

Spring 2027 Graduate Course Descriptions

510 / Post-colonial Theory: Post-Colonial & Decolonial Theory as Oceanic Borderspaces

Distribution Requirement(s): Post 1800 and Cultural Analysis/Theory

Karrieann Soto Vega

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

In this interdisciplinary seminar, we will examine genealogies of post-colonial and decolonial theory, as well as current issues, trends, and feminist interventions in scholarly production and social movements in and beyond hemispheric approaches. The overarching conceptual framework tying these theoretical strands will be “oceanic borderspaces,” which will facilitate global connections across gender, class, racial, ethnic, and colonial historical lines. In addition to English and Rhetoric graduate students, this course should be of interest to those enrolled or interested in a dual title in Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, African American Studies, the Latina/o Graduate minor, Geography, History, and others.

512 / The Writing of Fiction – Small Moments, Big Stories: The Art of the Vignette

Samuel Kolawole

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

The vignette in literature is a short piece of writing highlighting a snapshot of an event or a moment in time. The language used is often descriptive, with vivid details and imagery. How do vignettes contribute to the larger narrative? How can they be used to move the plot forward in short stories and long forms? In this class, students will consider how a well-crafted vignette can reveal character, evoke emotions, and introduce conflict. Through close reading, writing exercises, workshop discussion, and revisions, students will explore imagery, compression, and narrative movement. We will study the works of authors such as Jenny Offill, Margaret Atwood, and others.

513 / The Writing of Poetry

Noah Davis

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

This course is for students looking to take the next step in their development as poets. Students will push themselves as writers and readers of poetry as they grow their knowledge of poetic craft. This seminar was developed for students enrolled in the BA/MA program and other graduate students interested in developing their poetic practice. If you are not in the BA/MA program, please reach out to me prior to registering. During the semester, students will read several poetry collections and attend readings and Q&As with visiting authors. Students will take poetic risks and lean into imagination. This is manifested by regularly drafting and revising poems, providing written and oral critiques of classmate poems, and organizing a portfolio of work.

515 / The Writing of Non-fiction

Ari Araghi

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

Designed for students in the BA/MA program, the creative non-fiction workshop engages with the concept of “borders.” In its broad sense, we use the term as a creative space to think about clash, action, and interaction, about inside and out, self and other. We will discuss where fiction and non-fiction intersect and where they diverge. We will read and discuss literal and metaphorical borderlines. While our readings and discussions will anchor around these themes, your creative work is entirely open. You can bring your own interests, voices, and subjects to the table. You can expect to write two long pieces and several short exercises, complete reading assignments, and write responses. You will also engage with and respond to your peers’ writing in a workshop format. There will be no examination. Class participation and attendance are required.

567 / The Practice of Biography

ALT Title: The Literature of Biography and Autobiography: The Practice of Biography

Distribution Requirement(s): Pre-1800, Post-1800, and Historical Methods

Shirley Moody-Turner

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

In this course we explore the intellectual and literary practice of biography in relation to works written about (and primarily by) Black women writers. We will ground our study in the historiography and history of textual representations of Black lives (pre-1800) considering archival and interpretive strategies for identifying and discussing the works of literary black Africans in British colonial America from 1643 to 1760. We will then consider how the biographical imperative that took shape in the mid- to 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. Throughout the semester we will read contemporary biographical studies, mostly of historical figures (but some more recent as well), as a way to consider the method and practice of representing Black women’s lives in ways that account for the speakable and unspeakable, the knowable and unknowable, as well as the “respectable” and the renegade. Our course readings may include works by figures such as Hallie Quinn Brown, Elizabeth Keckley, Susie King Taylor, Gertrude Mossell, and Anna Julia Cooper as well as more recent biographies and studies in related genres by Saidiya Hartman, Mary Helen Washington, Elizabeth Alexander, Shanna Benjamin, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Dana Williams, Erica Armstrong Dunbar, Farrah Jasmine Griffin, and many 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 research and scholarship.

584 / Rhetorics of Food and Consumption

Distribution Requirement(s): Rhetoric or Media & Digital Studies and Cultural Analysis/Theory

Jennifer LeMesurier

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

This course will explore food and consumption as rhetorical object and process. How does food exert rhetorical influence, and where does this influence span the material and metaphorical? Where might biological processes of consumption intersect with the political work of sensation? When do rhetorics

about food influence rhetorics about identity, and vice versa? Exploring these questions will allow us to delve deeply into key concepts and theories in rhetoric (identification, phantasia, topoi, etc...) alongside and beyond classical definitions.

