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Graduate Course Catalogue

**Fall 2007-Winter 2008
Course Descriptions**

ENGL 5002: CONTEMPORARY LITERARY THEORY**INSTRUCTOR: G. Williams****■ TOPIC: “Reading Theory and Reading Theoretically” ■**

This course will introduce students to some of the key movements, authors, and debates of contemporary theory, in order to explore the political and psychoanalytic dimensions of textuality, institutionality, and culture. Contemporary theories infect and overlap with one another to the extent that the most productive work done exists between the spaces of Marxism, psychoanalysis, feminism, gender criticism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism. The course will also demonstrate the ways in which theory can inform and enrich our own practices of reading, interpretation, and analysis. To this end, we will try out our newly developed interpretive strategies and methodologies on a series of short stories alongside our readings of theorists.

ENGL 5004: LITERATURE, CONTACT, AND EMPIRE IN COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL SOCIETIES**INSTRUCTOR: S. Casteel****■ TOPIC: “Transnational Fictions of the Americas: Indigeneity, Diasporas, Borders” ■**

The current critical emphasis on transnational and globalized approaches has led to new interest in the Americas as a site whose cultural formations challenge the methodological nationalism of much literary study. Comparative studies of the Caribbean, North and South America reveal significant continuities among their literatures as well as important national and regional specificities. The hemispheric turn has drawn attention to the distinctive modes of fiction inspired by the unique cultural, political and historical conditions of the Americas, as well as to "America" itself as a fiction of sorts -- as "invented" rather than "discovered" in Edmundo O'Gorman's influential formulation.

In this seminar, we will examine a series of contemporary novels that theorize the space of the Americas as a postcolonial and postslavery contact zone – one that unsettles geo-political borders, myths of origins, and systems of racial classification. We will read contemporary authors from the Caribbean, North and South America such as Édouard Glissant, Jacques Poulin, Gerald Vizenor, Gayle Jones and Mario Vargas Llosa while also revisiting earlier attempts to theorize the hemisphere by such important figures as Jose Martí, Randolph Bourne, José Enrique Rodó and Alejo Carpentier.

Each major text will be paired with a short critical essay on a related topic that represents an important intervention in New World studies. Alongside these literary and theoretical texts, we will also consider relevant works by contemporary visual and performance artists such as Rafael Goldchain and Guillermo Gómez-Peña.

ENGL 5005: M.A. SEMINAR**INSTRUCTOR: B. Greenspan****■ TOPIC: “Proseminar” ■**

This seminar provides an overview of the history of English as a discipline. We will address current issues in the field of English and the academic profession generally, and survey the research methods and professional skills you will need to succeed at the graduate level. In our weekly meetings, we will devote roughly equal time to discussing each of three main topics: The

Discipline, The Profession and Research Methods. Over the course of the term, we will explore practical aspects of scholarship, advanced resources for literary research and how to use them, and new bibliographic, teaching and presentation technologies. We will cover issues central to literary study today, including the history and current state of the profession, current critical methodologies, the expanded canon, and interdisciplinary approaches to the field. In addition, we will discuss strategies for managing the Teaching Assistantship, try our hands at writing conference proposals and applications for grants and doctoral programs, and discuss the pros and cons of doctoral study.

ENGL 5207: EARLY MEDIEVAL STUDIES

INSTRUCTOR: R. Norris

■ TOPIC: “Hagiography in Early Medieval England: Laugh with the Sinners and Cry with the Saints” ■

Saints are the ancestors of today’s superheroes. Much like our summer Hollywood blockbusters, hagiography – or biographical writing about the saints – became the most popular form of literature throughout the Middle Ages. This genre includes infamously transgressive texts; we will discuss saints like the harlot Mary of Egypt, the transvestite saint Euphrosyne, the time-traveling seven sleepers, and the psychotropic visions of St. Guthlac. In the process, the course will introduce students to a range of medieval literature, including poetry and prose, anonymous and named authors. Moreover, through an in-depth examination of one particular genre as it evolves across several centuries, students will develop analytical skills transferable to other periods and interests (e.g., manuscript context, theories of translation and adaptation, intertextual relationships between literature and the non-literary).

ENGL 5304: RENAISSANCE DRAMA

INSTRUCTOR: D. Beecher

■ TOPIC: “The Plays of Ben Jonson: The Satiric and Historical Modes” ■

This course is all about saintly Ben Jonson, England’s best for satire in the theatre (say some), the best for comedy in the world (say one or two more), and the spoil sport of the Jacobean theatre (say still others). He is, in any case, controversial, talented, a little angry, hugely playful and inventive, a man with a vision for satire and for history (arguably) in his *Sejanus*. Our purpose is to investigate the playwright as maker and thinker in relation to the theatre of his day, its opportunities and sub-genres, and in relation to the theatre of the ancients. Jonson was intellectually well connected, had read widely, knew classical languages (in which certain others were said to be deficient), and clearly had ideas of the theatre, for which he was recognized, as I recall, by both universities.

