

## Department of English Course Descriptions—FALL 2009

### **602A/WGS 377: Ideas in Literature: U.S. Women Poets** (Professor DeShazer)

In this course we will examine the poetry, aesthetic strategies, and historical contexts of selected U.S. women poets from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries. Among our central themes will be breaking silence and finding voice; representing embodiment, sexuality, spirituality, and maternity; inscribing political resistance; and envisioning cultural transformation. The focal poets will be Anne Bradstreet, Emily Dickinson, Louise Bogan, Gwendolyn Brooks, Sylvia Plath, Elizabeth Bishop, and Adrienne Rich. Required will be an individual and a group presentation, two 10-12 page essays of critical analysis, a midterm exam, and active class participation in a discussion format.

Texts: Anne Bradstreet, *To My Husband and Other Poems*  
Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*  
Louise Bogan, *The Blue Estuaries*  
Gwendolyn Brooks, *Selected Poems*  
Sylvia Plath, *Ariel: The Restored Edition*  
Elizabeth Bishop, *The Complete Poems*  
Adrienne Rich, *An Atlas of the Difficult World*

### **611: The Legend of Arthur** (Professor Sigal)

This course aims to seek out the mysterious origins of the legend of King Arthur and his Knights through a reading of historical and literary texts, primarily (but not exclusively) medieval. We will delve into the mythic British past and explore the historical, social, political and religious contexts in which some of the greatest literary works of all time were enmeshed. And we will debate the relevance of the legend to a contemporary reader, and why, for some of us, the fascination endures. The texts will include: "Lanval" (a *lai* by Marie de France), *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, romances by Chrétien de Troyes, Malory's *Le Morte D'arthur*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. Where time permits, we will fit in a viewing of some "favorite" Arthurian films.

### **623: Shakespeare** (Professor Olga Valbuena)

We will read plays and poems from Shakespeare's career as chief dramatist for The Lord Chamberlain's Men and, later, The King's Men. Our class discussions will involve close analysis of Shakespeare's language, his culture, and the various moral, political, and aesthetic issues raised in the plays and poetry. We will favor a thematic over chronological order of reading so that we can build on our progressive examination of love, gender, and friendship; reciprocal obligation, and king and kinship. In relation to these issues, we'll examine domestic and political tyranny—and of course, revenge and moral redemption. *Required Text: The Necessary Shakespeare*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Edited by David Bevington. *Writing Requirement:* three essays (one with outside research) and occasional response papers.

### **627: Milton** (Professor Rapaport)

The course examines both some major and minor texts by Milton and examines them in the context of seventeenth century British history. Major issues raised by scholars of Milton are problematized and discussed, and Milton's influence as a poet is also examined. Additionally we will be looking at various theological issues and how Milton fits into Protestant religious movements. Given that Milton is such an enormous cultural watershed—he's a whole education in and of himself—a course on Milton is an invaluable part of the English major. This semester we'll be concentrating on Milton as a baroque poet.

### **630: Restoration and Eighteenth-Century British Literature** (Professor Kairoff)

Eighteenth-century Britons were talkative people, at least on paper. We will sample the many genres they practiced, including the poem, the essay, and the letter, in order to recreate some of the rich texture of their debates on such topics as religion, education, the economy, aesthetics, the status of women, and slavery.

Each student will be required to attend class, to write two papers, and to participate in a creative final examination supported by a written explanation of the project presented.

### **635: Eighteenth-Century British Fiction** (Professor Richard)

What we now think of as “the” novel was to eighteenth-century readers a new, controversial, shape-shifting form whose conventions were still subject to debate and innovation. This course will explore the wild variety that is eighteenth-century British fiction, from novels of manners and matrimony, to “true histories,” to oriental, sentimental, gothic, and political tales. Novelists may include Eliza Haywood, Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Samuel Johnson, Horace Walpole, Laurence Sterne, and Frances Burney. We will also occasionally read selections from critical accounts that try to explain the appearance and development of this new genre. There will be mid-term and final exams and two papers. Class participation is a significant component of the course grade.