We will read foundational theories of sensation, affect, feminist rhetoric, etc... and scholarship that applies these theories to a range of disciplinary projects. Through the course, students will practice applying these theories via multimodal explorations and written responses in order to develop both their scholarly voice and range of possible entry points to a topic. The final project will involve developing a robust literature review that extends beyond the provided readings and scaffolds toward a future professional presentation and/or publication.

589 / Contemporary Poetry and Poetics

Distribution Requirement(s): Post-1800

Jeffrey Nealon

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

This course is conceived on the model of a “proseminar” – trying to cover a lot of historical ground, rather than staking out a smaller bit of territory and intensively studying that. The longer-form description might be “American Poetry from High Modern to Postmodern and Beyond: Or, What's Left of 'Make It New'?” -- looking mostly at the fate of poetry in an economic world where “make it new!” (Ezra Pound's prescription for modernist poetry) has become the mantra of contemporary capitalism. (Fredric Jameson is the obvious theoretical touchstone there). Likewise, short, pithy expressions of emotion (like Mary Oliver's “Pay attention/Be astonished/Tell about it”) could today just as easily be the slogan of social media companies. So the semester's question is this: outside nostalgia and Hallmark-card sentimentality (constantly warehousing the preciousness of subjective “experience”), what are the roles for poetry in a society like ours? While they may eventually go in any direction, our initial readings of this body of work will center around the historical and theoretical relations among these poetries and late, later, or just-in-time capitalism.

We'll begin by considering how modernist American poetry, with the commitment to “Make it New!” (Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein) might differ from the Victorian verse that came before it. We'll then read some “revolution of the word” high modernists like William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, and TS Eliot, comparing and contrasting their work with Harlem Renaissance writers like Langston Hughes, as well as the poetry of Black blues singers like Bessie Smith.

Along the historical survey way, we'll examine, among others, the confessional poetics of writers like Elizabeth Bishop and Robert Lowell; the Black Mountain writers Charles Olson and Robert Creeley; purveyors of organic form like Denise Levertov and Robert Duncan; beat poets Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs; The New York School of Frank O'Hara and John Ashbery; feminist and disability poetics work by Sylvia Plath and Hannah Weiner; Black Arts poets like Amiri Baraka; the improvisational talk poetry of David Antin; the “Language” writing of Charles Bernstein and Lyn Hejinian; the ambient poetics of Tan Lin; the conceptual poetry of Kenneth Goldsmith and Robin Coste Lewis; and the new Black lyric of Claudia Rankine. We'll also consider critical works on poetics and capitalism by folks like Theodor Adorno, Fredric Jameson, Alain Badiou, Sianne Ngai, Kevin Young, Juliana Spahr and Chris Nealon.

Relatedly, we'll also spend some time along the way thinking about how American poetry of the 20th and 21st century has or hasn't been imbricated with other popular art forms – the African-American forms of blues (founded by Black women singers of the 1920s) and jazz (artists like Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane), and American popular music broadly considered. If blues or popular music lyrics aren't “poetry,” then what are they, exactly? Of course, this is a question that functions somewhat differently today (when Bob Dylan has won the Nobel Prize for literature and people are happy to think about rappers as poets) than it did only a few

decades ago, when people were a lot more hesitant to take popular culture seriously; but it does seem worth thinking about when it comes to considering the role of poetry in a world of commodity culture.

Requirements: In addition to robust reading and class participation, you'll be asked to produce a few short response papers throughout the semester, and deliver a final 15-minute conference-paper-style presentation on a modern or contemporary poet who we're not reading in the course.

597.1 / Remapping the Time/Space of American Literature: Regionalism, Modernism, and Transnationalism

Distribution Requirement(s): Post-1800, Historical Methods, and Cultural Analysis/Theory

