**Fall 2023 Graduate Course Descriptions**

**501 / Materials and Methods of Research**

**Christian Haines**

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

This course introduces incoming graduate students to graduate study in English. It examines the process from taking courses to writing the dissertation. Readings, discussions, and assignments will focus on the methodological and professional dimensions of English as a discipline. Some of the subjects we will cover include what it means to enter a critical conversation in a specific field; how to participate in academic conferences; how to do research using the resources of the PSU Libraries; working with faculty and building a dissertation committee; formal and informal support structures in the English Department; different academic genres like the fellowship application; and the publication process for scholarly articles.

**502 / Theory and the Teaching of Composition**

**Suresh Canagarajah**

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

English 502 is a "proseminar"-- i.e., a survey designed to make you familiar with key texts, issues, and movements in the chosen field.   The seminar will provide an introduction to seminal texts and emerging work in rhetoric and composition so that you will sample the range of theoretical and pedagogical work in the area. To give the course a common core, it has been organized around the theme of "Key Texts and Movements." We will start with early efforts to translate classical rhetoric for composition instruction; then analyze the process movement, which provided a cognitive and empirical basis to writing; review the social constructionist resistance in literacy; and finally theorize the influence of recent mobility processes, digital technology, and identity politics on rhetoric and writing. You will leave the course with a good understanding of the field of rhetoric and composition, with a perspective on diverse options available to you as a teacher or researcher of writing. Course assignments include brief response essays, a book review, and a seminar paper.

**512 / Fictional Realities: Turning imagination into narrative power  
Samuel Kolawole  
W / 2:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. / 132 Burrowes Building**

The most miraculous aspect of fiction writing is the ability to conjure up images and narratives out of seemingly nothing, to be inspired, and for that inspiration to lead to words on the page. Fiction prompts us to construct fictional worlds in our imaginations. How can we live more imaginative lives? How do we build the bridges designed by imagination?

In this class, we will explore the practicalities of fiction writing, including the interaction of memory and creative imagination and the uses of research in writing fiction. We will delve into what makes a detail powerful and how details combine to make a story memorable. We will draw inspiration from film, literature, and visual arts. We will learn about the craft of writing from Anton Chekov’s letters and other craft essays. We will read stories from *One World Two: A Second Global Anthology of Short Stories,* published by New Internationalist.

**513 / The Writing of Poetry: New and Reusable Forms**

**Julia Kasdorf**

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

Form, according to Robert Hass, can reflect “the openness and the instinctiveness of formal creation.” This advanced poetry workshop is designed for students enrolled in the BA/MA program and other graduate students interested in practicing their craft. Common readings will be chosen to explore the ways American poets have given shape to “the energy of the poem’s making,” whether in free verse, reusable, or prose forms. Students can expect to read works by foundational poets such as Robert Frost, Edna Saint Vincent Millay, and Gwendolyn Brooks, as well as books by contemporary poets such as Natasha Trethewey, Terrance Hayes, Dorothy Chan, and Diane Seuss. Most weeks, students will draft a new poem, provide written and oral critiques of their classmates’ work, and respond to assigned texts. Final assessment will be based on participation in the seminar and a portfolio of revisions.

**515 / The Writing of Nonfiction**

**Elizabeth Kadetsky**

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

The graduate nonfiction workshop is primarily for students in the BA/MA program, who will work on writing long-form personal essays, journalistic essays, and/or memoir. We will read various modes and genres of nonfiction to learn about technique, and to explore the blurry line between fiction and nonfiction. (Also, the blurry line between what one should or should not disclose about one’s family and friends!) We will be especially attentive to the demands of personal narrative, looking for how writers do or don’t become characters in their own work. Some examples: Anne Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*; Patti Smith, *Just Kids*; Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*; Elizabeth Kadetsky, *The Memory Eaters*. The course will follow a workshop format, in which students present their essays-in-progress for response by the group, with class time dedicated to reading, discussion, and presentations. Essays will be 6000-8000 words, with an initial draft due in late October, to be revised in the second half of the semester.

