

Fall 2022 Graduate Course Descriptions

501 / Materials and Methods of Research

Claire Bourne

W / 8:00AM - 11:00AM / 132 Burrowes Building

This course is designed to introduce first-year students to the forms that graduate study takes—from coursework through to the dissertation. What does it look like to pursue an advanced degree in English in our present moment, when a tenure-track academic job is a desirable goal but no longer the de facto outcome of earning a PhD? Readings and discussions will prepare students for the methodological and professional aspects of graduate study in English. We will explore how to identify and enter critical conversations; how to perform research using the resources available through PSU Libraries and other open-access initiatives; how to navigate the ins and outs of academic conferences; how to apply for fellowships and other forms of funding; how to collaborate with other scholars, writers, and thinkers; and how to write and communicate effectively in a range of textual and oral academic and academic-adjacent genres and media.

Students will be expected to write a series of short-form pieces tied both to research exercises and to critical/theoretical readings and engage in discussions of pertinent and pressing topics (for example, how to assemble a committee; the job market; the value of the humanities; how to balance research and teaching; etc). These discussions will be generated from daily readings and writing practices as well as by guest speakers from the department and beyond.

502 / Theory and Teaching of Composition: Composition Theory, Pedagogy, and Applications Inside and Outside the Academy

Cheryl Glenn

T / 8:00AM - 11:00AM / 132 Burrowes Building

The goal of this seminar is to introduce some of the major conversations—and controversies—in writing studies, scholarship that will invigorate your work as a teacher of writing during graduate school and as you write your way throughout your career, whether inside or outside the academy. Over the course of the semester, we will address such topics as rhetorical approaches to the teaching of writing, inclusive pedagogies and practices (i.e., those that are anti-racist/ sexist/ableist/heteronormative), digital composing, multi/translingualism, teacherly and writerly ethos, writerly engagement/resistance, assessment, writing program administration both inside and outside the academy, and public writing. Your semester-long projects can focus on/explore the work/role of writing inside or outside the academy.

512 / The Writing of Fiction

Samuel Kolawole

T / 2:30PM – 5:30PM / 132 Burrowes Building

Course description not yet available.

513 / The Writing of Poetry**Julia Kasdorf****F / 2:30PM - 5:30PM / 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 poetry, memory, and history, including the documentary current beginning with Modern American poetry. Students will be evaluated on their participation in the workshop and submission of a final portfolio of revised work.

515 / The Writing of Nonfiction - The Thing and the Other Thing**Elizabeth Kadetsky****W / 11:15AM - 2:15PM / 159 Burrowes Building**

The graduate nonfiction workshop is geared toward students in the BA/MA program, who are encouraged to work on long-form personal essays, lyric essays, and memoir in this fall's iteration of our creative nonfiction offering. The concept for this semester's nonfiction workshop borrows from the writer Tony Earley's statement that any good story, fiction or nonfiction, brings into play the "thing" and the "other thing." "The 'thing' is what the story is about, and the 'other thing' is a parallel narrative, something that looks like the 'thing' but isn't." We will look at books and essays use hybrid techniques, blending personal narrative with an encounter with the outside world. Writers such as Helen Macdonald, Rebecca Solnit, Paisley Rekdal, Grace Talusan, Maggie Nelson, ARE some practitioners of the form. The course will follow a workshop format, in which students present essays of their own for response by the group, with days set aside for reading discussion and presentations.

543 / Religious Conflict and Difference in Early Modern English Literature**David Loewenstein****R / 2:30PM - 5:30PM / 159 Burrowes Building**

Religious Conflict and Difference in Early Modern English Literature This graduate seminar will examine the divisive and creative impact of the Reformation on literary culture and national identity in early modern England up until the English Revolution. In particular, it will examine the ways religious beliefs, a sense of religious community, and the Bible itself became intensely contested as a result of the Reformation and as England changed in the course of the sixteenth century from a Catholic to a predominantly Protestant nation. The seminar will address a number of interconnected questions: How do anti-Catholic discourses and religious Protestant zeal help forge a new construction of national identity? How does religious conflict fuel the apocalyptic imagination? Does the impact of the Reformation in early modern England always result in the demonization of other religions? In some cases, we'll focus on religious conflict within specific writers. Where do we see evidence of both Catholic and Protestant elements in Donne's poetry? How and where does the starkness of Calvinist theology, with its emphasis on human depravity and sinfulness, generate acute anxiety in Donne's religious poems? How does Herbert explore the tension

between an all-powerful God and the sinful poet's agency? We'll consider these questions (and others) as we study key writers and texts from both the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: these include the bitter polemical conflict of the 1520s between Luther and Erasmus over free will; Anne Askew's heresy examinations (1546); selections from John Foxe's influential Protestant martyrology, *Acts and Monuments* (1563-83); selections from Edmund Spenser's Protestant epic, *The Faerie Queene* (1590, 1596); Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (where issues of race and religious difference intersect); George Herbert's prose and religious poetry; Donne's religious sonnets and verses; the Counter-Reformation poetry of Robert Southwell (executed as a Jesuit priest in 1595); Richard Crashaw's high church poetry; Robert Herrick's poetry of religious ceremonialism; and Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (1643), a text that responds to the deepening religious divisions of the English Revolution. Ultimately the seminar will consider how writers struggled with and made creative uses of religious conflict and diversity in the early modern period. Although our primary focus will be on religious conflict and difference as represented in early modern literary culture, we'll also reflect on religious conflict generated by the Reformation in relation to religious division in our world today. The seminar will be conducted primarily by discussion; it will conclude with a mini-conference in which students present work in progress based on their term paper.

