

Spring 2025 Graduate Course Descriptions

512 / The Writing of Fiction: Story Form and Structure

Elizabeth Kadetsky

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

In this semester's offering of the graduate fiction workshop, which is geared toward students in the IUG creative writing program, we will focus on the short story as a site of experimentation in form and structure. Through close reading of works such as Jamil Jan Kochai's *The Haunting of Hajji Hotak and Other Stories* and the newest edition of *Best American Short Stories*, we will ask how writers create meaning, entertainment, and story while also breaking the box of the traditional narrative triangle. The course will pair readings with writing prompts that borrow from the successful use of craft techniques by the authors in question. In equal part, the course will consider new works of fiction by course members in a workshop setting. Students will complete approximately 50 pages of new writing that follows from generative, in-class writing prompts. They can expect to read approximately four books and to employ a reading for writers strategy in class discussions. The course will engage with the creative writing program's visiting authors through a class visit and excursion to the program's reading series.

513 / Writing Poetry: Material World

Julia Kasdorf

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

"Love calls us to the things of this world," pronounced Richard Wilbur in a poem titled by that sentence. 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 nurture conversations about the ways American poets have described the things of this world as a means of articulation and insight. Students can expect to read work by foundational American poets such as William Carlos Williams and Gwendolyn Brooks as well as poetry and prose by contemporary poets such as Mark Doty, Jorie Graham, Adrienne Su, John Murillo, Rose McLarney, Jesse Nathan, Mary Szybist, and others. 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

Charles (Toby) Thompson

W / 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. / 159 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.

522 / Beowulf *(fulfills a pre-1800 requirement)*

Scott Smith

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

This seminar is dedicated to the translation and analysis of Beowulf. We will read this complex and rewarding Old English poem in full, considering key points of poetic language, narrative style, and contours of interpretation. Students will also examine the preservation, transmission, and reception of the poem, with attention to the original manuscript, the historical influence of early editions and translations, and changing currents and methodologies in scholarly assessment. This course fulfills a pre-1800 requirement.

565 / Abolition Literature

Oliver Baker

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

This seminar examines the relationship between African American literature and the abolition movement of the nineteenth century. We will study how Black authors, organizers, and artists represented, theorized, and participated in abolition as the social movement to overthrow slavery and win a world beyond racial capitalism. How do Black writers and theorists of the abolition movement tell the story of slave revolts, fugitivity, marronage, insurrections, armed campaigns, and other strategies of Black insurgency that sought to end slavery and secure Black liberation? What role did African American literature play in shaping this history of Black radicalism? How does abolition literature crystalize important insights and understandings of slavery, settler colonialism, capitalism, whiteness, and counterrevolution? What does abolition literature teach us about the relationship between literature and social movements? We will also explore what abolition literature reveals about the relationship between abolition and Indigenous anticolonial movements challenging settler colonialism in North America. The seminar will study the works and theory of Nat Turner, David Walker, Henry Highland Garnet, Harriet Tubman, Osborne Anderson, Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, James McCune Smith, Thomas Hamilton, Lewis Hayden, William Still, Harriet Jacobs, and Harriet Wilson, among others.

This seminar is designed to help students work in the fields of African American literature, nineteenth-century American studies, Black studies, Indigenous studies, and historical materialism.

597.003 / Theory Now and Then

Christian Haines

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

The seminar teaches students to read and write about theory at a graduate level. It focuses on French Theory and its legacies, while also touching on Critical Theory (in the German Tradition) and key antecedents (work by Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, and Plato). It offers students an overview of the history of theory in the context of Anglo-American universities and social movements. It covers some of the central questions and debates in theory that have haunted and continue to structure scholarly inquiry in the humanities. Finally, it addresses the current state of theory, detailing how the so-called death of theory has actually meant its proliferation as new critical practices. The course is organized around a handful of conceptual rubrics, including language, desire, and text; history, politics, and culture; and life on planet Earth. Authors we're likely to read include, but certainly aren't limited to, Theodor Adorno, Roland Barthes, Judith Butler, Mel Y. Chen, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Nahum Chandler, Jacques Derrida, Frantz Fanon, Michel Foucault, Fredric Jameson, Jacques Lacan, Fred Moten, Gayle Rubin, Edward Said, Ferdinand de Saussure, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Christina Sharpe, Hortense Spillers, and Anna Tsing.

No previous knowledge of theory is required. Assignments will likely include two short analytical essays/close reading exercises; a brief in-class presentation; and a short seminar paper (10-15 pages).