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

**Bob Edwards**

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

This seminar will focus on race and representation in medieval and early modern literature; it aims to generate a series of research and pedagogical projects by graduate students, building from three focal points. The first is a body of primary works from the two periods that represent race, ethnicity, and racialized differences as sites of fantasy, desire, fear, and identity. 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*, and the wonders of the East, and canonical texts such Spenser’s *Faerie Queene,* Shakespeare’s *Othello* and *The Tempest*, and Ben Jonson’s *Masque of Blackness* and *Masque of Beauty*. Is race, understood historically and theoretically, an element in early period writing? If so, how does it differ from Enlightenment theories and “racial science”? A second focus is literary scholarship—the array of interpretative discourse and disciplinary practices that have historically framed race and ethnicity as topics of critical scrutiny in period studies. We will consider the alternatives offered by contemporary approaches that seek to make visible the cultural and ideological work that race and representation perform on behalf of political authority, national identity, regulation, and empire. A third focus will be on the afterlife of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Here the nineteenth century, represented by Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe* and John Ruskin’s idealization of the Gothic, is crucial to creating the means for appropriating an idealized past. We will be interested in a range of expressions from subaltern medievalism to novels by Mark Twain and Charles Chesnutt to the racist appropriation of Thomas Dixon’s *The Clansman* and its film adaptation, D. W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation* (1915). The seminar will require active participation, several short presentations, a conference paper or presentation, and a final project (a fully developed course proposal or a scholarly paper).

**543 / Studies in Early 17th Century Literature: MSS, Rare Books, Special Collections**

**Marcy North**

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

Manuscripts, Book Production, and the Seventeenth-Century Archives invites graduate students to hone their archival skills while exploring Penn State’s Special Collections and the digital archives at major libraries. The literary focus of the course will be 17th-century non-dramatic genres preserved in manuscript, though students are welcome to explore early materials outside of the specific course scope. This might include print sources, medieval archives, dramatic archives, women’s literature, or 18th-century literature, for instance. The course pedagogy is partly modeled on the Folger Shakespeare Library’s seminars for graduate students, which immerse students in the archives, emphasize hands-on projects, and give students the skills, resources, and confidence to find and analyze archival sources on their own. There are five broad objectives that will organize our semester—finding, handling, reading, interpreting, and presenting on archival resources—though students should expect to start reading manuscripts on Day 1. The course introduces students to paleography, codicology, dating, terminology, finding and bibliographical aids, scribal and compilation practices, and early readership and book use. It gives students a chance to grapple with literary content and with how the archives frame interpretations. It also encourages students to grapple with the theories and practicalities of using material and 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.

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 political and familiar letters; a contemporary report on Quaker Margaret Fell’s 1697 talk to the Friends’ Chamber in London; satirical verse copied between 1630 and 1688; household accounts and family records; a woman’s recipe book, a treatise on British claims to the sea; and a late seventeenth-century treatise on medicine, pharmacy, and anatomy. There are also numerous printed books such as Spenser’s Faerie Queen 1596, Beaumont’s Comedies and Tragedies 1647, and Francis Osborne’s Advice to a Son that have manuscript annotations. The digital resources at the Folger Library, British Library, Beinecke Library, and Bodleian Library give us access to numerous other literary and historical works. 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.

Critical readings will help students understand “manuscript culture” and acquaint them with current Book History, which often combines bibliography, literary criticism, and cultural studies. Some readings will be practical and instructional, others will be cultural and contextual, and a few will take a theoretical look at manuscript studies in the digital age. The coursework will include several short skills exercises, a historical collation of a poem, an informational review of a digital repository, a short paper defining “archive” that is written in resonse to select criticism, a class presentation on 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. The skills assignments are central to this course and not simply peripheral, and they will be graded. Students should be prepared to spend time outside of class in Special Collections and working with manuscripts digitally.

