

Course Descriptions | Spring 2018



ENGL 676: Critical Approaches to Literature (and Composition)

Dr. Michael T. Williamson

T 6:00-8:30pm

This M.A. level course explores how readers develop useful knowledge, skills and professional dexterity by reading good prose. Our main goal is to develop research and presentation skills that enable us to present our disciplinary knowledge in public forums. We will read some of the most inventive and interesting thinkers of the 20th century as we explore a number of different approaches to literature, including an essay written about Stephen King's novel, *It* (now a major motion picture for the second time). As we consider analytical approaches to reading a wide variety of writers – Stephen King, Zora Neale Hurston, John Milton, Walt Whitman, George Herbert, W.B. Yeats, Gwendolyn Brooks, John Ashberry, and the pioneering interwar science fiction women writers Octavia Butler and N.K. Jemisin – we will develop a list of sound analytical practices. By the end of the course, we will have showcased those analytical practices in public academic forums.

Thomas Edwards, *Over Here* 978-0813517100

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Signifying Monkey* 978-0195136470

Helen Vendler, *Invisible Listeners* 9780691134741

Edmund Wilson, *Axel's Castle: A Study of the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1830*
978-0374529277

D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* 978-0415345460

Yaszek and Sharp, eds., *Sisters of Tomorrow: The First Women of Science Fiction*
978-0819576248

Essays by Amanda Anderson, Barbara Johnson, Kari Lokke, Richard E. Miller, Kurt Spellmeyer, Georgia Warnke

ENGL 757/857: Digital Composition, Literature, and Pedagogy

Dr. Kenneth Sherwood

TR 12:30-1:45pm

In the preface to Blackwell's Companion to Digital Literary Studies, Alan Liu writes "that the boundary between codex-based literature and digital information has now been so breached by shared technological, communicational, and computational protocols that we might best think in terms of an encounter rather than a border." As a component of a society increasingly penetrated and reshaped by digital networks, the contemporary classroom is also a space of encounter. Fortunately, the academy has begun to move beyond the false dichotomy of "digital immigrants" and "digital natives" to recognize that digital literacy can best be understood as a set of learned knowledges and practices. As graduate students move into their roles as the classroom teachers of millennials, they will find that this course has helped them to teach more effectively.

"Digital pedagogy," according to Katherine D. Harris, "borrows from the mainstays of Digital Humanities: collaboration, playfulness tinkering, focus on process, [and] building.... Digital pedagogy requires re-thinking curriculum, student learning outcomes [and] assessment.... It's not just about the flashy use of tools."



This course introduces students to the issues at the intersection of composition, literary studies, pedagogy and emerging digital technologies. Addressing history, theory, and teaching practice, it explores the emerging conventions of writing for digital environments, giving students practice in conceiving, composing, and producing networked texts; extends traditional skills of literary interpretation to emergent, digital genres, including both remediated archival, print texts / and contemporary, “born digital” e-literature; and familiarizes students with changes in the field, exploring exemplary projects of digital scholarship and how they can be integrated into their own future research and teaching.

Through this course, students will develop their abilities to:

- describe and identify specific conventions of writing in digital environments;
- produce writing that demonstrates familiarity with these conventions and present it in a digital form;
- articulate, plan and demonstrate appropriate teaching strategies for digital writing;
- describe changes in literature interpretation and criticism, evaluating effective responses to digital literature and scholarship;
- produce literary interpretations informed by the changes related to digital environments, scholarship, and born-digital literature;
- articulate, plan and demonstrate appropriate teaching strategies involving the production and or use of digital literary scholarship;
- plan and model an individual or collaborative scholarly research project such as an archival exhibit, digital edition, or visualization, identifying and knowing how to develop appropriate DH skills for implementation

ENGL 762/862: Topics in American Literature since 1870

Dr. Veronica Watson

R 6:00-8:30pm

Exploring Feminism, Activism and the Law & Order Agenda through Black Crime/Detective Fiction

According to feminist scholar Karsonya Whitehead, the decolonizing work of both the #BlackLivesMatter and the #SayHerName movements mark a new era of activism that is interrogates the precarity of black lives using feminist theoretical approaches. Indeed, as a special issue of *Meridians* focusing on #BlackGirlActivism and the special *Feminist Studies* forum “Teaching about Ferguson” suggest, feminists from a range of disciplinary and national contexts are renewing interrogations and activism designed to disrupt and resist the discursive and material forms of racism, imperialism, colonization and globalization.

