and Susan Stewart.

597.6 / Special Topics: Novel Enlightenments: Fiction in Britain and America during the Long Eighteenth Century

Carla Mulford

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

Fiction, which became increasingly popular during the late seventeenth century, often featured elements of contemporary society that fascinated readers interested in the latest literary fashions. Two areas of significant interest to readers included so-called new science and real and imagined travel. Part of the fascination with travel literature was the presumed knowledge one gained about differing cultures and locales. Readers could use others’ cultures in order to hold up a mirror to their own society, just as they could use new scientific findings to illuminate the potential for human agency (or human fragility, or rapaciousness, or foolishness) in the world. In either case, readers could claim cultural or scientific enlightenment resulted from reading fiction. By studying fiction from the era, we gain a particularly good perspective on the extent to which writers inscribed various forms of enlightenment into the very structure of the reading marketplace. We will read all or part of the following primary readings: Francis Godwin, *The Man in the Moone* (London, 1638); Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World* (London, 1666); Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko: Or, the Royal Slave* (London, 1688); George Psalmanazar, *Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa* (London, 1704); Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner* (London, 1719); Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters* (London, 1763); Daniel Defoe, *Roxana, The Fortunate Mistress* (London, 1724); Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels* (London, 1726); Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* (London, 1740); Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy* (London, 1761-67); Anon., *The History of Constantius and Pulchera* (Boston, MA, 1789); Anon., *Humanity in Algiers; Or, the Story of Azem* (Troy, NY, 1801); Tabitha Tenney, *Female Quixotism* (Boston, 1801); Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland* (New York, 1798); Anon., *A Woman of Colour* (London, 1808). In addition to regular and spirited class discussion, students will lead

part of a class discussion with a talking point; write a book report (to be posted to a course folder) and delivered VERY briefly in class; and prepare three formal written assignments (proposal for the course paper; course paper version 1; course paper version 2). The final grade will be an average of four components: talking point and class participation (25 percent); proposal and book report (25 percent); paper version 1 (25 percent); paper version 2 (25 percent).

597.7 / Special Topics: Rhetorics and Technologies

Stuart Selber

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

This seminar focuses on the rhetorical nature of literacy technologies, especially digital environments and contexts, in an effort to map this complex terrain for scholars and teachers in rhetoric and communication. We will consider how people discuss and represent technological activities and spaces: Language is constitutive of human enterprises, after all. But we will also investigate digital environments and contexts as an aspect of the rhetorical situation that must be considered, engaged, and constructed in a conscious fashion. The course will not overstate the autonomous power of literacy technologies, but situate their tendencies, biases, and affordances in ways that are productive and meaningful for the field. We will frame these plans with a series of key questions: How do literacy technologies organize and mediate work, especially in academic settings? In what ways are they socially and politically organized? Institutionally organized? What is at stake in the contexts in which literacy technologies are developed and used? What are the implications for rhetoric and communication as disciplinary formations? For writing practices? For teaching practices? What are productive uses to which literacy technologies can be put? We will investigate these questions (and others) through texts that situate literacy technologies historically, critically, and contextually. Students will read (and hear and watch) an array of perspectives on rhetorics and technologies, lead class discussions and participate actively, write about their interests in this area, and engage literacy technologies through hands-on experiences. After taking this seminar, students should be able to articulate the nature of the professional academic discourse on rhetorics and technologies, present and argue for their own perspectives, and incorporate literacy technologies into their own work, scholarly and pedagogical. The goal is to develop positions and projects that are both useful and professionally responsible.

597.8 / Special Topics: Media / Culture

Matthew Tierney

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

This course will map the intersection and divergence of two related interdisciplinary fields: cultural studies and media studies. Our approach will be both genealogical and methodological. Genealogically, we will explore how differing scholarly argots emerged to describe class, race, gender, and empire in their most material forms of expression. Methodologically, we will explore and employ a wide range of critical tactics: some still dominant, some nearly lost to time, and all available for recovery in the urgent present. Beginning with two major field retrospectives (one by Ioan Davies; the other by Armand and Michèle Mattelart), we will trace the lineaments of a study of residual, dominant, and emergent cultural hegemonies, as it arose in the mid-20th century alongside a study of media as a composite of ideological apparatuses. The first half of the class employs a toolbox approach to four objects of study that are shared by both fields in their formative years: cultural production, cultural imperialism, ideology, and technology. The second half of the course applies this toolset to a reading of several new books at the intersection of digital studies, feminist studies, critical race studies, political theory, and media philosophy.

597.9 / Special Topics: Disability, Rhetoric, and Language

Suresh Canagarajah

T / 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. / 159 Burrowes Building

This course will review recent theoretical developments in disability studies and apply them to concerns in rhetoric, composition, and language studies. We will begin by tracing the shifting paradigms from disability studies to critical disability studies; identity politics to posthumanism; and rights to ethics. We will then survey publications in rhetoric and composition, beginning with the edited collection by Wilson and Lewiecki-Wilson's (2001) *Embodied Rhetorics* through Jay Dolmage's (2014) *Disability Rhetoric* and Melanie Yergeau's *Authoring Autism* (2018). We will also explore the orientations from linguistics in Ramanathan (2009) in *Bodies and Language*, Grue (2015) in *Disability and Discourse Analysis*, and others. We will discuss these texts in the context of theoretical works by Jasbir Puar, Tobin Siebers, Shelley Lynn Tremain, and Nirmala Eruvelles. The course will explore how disability studies isn't restricted to a special group of people but is central to academic inquiry on what it means to be human and demonstrate communicative competence.

VSTUD 502 / Visual Studies in Digitality

Ashleigh Wade

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

This course explores the theoretical, historical, and operational aspects of the consumption and production of digital technologies and associated cultures. We will discuss ways of seeing/reading visual media as well as how digitality itself shapes visualization. Along with these theoretical conversations, we will consider the methodological, ethical, and pedagogical implications of digital visual studies. For students pursuing the Visual Studies dual-title Ph.D., this course will contextualize study of aspects of digital culture treated in other classes.