**564 / Proseminar, Studies in 19th Century American Literature**

**Hester Blum**

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

This is a reading-intensive course on American fictional and nonfictional prose writing in the nineteenth century. While the course is most obviously designed for grads interested in US literature and culture, it will also speak to grads interested in questions of academic historicism, presentism, and imagined futurity. Each week we will focus on a key work or topic, and trace how it has spoken to and been taken up in turn by readers and responders in c19, c20, and c21; a constellation of related c19 texts (forgotten, canonized, hot now, or potentially ascendent) will supplement that key work each week. We will reflect, as well, on the processes by which each new generation of scholars and readers brings new questions to historic texts.

We will read a variety of prose forms (novels, sketches, tales, essays, personal narratives, polemics, confessions, declarations, manifestos, fantasias, memoirs, reveries, proposals, short stories, travel narratives, sermons, histories, letters) by a range of authors (who may include Charles Brockden Brown, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, William Apess, Leonora Sansay, Lydia Maria Child, Edgar Allan Poe, John Rollin Ridge, George Lippard, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Frederick Douglass, Hannah Bond [Hannah Crafts], Herman Melville, Harriet Jacobs, Harriet Wilson, William Wells Brown, Harriet Prescott Spofford, Elizabeth Stoddard, Frank Webb, Martin Delaney, Fanny Fern, Harriet Beecher Stowe, María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, Zitkala-Sa, Frances Harper, Sarah Orne Jewett, Sui Sin Far, Mark Twain, Henry James, José Martí, George Washington Cable, Pauline Hopkins, Sutton Griggs, Charles Chesnutt). The course reading will provide a broad overview both of c19 US literary history and current scholarly conversations in the field. While the reading demands will be high, the writing expectations will be modest; students will produce a 10-15 page textual and critical history of a keywork drawn from the course reading, as well as several short presentations or responses.

**583 / Extra-rational Rhetorical Theory**

**Debra Hawhee**

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

For the past few decades, scholars in rhetoric have challenged theories of rhetoric that privilege rational processes. After all, even enthymemes, those compressed nuggets of argument, short circuit those processes by cutting to the heart of the matter. This seminar will examine what else besides rationality rhetoric requires, and the answers given by scholars of rhetoric—bodies, materiality, sensation, feeling, imagination, temporality—will organize the course. How has extrarational rhetorical theory changed the disciplinary conversations in rhetoric as it is studied and taught in the contexts of communication and writing studies? How might different extrarational rhetorical theories and concepts be distinguished? And finally, what figures, methods, and perspectives are most compatible with extrarational rhetoric?

Student projects will put these concepts and approaches to work in a comprehensive project plan that they develop through the course of the semester and in small-group consultation. Students will leave this seminar with a deeper awareness of rhetoric’s extrarational dimensions, scholarly conversations about those dimensions, and what concepts and approaches need further development.

**586 / Article Writing and the Profession of the Academic Humanities**

***(Note: closed to first- and second-year MA students)***

**Tina Chen Goudie**

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

This course fulfills two complementary aims:to work early-stage articles into shape for submission and publication and to provide participants with documents and discussion that will improve their understanding of the academic humanities as a profession.

Weekly meetings will encompass workshop sessions devoted to students’ articles, which will be circulated to the group in advance, and lectures and Q&A sessions on writing, publication, and professionalization. As part of our work together this semester, we will explore different genres of academic writing (including abstracts; conference papers; book reviews; journal articles; and dissertation chapters) and learn how to analyze writing in terms of argument, structure, and style. In addition, we will cover all aspects of article publication, from initial conception to final appearance in print. Publication topics will cover such matters as evaluating journals, selecting a target journal, framing and structuring an argument, citational ecologies, cover letters and editorial correspondence, readers’ reports and requests for revision, copyediting and proofreading. The aim will be to demystify the whole process of writing for publication and getting your work accepted. Finally, the course will introduce students to the professional norms and expectations of the academic humanities, addressing issues such as collegiality and developing a scholarly research profile, and offering concrete information about and advice for generating job market materials and faculty review documents.