Sean Goudie

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

In recent years, scholars have begun to question the boundaries between US regionalist and modernist writings. Nineteenth-century regionalist literature, once thought to be unconcerned with a more serious and sophisticated modernity, is now being explored for its intimate connections to the “city” and “nation.” In turn, American literary modernisms are no longer thought to be separate from, but exist in interdynamic relation with, the “traditional,” or developments occurring in the “rural,” “local,” and “regional.” Still more recently, scholars working in “transnational” and “hemispheric” American literary studies have further unsettled assumptions about the time-space coordinates of would-be discrete regional and modernist US and *non*-US American literatures and cultures. Put differently, just as adjacent regionalist and modernist US literary traditions are being explored for their permeability, so too scholars are seeking to understand how US modernisms and regionalisms form themselves in relation to transnational political, economic, social, and cultural developments—developments that unfold not only according to an east-west axis (US-Europe), a heretofore dominant way of mapping transnational influence, but also a north-south one (US and the wider Americas). This course focuses especially on how received ideas and assumptions about regionalism, modernism, and the transnational—both in the US and in the Caribbean—are unsettled, or remade and re-remade, from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries in the context of a dying European colonialism on the one hand, and a rising US imperialism and expansionism in the Caribbean on the other hand. We will treat a full range of recognizable and less well-known US regionalist and modernist writers and intellectuals with Caribbean affiliations, as well as Caribbean writers with North American affiliations. We will examine these writings alongside theorists and critics of what we might provocatively term “Caribbean American” literary aesthetics. This course is especially relevant for graduate students working in modernism, nineteenth-century American, ethnic American, and comparative Americas. All readings will be in English, whether in the original or in translation, and this course might be used to satisfy the post-1800 literature in English, historical methods, or theory and/or cultural analysis requirements.

597.2 / The Humanities After Nature: From Ecocriticism to Ecotheory

Distribution Requirement(s): Post-1800 and Cultural Analysis/Theory

Christian Haines

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

From Ecocriticism to Ecotheory: This course serves as an introduction to the environmental humanities, with an emphasis on theory and method in literary studies, cultural studies, and visual studies. It surveys major shifts in the environmental humanities, especially the transition from an ecocriticism centered on nature and wilderness to more general environmental approaches, ranging from feminist new materialisms to eco-Marxism. It also examines the Anthropocene as a periodizing and diagnostic term and the planetary turn (in the humanities and social sciences) as an interdisciplinary endeavor.

597.3 / AI and English Studies: Practices, Paradigms, Genealogies

Distribution Requirement(s): Rhetoric or Media & Digital Studies

Brian Lennon

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

Designed to bring graduate students in any subdiscipline of English studies fully up to speed in a critical, discipline-based mode of the AI “literacy” and “fluency” now being rapidly and widely adopted as a curricular priority in U.S. higher education, this graduate seminar addresses urgent questions that AI poses for English studies as both an intellectual tradition and a set of professional practices. First, we will face squarely the immediate challenge that the widespread adoption of Large Language Model-based platforms and consumer products presents to established patterns of work in the practice and teaching of literary and cultural criticism, rhetoric and composition, and creative writing, directly engaging current debates about AI-assisted writing in academic contexts and the use of LLMs for cultural analysis and interpretation. Next, we will survey the entire range of currently available providers, platforms, model families, standard features for working with text, and elementary to advanced usage practices. Finally, we will reconstruct the emergence of LLMs in a broad scope, via the long conflict between symbolic AI and connectionist AI; narrow it to the specific context of NLP (Natural Language Processing) in vector semantics, embedding, attention, and scaling; then translate these into specific contexts for English studies. Along the way, we will retrace a longer, mostly forgotten history of AI and English studies, from early machine translation and computational linguistics onward, and address topics in data justice, environmental impact, and globalized moderation and labeling labor. Graduate students will complete this seminar prepared to speak with authority about how LLMs work, about their broader cultural and institutional effects, and about how to adapt or redesign research and teaching in English studies in a way that neither mystifies nor normalizes this current paradigm.

597.4 / Collectors and Gleaners

Distribution Requirement(s): Post-1800, Historical Methods, and Cultural Analysis/Theory

Deborah Lutz

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

In this class we will think about what it means to busily gather, amass, hoard, store, curate, file, shelve, archive, and display objects and words. We will consider such activities as collecting quotations, books, locks of hair, letters, lovers, trash, and more. We will also study the activity of gleaning—reusing, thrifting, picking up things on the street, making art out of found objects such as cloth scraps into quilts, and the like. The history of museums and personal collections will interest us, as will stories about fabled or fictional assemblages, libraries, and accumulations. Some questions we will address: What is an archive or a collection and how does it develop the self or identity? Is collecting an ethical practice or is it elitist? How is collecting related to the creation of art? How and why do passions for collecting develop? In what ways has the environmental crisis influenced gleaning practices?

We will read essays about collecting and gleaning practices by such writers as Roland Barthes, Walter Benjamin, Jane Bennett, and Susan Stewart. Fictional representations will be important, such as Henry James’s *The Spoils of Poynten*, and stories by Shirley Jackson, Angela Carter, and Virginia Woolf. We will see films about collecting, such as Agnes Varda’s “The Gleaners and I,” and films of collections, such as Stan Brakhage’s “Mothlight.” We will study art that includes gleaning as part of its practice, such as in the case of quilts, and other found-object art. There will be an assignment that will take you to local archives and museums.