545 / Chaucer

Bob Edwards

W / 6:00PM - 9:00PM / 132 Burrowes Building

This seminar will focus on key texts from the Chaucerian canon: courtly dream visions such as *The Book of the Duchess* and *the Parliament of Fowls*, short narratives such as *Dido and Lucrece* from *The Legend of Good Women*, major works from the *Canterbury Tales*, and *Troilus and Criseyde*. For students unfamiliar with Middle English or those returning to it, we will spend some time initially reviewing the points needed to read the texts closely. Our focus will be on interpreting the texts aesthetically and contextually. We will also examine the approaches that scholars have made in the critical literature.

564 / Proseminar in 19th Century American Literature

Michael Anesko

W / 2:30PM - 5:30PM / 132 Burrowes Building

English 564 will introduce graduate students to a wide-ranging survey of nineteenth-century American literature, exploring all of the major genres of that period: poetry, fiction, oratory, drama, and non-fictional prose. Through careful examination of representative selections from these categories, students should achieve a better understanding of the literary culture of the United States and the canonical base from which (and sometimes against which) more recent works of imagination and criticism have arisen.

A student's final grade for this course will depend upon the quality of three critical essays and the nature of class participation. In equitable rotation, members of the proseminar will be responsible for preparing brief but incisive exercises of critical speculation (two pages, double-spaced), the purpose of which should be to focus attention on a particular line of argument that fruitfully can open up the text(s) at hand. These presentations normally will involve some additional research into matters of historical context and/or critical reception for the assigned reading. The

format of these individual presentations, however, is not prescribed in any way—they can be as imaginative as you care to make them: they should be freely speculative and even deliberately controversial.

567 / Thematic Studies in African-American Literature: Intellectual Activism: The Writing and Work of Black Organizing in the Long Nineteenth Century

Shirley Moody

T / 2:30PM - 5:30PM / 132 Burrowes Building

As Brittany Cooper reminds us, Black women’s “intellectual work is not a disembodied project.” In this course we will explore the practice of Black women’s intellectual and literary activism through biographies about (and primarily written by) Black women. We will ground our study in an examination of the biographical imperative that took shape in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century to document and represent the lives of Black women in relation to (but also beyond) various intersecting social, political, and cultural projects. We will consider the method and practice, historically and today, of representing Black women’s lives in ways that account for the speakable and unspeakable, the knowable and unknowable, and the prominent as well as the invisibilized. We will read 19th and 20th century biographical work by figures such Pauline Hopkins, S. Elizabeth Frazier and Lucy Wilmot Smith as well as more recent biographies and work in related genres by Saidyia Hartman, Shanna Benjamin, Martha Jones, and others. Students will come away from the course with a deeper understanding of 1. the role of biography in the development and practice of Black intellectual history and literary production; 2. the theory and practice of Black women’s biography; and 3. the ways in which biography, criticism, and intellectual history can be generatively intertwined in their own scholarship.

574 / Cold War and Beyond: US Identity and the American Novel

Benjamin Schreier

W / 11:15AM - 2:15PM / 159 Burrowes Building

Using the Cold War mostly as a hopelessly overdetermined interpretive frame—hoping to rely on it as historical marker, signifier of a particular relationship between the US and the world, a symptomatic representation of a “America,” and quite a few other things—this seminar will survey US novels since the middle of the 20th century. I know better than to presume or advertise any kind of comprehensiveness (what can that possibly mean anymore anyway?), but a good number of the authors we’ll read are familiar names, canonical even, and a few can likely claim more than one canon. I’m less interested in determining whether there’s a different character to US novels written before and after the end of the Cold War—an increasingly dubious historical watershed in any case—than I am in assaying the usefulness and/or productivity of the Cold War as an analytical tool, and in determining what alternatives might present themselves. “Identity”—as a representational object, as a subjective anchor, as a preoccupation, as a critical tool, as an apparatus of national accountancy, etc.—organizes the reading list, but that’s not meant to be totalitarian. their historical and institutional moment.