**597.1 / Decolonization and the Critique of Capitalism**

**Oliver Baker**

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

This seminar studies the relationship between anti-imperialist thought and Marxism. What is the relationship between Marxism and the liberation struggles of Black, Indigenous, Chicanx and other colonized peoples? We will examine how Black, Indigenous, and Chicanx literary and political thought has both shaped and been informed by Marxism. By examining Marxism and decolonial thought, the course will engage current debates in the fields of Black studies, Indigenous studies, and critical ethnic studies concerning the relationship between race and class, the role of cultural critique in social movements, the interlocking logics of settler colonialism, antiblackness, patriarchy, capitalism, and imperialism, and the relevance of Marxist critiques of power today.

This seminar’s focus will help students prepare to work in the fields of Black studies, Indigenous studies, critical ethnic studies, nineteenth-century American studies, and Marxist literary criticism. It also serves students interested in connecting university study to social movement building dedicated to equity and antiracism.

Some of the authors and/or persons whose work or lives we will study include: Nat Turner, Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Harriet Wilson, John Brown, Sarah Winnemucca, Frantz Fanon, Walter Rodney, W. E. B. Du Bois, Amílcar Cabral, Kwame Ture, Gerald Horne, Charisse Burden-Stelly, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Américo Paredes, Tomás Rivera, Ana Castillo, Nick Estes, Glen Coulthard, Joanne Barker, Iyko Day, and Manu Karuka.

**597.3 / The Black Arts Movement: John Oliver Killens, Toni Cade Bambara, and Sonia Sanchez**

**Keith Gilyard**

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

Beginning with Killens's 1954 novel YOUNGBLOOD, considered a precursor to the Black Arts Movement, students will study his career was related to the cultural flowering known was the Black Arts Movement (1965-1975). Similarly, students will study the careers of short story writer/novelist/editor Bambara and poet/playwright Sanchez.

**597.5 / “The Last Seminar” – The New American Writing and its Aftershocks**

**Aldon Nielsen**

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

In the wake of the second World War, in the lengthening shadow of Modernism, American writers seemed simultaneously obsessed with first and last things. Cary Nelson's study of this period is titled "Our Last First Poets" with good reason. Beat writers saw themselves writing under the threat of world annihilation. LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) wrote in opposition to the "primitivism" of received modernism, arguing instead for Olson's thinking of the "primitive" as "first things." With the spreading of anti-colonial independence movements and the reassertion of Civil Rights struggles in the USA, poets were increasingly concerned with the meanings of race and ethnicity in our culture. For very nearly the first time in U.S. literary history, African American writers were in positions of leadership in (semi)integrated movements in the arts. This seminar will trace the eruptions of what was then termed the "New American Writing" in poetry and prose and will then take up the critiques and legacies of these movements in the decades leading up to our own. Writers we may read include Baraka, Olson, Creeley, DiPrima, Kaufman, Levertov, Cortez, Hejinian, etc.  
 **VSTUD 501 / Visual Culture Theory and History**

**Chris Reed**

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

This course examines foundational theoretical texts that have come to define Visual Studies as a historically delineated academic discipline. Topics will be developed to reflect the interests of enrolled students, and may include theories of the visual and visualization (including such traditional literary approaches as *ekphrasis*), as well as methodological models for the visual analysis of books (including graphic novels), material culture (from popular consumer culture through high-design fashions, photography, and the fine arts), the built environment, film, television, and other forms of performance in their historical contexts and in relation to literature. Throughout we will emphasize effective ways to bring visual materials into publication and teaching.  VSTUD 501 is open to all interested graduate students. It is required for the Visual Studies dual-title PhD program, and students interested in that option are encouraged to enroll early in their graduate career.