597.004 / Rhetoric and Aesthetics: Histories, Theories, Methods, and Modes

Debra Hawhee

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

In this seminar, participants will work at the nexus of rhetoric and aesthetics, two capacious and interdisciplinary categories with long, fraught histories. We will consider how aesthetics and rhetoric interanimate each other; what features mutually constitute them; what promise a renewed relation might hold for otherwise bleak-seeming futures; what methodological approaches come to the fore when thinking the two together; and through what modes both operate. The chronological, geographic scope, and citational ecology will all range widely, and the reading list aims for connectivity rather than comprehensiveness. Readings are likely to include texts from Baumgarten, Kant, Longinus, Ngai, Moten, Ranciere, Chuh, Guatarri, Walker, Souriau, Lloyd, Porter, Wysocki, Latour, and a host of others. The readings and activities, together with the final assignment, a curation-based project, will encourage exploration, intuitive followings, and creative connections.

The course meets the English department's rhetoric and theory requirement for the MA. The historical span of the course ranges widely so students here to study rhetoric may use it to count for the pre-1800 or post-1800 requirement. In such cases, the focus of the student's written work in the course should follow suit.

597.005 / READING EFFLUENCE: PLANETARY HEALTH, HUMAN CONTAGION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Rosemary Jolly

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

This class will attract students wanting to read knowledges from the margins of colonial capitalism back into a critique of human rights and that regime's investments in anthropocentrism. What happens to genre when it accords non-human subjects what Western culture since the Enlightenment has called 'selfhood'? The United Nations Human Rights regime was critiqued at the time of its adoption for its focus on the individual as the unit, as it were, of rights. This course looks at key narratives from the Global South that critique normative human rights regimes by sidelining human rights as at best unsustainable and at worst, anthropocentric. We will explore how writing from Africa, Australasia and the Caribbean refuse the Western notion of the human and instantiate a multiplicity of complex subjects in 'his' place. This class is for those looking for a deep dive into how we can think otherwise about human rights (yes, I mean the ones that don't work most of the time); what happens when decolonial critique and the health humanities meet 'down South'; what a "welcome to country" can look like when it's not reduced to settler colonialism; and what the alternatives are to treating ourselves, our emotions and the planet as sites of extractive industry. Exemplary writers include Alexis Wright, Marlene NoubéSe Philip, Masande Ntshanga, Lauren Beukes, Edwidge Danticat, Shelley Burne-Field.

Note that there will be an alternative of this class for Africanists that will substitute a set of African texts chosen by the Africanists themselves in consultation with me. *The Effluent Eye* will remain the approach taken: therein lies the coherence of the syllabus.

Note that one assignment may be written as an experimental genre of the critical and the creative in conjunction with a consultation with me *prior* to the undertaking.

Who may be interested in this class?

Those intrigued by decolonial theory, global health, critical health humanities, disease narratives, colonial-capitalist violence, gender based violence and racism; the postcolonial narrative history of pandemics, zoonoses; zoonoses (HIV/AIDS; COVID 19, Ebola; Mpox); addiction/using and harm reduction; what replaces human rights and normative trauma theory; why disposability and grievance become meaningless when the human-as-substitute comes into view; what happens when sustainability is a category for thinking through human emotions; where the hope may lie; innovative journalism/fiction/memoir; 'marginal' youth and anger; what recycling means it's when undertaken with an effluent eye; ways of mourning subjects somewhat beyond the human grasp; why senses of the absurd, including absurd laughter, are inextricable from resilience -- and necessarily extricable from rationality.

597.006 / Critical Disability (*proseminar*)

Janet Lyon

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

This reading-intensive proseminar will introduce students to a wide range of writings that center disability from theoretical, critical, and experiential perspectives. We'll sample some of the major texts published in the past 50 years, as well as recent influential work appearing in both academic and non-academic venues. We'll consider multiple conceptual approaches, including the tenets and elaborations of anti-racist disability justice; the reach of disability aesthetics; the heated conversations around disability v. systemic (socioeconomic) debility & phenomenology v. structural ableism. The field's permutations are vast; we'll concentrate mostly on the purview of the humanities.

597.007 / Japanism and its Reversals

Chris Reed

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

As the farthest extreme of the "East" and the last civilization "opened" to Western exploration and travel, Japan often signified the utmost in the West: the most beautiful, most exotic, and most intriguing, aesthetically and intellectually. At the same time that Western artists and designers rushed to deploy Japanese aesthetics in art, interior décor, and clothing, authors such as Ezra Pound, experimented with Japanist effects in literary style.

This course traces these canons of Japanist aesthetics in Western literature and art, then complicates them with other perspectives. Specific topics of will be generated in response to student interest. Broad themes are likely to include the centrality of European and especially American women authors and artists in creating images of a feminized Japan; projects by Japanese writers, artists, and politicians to appropriate Japanist tropes for their own purposes, such as Yone Noguchi's *American Diary of a Japanese Girl*; representations of incarceration and occupation, relationships of East and West in global postmodernism.

This course counts as a Visual Studies elective.

597.008 / African Literature and its Theories (*cross-listed with AFR 597*)

Cheryl Sterling

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

In this seminar, we will explore the African literary canon written in English (some will be in translation). We explore the creation of the African novel and read different fictional works that characterize the development of this narrative tradition. We will also center these works within the theoretical debates coming from writers and critics from the continent.