

Fall 2021 Graduate Course Descriptions

501 / Materials and Methods

Hester Blum

M / 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.

512 / The Writing of Fiction

Elizabeth Kadesky

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

This seminar is designed to meet the needs of students enrolled in the first and second years of the BA/MA Program.

If history is any indication, 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. You’ll have at least two full-length pieces discussed in class. You’ll sharpen your editorial and critical skills by writing about the work we discuss in class—both workshop pieces and the published writing. You’ll also complete weekly journal exercises, with prompts developed by you and your classmates. For your final project in the class, you’ll revise one of your pieces that we discussed in workshop.

In addition to your own work, 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 short story collections and novels, a mix of old and new.

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: Listening for the Voice
Julia Kasdorf
W / 11:15 a.m. – 2:15 p.m. / 132 Burrowes Building

This seminar is designed for those enrolled in the BA/MA program and any other graduate-level students who seek to take part in a poetry writing workshop. Members of the class can expect to read at least 8 books of contemporary poetry by authors such as Natalie Diaz, Ross Gay, Leah Huizar, Alicia Ostriker, and Paisley Rekdal in addition to several critical articles; to memorize published poems; to write and critique new poems weekly; and to engage in individual and small group tutorials. Readings will be selected to support an investigation of listening and whatever it is that we mean when we talk about hearing a poet's "voice." Students will be evaluated on their participation in the workshop and submission of a final portfolio of revised poems.

515 / The Writing of Nonfiction
Toby 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.

540 / Studies in Elizabethan Prose and Poetry
Claire M. L. Bourne
W / 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. / 132 Burrowes Building

This course will introduce students to foundational and emerging methods of studying the book (broadly conceived) as a material object and the relationships between such methods and early modern literary study. Work in bibliography, book history, and related sub-fields (especially around Shakespeare) long assumed a default stance of political neutrality in its emphasis on the "facts" of textual production and transmission. But this pretense has been challenged in meaningful ways over the last two decades. We will study a range of new approaches to telling textual histories, that is, methods that center gender, sexuality, race, and social class—both in theory and practice. We will also pay special attention to the advantages, limits, and potentials of the digital mediation of books, especially given how new forms media literacy are fast becoming indispensable for remote research. At the time of writing this description, my intention is to design the course around early modern (and related) book objects in the Eberly Family Special Collections Library. Students should expect a series of short, experimental, and

low-stakes research/writing exercises leading up to a conference paper and class conference at the end of the semester.

541 / Race, Scholarship, and Appropriation—Medieval and Early Modern Literary Studies

Robert Edwards

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

This seminar will focus on issues of race and representation in medieval and early modern literature. It is an evolving and collaborative project aiming to generate new research and pedagogy by graduate students. (A working group will give a final shape to readings and topics over the spring and summer.) For the moment, the course planning involves three broad areas. The first is a critical study of selected primary texts from both periods that present race, ethnicity, and racialized differences as sites of fantasy, desire, fear, hatred, and conflict. These works include medieval romances such as *The King of Tars*, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, and *The Siege of Jerusalem*; fantastic accounts such as *Mandeville's Travels*, *Thomas More's Utopia*, the wonders of the East, and the literatures of European exploration and colonialism; and canonical texts such as Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Shakespeare's *Othello* and *The Tempest*, and Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* and *Masque of Beauty*. Other texts will include sources outside the British literary canon. In reading these works, we will examine the lexicon of exclusion and belonging (descent, blood, kinship, land, language) and the concepts it supports (identity, the nation, religion, tradition, centers and margins, hegemony, empire). A second area is closely related—method: the disciplinary practices and interpretive approaches that have historically framed race and ethnicity as authorized topics in early period literary studies. What kinds of knowledge has literary scholarship produced or foreclosed thus far? And what alternative methods of knowledge formation have appeared in the last two decades or so, drawing on critical race theory, postcolonial/decolonial studies, the history of antisemitism, gender and queer studies, and intersectional approaches to cultural analysis and social justice? A third area is the afterlife and reuse of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Here, in radically different ways, race and ethnicity underlie nostalgia (Walter Scott's medievalism, John Ruskin's Gothicism), white supremacist propaganda (Thomas Dixon's *Lost Cause in The Clansman*), strategic revisions to forms and mythologies of the past (W.E.B. Du Bois, Charles Chesnutt, Mark Twain), and official memory and amnesia (of Muslim and Jewish culture in Iberia, of indigenous cultures in the Americas and elsewhere during eras of colonization). The seminar will require active participation and collaboration, several short presentations, a conference paper or presentation, and a final project (a scholarly paper or a fully developed course proposal with reading, supplementary, and assessment materials). No previous experience with medieval or early modern English is required, and people from other fields are encouraged to join the seminar.

556 / Reading Film

Matt Tierney

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

A practical and historical approach to film theory and analysis. This seminar develops critical visual literacy by examining a range of practices in cinema study, with emphases on the relation of film to literature and the analysis of film meaning. The course asks how to read a film, and considers the multiple ways that films combine framing, movement, editing, narrative, character, and genre toward the production of culture, ideology, identity, desire, poetic imagery, and community. Students will explore a wide range of critical methods, and will view one to two films per week. Readings will range

from novels to classic film theory, cultural studies, belles-lettres, film criticism, radical poetics, apparatus theory, media theory, and contemporary philosophy.