Our central theoretical readings will come from Janell Hobson’s collection, *Are All the Women Still White?* Other readings will be drawn from a number of spaces and platforms where the feminist theoretical and intellectual work of social, institutional and structural transformation is being conceptualized and disseminated—Twitter, blogs, online publications, etc. We will also be engaging a body of literature not traditionally considered in U.S. academic and scholarly institutions: black crime and detective fiction. We will consider what black writers have been saying about the delicate balance between law and order and criminal policing in the U.S., and throughout the course we will consider a variety of topics related to feminist activism and the representations of crime and justice

in African American literature: black violability and vulnerability, labor, mothering, decolonization and anti-racist activism.

ENGL 764/864: Topics in British Literature after 1660

Dr. Michael T. Williamson

W 6-8:30pm

Fatalism, Determinism, Madness and Love in 19th Century British Literature

In 1832, Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* helped to shift both scientific and literary thinking in Britain. Writers and thinkers moved away from "catastrophic" models and towards more gradualist or "uniformitarian" models of change. Earthquakes, volcanoes, and floods were no longer seen as agents of change. Rather, geological change was produced slowly, even secretly, by hidden forces that could be interpreted and mapped out only when apocalyptic models of history were replaced by "deep time" – the changing of the world through the movement of rocks, or what geologists now call plate tectonics. Evolution replaced revolution; evidence replaced conviction/belief/ideology; deep time replaced utopianism, and nature displaced humans as the major force acting on the globe. Fatalism and determinism suddenly became smart belief systems because they were rooted in the observable world rather than in superstition. As a consequence, the function of morality changed in British literature. In this course, we will explore literary explorations of madness and love became linked to fatalist and determinist models of thought. How are love and madness related to geology, fatalism, and determinism? How did the poet May Kendall satirize these interrelations as she looked back on the nineteenth century? We will find out!

Required texts:

Charlotte Bronte, *Villette* 978-0140434798

Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights* 978-0141439556

Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White* 978-0141439617

Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native* 9781554810703

May Kendall, poems from *Songs from Dreamland*

(<https://archive.org/stream/songsfromdreaml01kendgoog#page/n4/mode/2up>)

Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology* 978-0140435283

Alfred Tennyson, *Idylls of the King* 978-0140422535

Suggested Reading:

William Buckler, *The Victorian Imagination* 978-0814710333

Richard Fortey, *Earth, An Intimate History* 978-0375706202

ENGL 765/865: Topics in Literature as Genre

Dr. Tom Slater

M 6:00-8:30pm

Fear and Gender in Postwar American Film

The 1940s and '50s. Americans feel a burst of triumph followed by an era of unsettling fear. Returning to "normalcy" turns out to be not so easy as becomes evident in a number of films and suppressed realities. Concerns about masculinity are especially strong as we will see in films of Alfred Hitchcock such as *Rebecca*, *Vertigo*, and *Marnie*. Another set of films adapted from the works of playwright Tennessee Williams parades another set of social and gender anxieties. We'll study

these films and the social complexities subtending them through BFI Classic Screen texts on *Vertigo* and *Marnie*; *Hollywood's Tennessee: The Williams Films and Postwar America*, by R. Barton Palmer and William Robert Bray (U of Texas, 2009, available as an e-book through IUP library); and *Pinks, Pansies, and Punks: The Rhetoric of Masculinity in American Literary Culture*, by James Penner (Indiana U. Pr, 2010, also available as an e-book through IUP library), which examines the rise of “macho criticism” during the era and its relation to definitions of masculinity and divisions on the political left in the ‘50s and ‘60s. Short essays, a research paper, and possible small group presentations will be the assignments.