582 / Survey of Contemporary Lit. Theory: Contemporary Theory

Jeffrey Nealon

R / 2:30PM - 5:30PM / 132 Burrowes Building

This course is a proseminar designed to familiarize you with the kinds of questions that contemporary critics and theorists have asked when they study literature and other cultural texts. It will be, to some extent, an introduction to all those "-isms" (formalism, structuralism, psychoanalytic criticism, Marxism, post-structuralism, feminism, queer theory, cultural studies, deconstruction, and so on), but we'll try not to go through some mechanical history of these movements. Insofar as these schools of criticism or theories of interpretation all continue to inflect or infect one another, it's rather disingenuous to line them up into a lock-step history ("in the beginning, there was formalism..."); so we'll be interested in tracing the history of critical topics or concepts rather than merely tracing competing schools and methods. Although we'll certainly be concerned with differences among competing theoretical approaches, we'll be perhaps more interested in looking at the ways that different approaches to texts can be fruitfully combined and reinvented -- what Edward Said dubbed "traveling theory."

We'll also be keenly interested week to week in the status and usefulness of theory today, and going forward, insofar as the so-called "death of theory" has been greatly exaggerated (as you'll see by merely glancing at any high-end journal or major university press catalog). While Vincent Leitch has suggested there are more than 20 distinct "studies" programs that make up the contemporary English department (rhetorical studies, Early Modern studies, visual culture studies, globalization studies, etc), all of them are scaffolded on one or several contemporary theoretical concepts that we'll be studying. While there's a pervasive narrative suggesting that theory killed English's coherence, this course will argue the contrary: theory may be the only lingua franca left in that tangled hybrid called "the English Department."

To that end, the methodology week to week will consist in examining so-called "core" texts/theorists of the past, and combining them with contemporary theorists who've taken those insights in what Said called more "worldly" directions: so when we read Foucault, for example, we'll read Said in the second half of that session, to see where Foucault's theoretical insights overlap with and diverge from Said's postcolonial theory. Similarly, we'll read Paul de Man, and pair him with the work of his first PhD student, Gayatri Spivak. We'll look at Saussure's work on linguistics, and see how it has impacted work on race since Omi and Winant (the critique of essentialism, for instance); we'll similarly pair Nietzsche and Wendy Brown, JL Austin and Karen Barad, Lacan and queer theory, Adorno and cultural studies work on popular music, Marx and Black Marxism, Hegel and the question of recognition (vs. Marxism's emphasis on redistribution), Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" and contemporary work on "own-voices," you get the picture.

The point ultimately is to see what's living and what's dead in the canon of literary and cultural theory.

The assignments will be flexible -- we're going to dispense with the fiction of the near-publishable essay as the final determinant of a grade, and look instead to shorter and more frequent experimental assignments. We'll culminate with a roundtable where each student introduces to the class a contemporary theorist (in your field) who we will not have formally discussed during the semester, to add some more tools to our collective theoretical toolbox.

597.001 / Polar Humanities/Blue Humanities/Environmental Humanities

Hester Blum

M / 11:15AM - 2:15PM / 132 Burrowes Building

This course will provide an introduction to the Environmental Humanities subfields of Blue Humanities (or oceanic studies) and Polar Humanities, with readings both in recent ecocritical scholarship and American literature. Drawing from insights in the fields of natural history, Indigenous studies, political ecology, cultural geography, anthropology, philosophy, and ecocriticism, among others in the social and natural sciences, the Environmental Humanities studies the cultural, social, and theoretical implications of environmental conditions, with attention to environmental racism and modes of ecological justice. The oceanic and polar regions are key to such conversations. Readings may include Tiffany Lethabo King's *The Black Shoals*, Elizabeth DeLoughery's *Allegories of the Anthropocene*, Julie Cruikshank's *Do Glaciers Listen?*, Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake*, Bathsheba Demuth's *Floating Coast*, Karen Routledge's *Do You See Ice?*, Sheila Watt Cloutier's *The Right to Be Cold*, Brian Russel Roberts's *Borderwaters*, Kathryn Yusoff's *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, and Epeli Hau'ofa's *We Are the Ocean*, as well as fiction and poetry from the nineteenth century to the present.

597.002 / Special Topics: African Lit. and its Theories (Cross list with African Studies)

Cheryl Sterling

T / 6:00PM - 9:00PM / 132 Burrowes Building

African Literature and its Theories: Looking at the theoretical canon of African literature and complementary literature.

597.003 / Special Topics: Risks in Science & Tech: Rhetorics and Circulations

Ana Cooke

W / 2:30PM - 5:30PM / 159 Burrowes Building

This course introduces students to rhetorical and critical perspectives on risk and risks discourses, focusing particularly on rhetorics of risk in science, technology, health, and the environment. Contemporary life is fraught with risks arising from climate change, disease, economic collapse, and myriad complex impacts of technoscience. How do publics, organizations, and individuals negotiate risks in the contemporary "risk society" (Beck) How does risk shape the development, manufacture, and distribution of science, tech, and medicine, and how are those risks communicated to (and understood by) the public? We will take up these questions through readings and case studies, drawing on perspectives from sociology, critical theory, and rhetoric, discourse, and communication.