584 / Studies in Rhetoric: At the Intersection of Rhetorics and Feminisms

Cheryl Glenn

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

"At the Intersection of Rhetorics and Feminisms" will provide an interdisciplinary overview of feminist rhetorical advances over the past thirty years, particularly in the ways feminism and rhetoric intersect with class, religion, gender, race, sexuality, nationality, and/or disability. Feminist rhetorical practices now invigorate law, medicine, politics, argument, delivery (the un/spoken, written, visual, and/or electronic), research methods and methodologies, teaching (especially of rhetoric), mentoring, and administration—all scenes that offer generative responses to traditional, hegemonic rhetorical practices. This seminar will identify and introduce significant research methods and methodological approaches to this intersection. Each day of the seminar will be divided between seminar-style discussions of assigned readings and workshop discussions of participants' research interests. Throughout the term, participants will be working toward a final research project, sharing portions of their research along the way. In these ways, seminarians will both cultivate a rich understanding of these disciplinary intersections as well as develop viable research projects (dissertation chapters, articles or chapters, conference presentations, and/or grant proposals).

589 / Studies in American Poetry: Race, Rhythms and Resistance- Radical Poetries in a Time of Crisis

Aldon Nielsen

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

"Radical" in both the aesthetic and the political sense; "Resistance" both in the sense of socio-political responses to crises in our culture, and in the sense of the resistant poetics of artists unwilling to abide the constraints of mainstream compositional forms. This seminar will examine poetry and theoretical work by radical writers from racial/ethnic minority communities and from aesthetic "outliers." From Chinese poets responding to the early stages of the pandemic, to African American poets addressing the issues and events giving rise to the Black Lives Matter movement, to theorists responding to recent episodes of racial masquerading, the course will encompass a broad range of readings and debates.

597.1 / Disability and Speculative Fiction

Michael Berube

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

In *Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women's Speculative Fiction*, Sami Schalk writes that "the freedom afforded speculative fiction authors through the rejection of verisimilitude, the use of nonmimetic devices, the disruption of linear time, and other tropes which subvert our expectations of reality are all beneficial to writers who wish to represent a world not restricted by our contemporary racist, sexist, ableist, homophobic, and classist realities." In other words, speculative fiction allows us to make things up, and thereby take disability studies (and our understanding of what it means to be human) in new and surprising directions. We'll pursue some of those directions by reading the following novels: Philip K. Dick, *Martian Time-Slip*; C. S. Friedman, *This Alien Shore*; Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*; N. K. Jemisin, *The Fifth Season*; Rivers Solomon, *An*

Unkindness of Ghosts; Jesse Ball, *Census*; Kevin Wilson, *Nothing to See Here*, Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Talents*, as well as Schalk's book, excerpts from Ato Quayson's *Aesthetic Nervousness*, and my own *The Secret Life of Stories*. We'll also watch the films *Deadpool 2* and *The Man Without Gravity*.

597.2 / Decolonizing Rhetoric and Composition

Suresh Canagarajah & Xiaoye You

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

The course will critically examine the dominant scholarly and pedagogical constructs in rhetoric and composition. It will survey emerging approaches from scholars from minoritized backgrounds which introduce constructs that diversify the discipline. The course will examine the extent to which dominant disciplinary constructs represent a colonizing history and envision disciplinary practices that are more inclusive.

597.3 / Imperial Eyes: The First British Empire, the Enlightenment, and Race

Carla Mulford

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

Traditionally, scholars have argued that ideas about race became culturally solidified during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a result of the so-called scientific racism evident in writings by natural philosophers. Did racializing constructs emerge earlier than that during the early modern era? If they did, then the questions we might consider are these: How, and for what reasons? We will look both eastward and westward from Britain as we read belletristic, natural philosophical, and travel writings to explore questions about race, enlightenment, and empire.

The reading list could change, but we will likely read portions of or complete works by the following: Richard Ligon (*History of Barbados*, 1657), John Locke (*The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*, 1669, and *Two Treatises*, 1689); Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko* (1688); George Psalmanazar (*Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa*, 1704); Daniel Defoe, (*Roxana*, 1724); David Hume (*Essay, Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations*, 1752, 1777); Samuel Johnson (*Rasselas*, 1759); Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (*The Turkish Embassy Letters*, 1763); Benjamin Franklin (*Essays*, including *Remarks concerning the Savages of North America*, 1784); Thomas Jefferson (*Notes on the State of Virginia*, 1785); Olaudah Equiano (*Interesting Narrative of the Life*, 1789); Anonymous (*The Woman of Colour*, 1808); Jane Austen (*Mansfield Park*, 1814). Assignments include talking points to assist class discussion; a book report on a scholarly book; and a formal seminar paper (written in three stages – as a proposal, a complete version 1, and a complete version 2).