ENGL 772/872: Topics in Women’s Literature

Dr. Melanie Holm

TR 3:30-4:45pm

Women Writers: Jane Austen and the Novel of Refusal

In *Northanger Abbey*, Jane Austen’s somewhat less than dreamy leading man Henry Tilney declares, unprompted and unchallenged, that “a woman's only power is the power of refusal.” This tidy maxim rolls off his tongue with ironic gravitas in the fictional world of this particular novel, but how should we read such a line when coming from the real-world pen of a woman writer—the prolific, poised, and provocative Jane Austen? In this course we will read all six of Jane Austen’s novels in the order of their publication— *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1815), *Northanger Abbey* (1818, posthumous), and *Persuasion* (1818, posthumous), as well as some collected *juvenilia* and letters, to ask questions of what, if anything, Austen or her female characters refuse, what the modes of that refusal might be, and what it means both now and then to deem Austen a “Woman Writer” and/or her works “Women’s Literature” To achieve these ends, supplemental critical essays, contextualizing historical readings, excerpts from writers who influenced Austen’s work and world, and modern-day film adaptations will accompany our readings of the primary texts.

ENGL 956: Literary Theory

Dr. Tom Slater

T 6-8:30pm

Theory for the Teacher and Scholar

This course will focus on film teaching and scholarship through the perspective of cinephilia. We’ll use *For the Love of Cinema: Teaching Our Passion In and Out of the Classroom*, ed. Rashna Wadia Richards and David T. Johnson. This approach simply involves transforming our love of film (with considerations relevant to tv or lit) into pedagogy and scholarship. In other words, we come from what we love about all aspects of cinema: favorite films, favorite experiences, ways of writing and discussing. Students will do teaching presentations and produce a research paper.

ENGL 983: Seminar in American Literature

Dr. Tanya Heflin

T 3:30-6:00pm

Song of Myself: The Autobiographical Impulse in American Literature

“I celebrate myself and sing myself.” ~Walt Whitman

“Autobiography is stranger than fiction, which as everybody knows must be stranger than life.” ~Jane Lazarre

Witnessing an explosion of interest in both the academy and popular social media, autobiographical modes of narrative provide a testing ground for key theoretical issues regarding aesthetics, subjectivity, audience, reading strategies, canonicity, cultural biases, authenticity, and individuality versus relationality as key orienting concepts. In this seminar, we will explore a range of autobiographical narrative spanning from the nineteenth century through the contemporary moment, tracing the ways in which the act of writing the self, whether private or communal, transformed from a public practice to a private one, moving in recent years to public spaces once again, and we will explore the meanings of the contemporary moment's reenergizing of the form via the popularity of memoir and the democratization of self-narration provided by online venues.

Asking questions about the ideological assumptions regarding the very nature of the self that are at the heart of the autobiographical impulse, we will focus on the practice of autobiographical writing in the U.S., where a cultural imperative toward self-creation works in concert with the empowering promise of autobiography to give voice to those who write from positions that are often ignored or contested on cultural, ethnic, gender, sexuality, religious, or ideological grounds. We will take as primary texts a variety of forms ranging from traditional autobiography, memoir, manuscript diary, self-portraiture, film, graphic novel, and blog, and we will consider the ways in which the autobiographical impulse may be serving simultaneously to empower, to confess, to liberate, to vindicate, or to deny—far beyond its surface intent of simply recording a life.

Challenging us to deepen our theoretical understanding of the autobiographical impulse will be theory drawn from feminism, new historicism, narrative theory, and narrative psychology. And a key praxis of the course will be hands-on archival research at locally available archives in order to deepen the article-length paper that will make up the primary outcome of the course. In addition, because tapping into undergraduates' own autobiographical impulse can energize the teaching of writing courses, the work we do in this seminar will simultaneously add a useful dimension to the teaching of first-year writing and other undergraduate courses.

ENGL 985: Seminar in Comparative Literature Theory

Dr. Christopher Kuipers

W 6-8:30pm

The Canon

What is “the canon,” how did it emerge, and why has it become the site of such contention within the discipline and beyond? Why do we canonize authors and texts? What do canon arbiters impose on readers? How durable are canons? How successfully have traditional canons been revised or replaced by advocates of non-traditional literature? Is canonicity essential to the nature of literature, or can canons be dispensed with entirely? Is there an “anti-canon”? How should “the canon” be broached pedagogically? How does literary value correlate with canons? These sorts of questions will be at the heart of this seminar.