The course is a seminar, which means that you have every right to try an out-talk me. And to this end, I will be giving each of you two formal headstarts in the form of seminar presentations. In the interests of unpressured exploration and experimentation of an innovative kind, these presentations will not be graded. But they are, for all that, enormously important, for they will constitute the information, research, and critical evaluations upon which class discussion will largely be based. Ideally, they will seize upon significant issues and problems in the reading of this demanding playwright in terms of his generation of meanings, his conventions, modes, and genres, his artistry, textual architectonics, and theatrical ideas, his style, imagery, and play of language, his sense of reciprocity, justice, civic mindedness, even his nostalgia. All that goes into

the making of social comedy or political history in the theatre is material for consideration in contexts linguistic and cultural to ideological and emotional or cognitive. Yet the play is always the “thing,” and seminars should remain grounded in the Jonsonian text.

ENGL 5308: RENAISSANCE STUDIES

INSTRUCTOR: A. Wallace

■ TOPIC: “The Afterlife of the Ancients: Classical Culture and the Origins of Modernity” ■

The course attempts to come to terms with what it means to speak of a “Renaissance” of classical culture. Our primary goal will be to catch writers in the act of re-imagining the ancient world as consolation, fantasy, fetish, heuristic, and hallucination. Resisting the urge to advance vague and nostalgic notions concerning the “continuity” of classical culture, we will instead enquire how and why the prospect of raising the ancient dead so tantalized early modern writers, artists, and theorists. Why, for instance, does the spectre of ancient Rome (and indeed the spectres of antiquity’s erotic plots) haunt the early modern schoolroom? Why does what Anthony Grafton has called the “culture of the ancient book” loom so large at the origins of modernity? Where and how do the erotic (and even pornographic) instincts of so much classical culture surface in the Renaissance and after? How are ancient texts (and literary, philosophical, and theoretical discourses that constitute themselves in direct dialogue with antiquity) put to new uses and crammed into new forms under the pressure of sometimes wildly anachronistic paradigms? Why are the discourses of desire and sexual intimacy so central to the recuperative programs of early modern aesthetics? Special emphasis will be placed on the affective dimension of the early modern encounter with antiquity.

Primary texts will include works by (in order) Dante, Petrarch, Freud, Pietro Aretino, Plato, Marsilio Ficino, Edmund Spenser, Virgil, Roger Ascham, St. Augustine, Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Ovid, Luce Irigaray, Soren Kierkegaard, and Sir Thomas Brown. Primary and theoretical readings will usually be read in conjunction with recent scholarship on the texts and problems at hand.

ENGL 5402: EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY STUDIES

INSTRUCTOR: J. Murray

■ TOPIC: “Homework: The Culture of Improvement in the Eighteenth Century” ■

This course explores the late eighteenth century discourse of improvement, which encompasses a wide-ranging set of cultural, literary, social and political concerns, from the conception of improvement that underlies late eighteenth-century stadial theory, or teleologies of historical progress, to the widespread land enclosure and agricultural improvement that occurred in the late eighteenth century, to the aesthetic of the picturesque and the desire to improve nature, to the education and moral improvement of the “lower orders,” to the vogue for landscape architecture and estate improvement, to the moral and social cultivation of young women such as Fanny Price in Austen’s *Mansfield Park*, to Britain’s imperial and civilizing mission. If in its original and more narrow understanding improvement “referred to the management and cultivation of land to render it more profitable,” as Anne Janowitz has suggested, it also came to have diverse meanings which “range from an external set of pressures for increasing profit to a set of internal pressures for developing the self.”

ENGL 5508: NINETEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE**INSTRUCTOR: J. Schroeder****■ TOPIC: “Hacks, Scribblers, Sages: Journalism, Fiction and the Victorian Press” ■**

In this course we will consider the relationship between Victorian fiction and the press. Possible topics for discussion may include: the intersections between news and narrative; the development of “higher journalism”; the rise of the professional journalist and literary critic; the book review as a literary category; the creation and representation of literary and intellectual communities through publications; the creation and representation of audiences as “markets”; fictional representations of journalism as a form of literary labour; the separation and intersection of “high” and “low” reading cultures.

ENGL 5601: TWENTIETH-CENTURY POETRY**INSTRUCTOR: B. Carr Vellino****■ TOPIC: “The Proxy Witness in Twentieth-Century Human Rights” ■**

This course will explore the limitations and possibilities for poets who adopt the position of secondary witness to social suffering which they did not experience firsthand. Poets of conscious self-critically interrogate the risks of “appropriating suffering” to engage in human rights advocacy representations in a range of contexts, including Canadian, American, Chilean, Armenian, South African, Irish, and Israeli. We will consider the poets’ contribution to a model of ethical writing and reading in response to atrocity; the mobilization of a human rights rhetoric of the body in poetry, NGO appeals, and law; and the role of literary testimony in historical consciousness, counter-memorial, redress, and transitional justice initiatives.

ENGL 5606: TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERATURE**INSTRUCTOR: S. Kamra****■ TOPIC: “Engaging Culture and Politics: Writings by Salman Rushdie and Edward Said” ■**

Salman Rushdie and Edward Said are considered among the most influential and provocative intellectuals identified with the project of provincializing Europe. Equally, they have been controversial figures because of their challenging of orthodoxies within the economies of South Asia and the Middle East respectively. Over the years, they have established definitive counter-colonial histories and alternative historiographic practices (Rushdie in *Midnight’s Children* for instance), provided models for thinking about the political work of culture in an imperial age and colonial culture (Said in *Orientalism* for instance), engaged in a critical dialogue with fundamentalist movements, and addressed the place of literature in contemporary culture.

In this course we will study some of the major works by these two intellectuals, paying particular attention to their impact on the study of culture and society in a variety of disciplines. We will end by considering Aijaz Ahmad’s critique (*In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*) of the establishment of the postcolonial intellectual in western academe and his discussion of Rushdie and Said in particular.

ENGL 5608: TWENTIETH-CENTURY STUDIES**INSTRUCTOR: J. Medd****■ TOPIC: “Modernist Genders, Modernist Sexualities” ■**

“Modernism” is understood as a combination of innovative literary movements from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, movements that were responding to the contemporary historical conditions of “modernity” while also reacting against Victorian cultural beliefs and literary forms. However, modernism also developed in relation to significant changes in the politics and understandings of gender and sexuality, including changes in marriage and the family, gender roles, sexual identities and attitudes, and psychology. Modernism addressed gender identity (masculinity, femininity, and the spaces in between), gender relations (whether ‘opposite’ sex relations or same-sex relations), and sexuality (hetero, homo, infantile, extra-marital, and otherwise) as subject matter, but also conceptualized its innovative avant-garde style and philosophical concerns through specifically gendered and sexualized language. This course will consider modernist texts and artistic theory in relation to the cultural context of modernity to explore how both the content and style of modernism were gendered and sexualized. The course is organized around key topics: the sexual child; homosexuality; gender, sexuality and World War One; the gendering of the avant-garde; the modernist artist; modernist gender criticism; the gendered desires of Empire. Authors will include (but are not limited to) Henry James, Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence, E.M. Forster, Imagist poets, and members of the Vorticist movement.

ENGL 5706: AMERICAN LITERATURE**INSTRUCTOR: F. Nudelman****■ TOPIC: “United States Culture in the Age of Experience, 1945-1979” ■**

In the decades following World War Two, writers, painters, filmmakers, and musicians cultivated an aesthetic spontaneity, intensity, and interiority that might adequately represent--and potentially transform--the strange conditions of modern life. In this course, we will explore innovations in the arts during this period. Examining significant texts and trends--abstract expressionism, beat poetry, new journalism, and direct cinema among them--we will consider the impact of military expansion, movements for gender and racial equality, and the advent of live television on cultural production.

ENGL 5803: CANADIAN FICTION**INSTRUCTOR: S. Jamieson****■ TOPIC: “Wrinkle Nation?: Ideologies of Aging in Canadian Writing” ■**

The statement from a recent edition of *The Globe and Mail*, “already, women over 80 outnumber farmers in Canada by two to one,” is an example of the mainstream media’s partiality for statistics that enable an interpretation of population aging as an impending social and economic crisis. In view of this construction of the old (old women in particular!) as a drain on the nation’s resources, it is important that we examine and question the formation of our assumptions about our own and others’ aging across the life course. We are, of course, all aging from the moment we are born.

This course will introduce you to the issues and methodologies central to the field of critical gerontology. In contrast to the medical and scientific discourses that have dominated the study of

aging since the late nineteenth century, critical gerontology approaches the subject of aging through various multi-disciplinary perspectives including political economy, cultural history, and textual analysis. Through the reading of fictional and theoretical texts, participation in class discussions, and the completion of oral and written assignments, you will learn to identify and interpret the ways in which age intersects with the other forms of difference (such as gender, class, race, ethnicity, and sexuality) that animate contemporary Canadian literature and culture.

ENGL 6000: DOCTORAL SEMINAR**INSTRUCTOR: T. DeCook****■ TOPIC: “The Production of Literature” ■**

This seminar addresses key questions in cultural theory and history from the perspective of three major topics: how technological change and material forms affect meaning and instigate or reflect cultural and epistemological shifts; how authorship has been historically understood, and how it has been shaped by economics and changing media; and how reading has been understood as a psychological, cultural, and political act, and how it has been shaped by institutional forces and practices.