An essential starting point will be terminology (in the basic sense, as well as the sense of Kenneth Burke, as “scope and reduction”). We will carefully distinguish the four distinct meanings of “canon” that are regularly employed in literary studies—standard, corpus, selection, list—in order to detect and avoid the fallacy of equivocation that is endemic in critical and theoretical discussions of canons. We will subsequently consider the canon of other canon terms: “the classics,” the scriptures,” “the apocrypha,” “the great books,” “the (literary) tradition,” “canonization” vs. “canon-formation,” and “closed” vs. “open” canons. Several other key themes will also guide our

discussions, such as the basic conceptual metaphors for canons, the re-mediation of canons in emergent storage media, the historical fluidity of genre hierarchies, the canon-making force of translations, the canon's zombification of "dead" languages, and the historical shifts in what qualifies as "literary" in the first place. A corollary strand will be to rehabilitate the underestimated subfield of cultural studies that has been called *Begriffsgeschichte*, "the history of concepts," or more properly, the historical-cultural dynamics of concept-formation. We will find that two familiar methods of *Begriffsgeschichte* employed by literary studies, namely tracing etymologies and isolating keywords, fail epically when practiced on "the canon," as evidenced by the discipline's widely accepted myth that the concept of the literary canon originates in the eighteenth century.

The course readings will be unusually eclectic. "Primary texts" will include literature as well as historical works of literary criticism and theory. At the center of course lies the great anthology of Judeo-Christian scriptures, impertinently known as "The Bible." Other scriptural texts are not "out," permanently banned from an Edenic canon, but hover angelically at the edges as "Deutero-Canon": the Dead Sea Scrolls, Ecclesiasticus, the Gnostic Gospels. We will also investigate various instances of literature whose canonicity is of particular interest: "hyper-canonical" selections from British and world literature (e.g., Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*); works that self-consciously invoke canons (e.g., Keats' "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer"), and items that have been notably de-canonized (e.g., the apocryphal Chaucerian poem *The Floure and the Leaf*). Some readings will be embodiments of canons, such as Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, and others indexical canon-lists, such as Bloom's *The Western Canon*. Classics of critical canon-formation will include Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, Hume's "The Standard of Taste," and Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent."

"Secondary readings" will include manuscript chapters of the instructor's forthcoming book on *The Canon*, and familiar classics of canon studies such as Guillory, Gates, and Herrnstein Smith. Attention will be given to the great essays of canonical pedagogy (e.g., Bacon, "On Studies"; Erasmus, *De Ratione Studii*), and also to a neglected canon-making genre: popular reader's guides, such as James Pycroft's *Course of English Reading* and Clifton Fadiman's *Lifetime Reading Plan*. The encyclopedic cornucopia of private and nationally-sponsored publishing series that exploded in the era of the printing press will be contrasted with the ascendance of the textbook anthology, which signifies how the contemporary capital of canon-making has moved to the university. All the former are only "secondary" readings in the sense that we will be paying particular attention to the volumes' editorial matter and modes of selection and organization, rather than to the canonical content itself.

Evaluation will be based on weekly assignments, seminar presentations, and a study of a particular canon or canonicity problem to be developed in consultation with the instructor.

ENGL 797/897: Independent Seminar

Dr. Susan Comfort: Postcolonial and Third-World Studies (especially South Asian and Caribbean Literatures), Feminist and Queer Ecocriticism, Environmental Justice Literature & Theory with emphasis on Environmental Racism, Women and Gender Studies, Marxist Theory & Cultural Studies.

Dr. Todd Thompson: 18th and 19th century American literature, humor and satire studies, literature and periodicals, digital humanities, hemispheric literatures

Dr. Michael Williamson: 19th and 20th century British literature, transatlantic literature, global literature, travel writing, poetry from classical to modern, Holocaust and interwar literature, war literature, Russian literature, Anglo Saxon poetry