### **658: Postcolonial Literature** (Professor Hena)

The British Empire at its height in 1921 encompassed a quarter of the earth's surface. In the era after World War II, however, Britain's former colonies struggled, often violently, to overthrow colonial rule and to establish national independence and self-definition. Resistance to British imperialism was not solely a matter of contesting political governance, economic exploitation, or racial discrimination. It also entailed re-imagining the imperial legacy of the English language, literature, and culture. This seminar examines how postcolonial writers from Africa, South Asia, and the Caribbean respond to the violence of imperial modernity, from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) through Mohsin Hamid's post-9/11 novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007). As we journey across twentieth- and twenty-first century world literature, we will simultaneously venture into postcolonial criticism and theory, asking how literature and criticism intersect with and depart from one another concerning the condition of postcoloniality. For instance, the course will probe how postcolonial literature and theory contend with a range of problems including the writing of the colonial subject; the question of resistance to colonial violence; the tumult of decolonization and national independence; the experience of migration, diaspora, and hybridity; the formation of national,

racial, and gendered and sexual identities within the colonial matrix; the onslaught of globalization upon postcolonial states; and the future of postcolonial studies in the aftermath of 9/11. Above all, this class will ask the dialectical question: what is the power of art in situations of political and cultural crisis, and what are the claims of theory upon the postcolonial condition?

Literary authors will likely include Joseph Conrad, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Nawal el Sadawi, J.M. Coetzee, Salman Rushdie, Derek Walcott, Jamaica Kincaid, Arundhati Roy, and Mohsin Hamid. Critical theorists will range from Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Anne McClintock, Simon Gikandi, and Slavoj Zizek.

### **681: Studies in African-American literature** (Professor Irwin-Mulcahy)

This course will examine modern works of African American literature. We will direct our attention to twentieth-century novelists whose writings explore the practices of modern aesthetics, innovation, and memory. We will be further attentive to themes of power, race, and sexuality in relation to such texts as Paul Dunbar's *The Sport of the Gods*, Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*, James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, Edwidge Danticat's *The Dew Breaker* and shorter pieces by Toni Morrison and John Edgar Wideman. Innovation and scholarly creativity will be encouraged in our approaches to the literature. Two critical papers required.

### **682: Modern American Fiction** (Professor Maine)

We will examine what experiments in narrative form reveal about human identity in 20<sup>th</sup> Century American fiction, theorize about what it means (or meant) to be "modern," and investigate as well some relationships between form and meaning in the visual arts of the same period.

Ernest Hemingway	<u>The Sun Also Rises</u>
F. Scott Fitzgerald	<u>The Great Gatsby</u>
William Faulkner	<u>The Sound and the Fury</u>
John Dos Passos	<u>The Big Money</u>
James Baldwin	<u>Go Tell It on the Mountain</u>
Vladimir Nabokov	<u>Lolita</u>
Truman Capote	<u>In Cold Blood</u>
Don DeLillo	<u>White Noise</u>

Requirements: short assignments, one of which will involve a trip to Reynolda House Museum of American Art; two 8-10 page papers; final exam.

### **685: 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Poetry: T.S. Eliot and W.H. Auden** (Professor Kuberski)

We will read the poetry and prose of T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) and W.H. Auden (1907-1973), following the development of these two masters from their early modernist works, through their poetry of Christian conversion, to their later attempts to establish a modern classicism. Two critical papers and class presentations.

Texts:

Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays: 1909-1950* (Harcourt)

Eliot, *Selected Prose* (Harcourt)

Auden, *Collected Poems* (Vintage)

Auden, *The Prolific and the Devourer* (Ecco)

### **687: Slavery in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Black Imagination** (Professor Bowie)

This course will be framed around contemporary novels and films that directly or indirectly signify upon eighteenth and nineteenth century bodies of knowledge about slavery and freedom. In particular, discussions will focus on some of the ways modern artists have reaffirmed or re-imagined “written by herself or himself” narratives in both form and content. Each work, to a degree, modifies the subject of slavery by disrupting “known” assumptions about race, geography, or national/ethnic identity. From Maryse Conde’s *I, Tituba*, which positions a Caribbean woman at the center of the Salem Witch Trials, to Edward P. Jones’ *The Known World*, which draws readers into the unexpected and somewhat uncharted worlds of the black slaveholding, each of these works lays open opportunities for us to examine how these texts engage notions of historical objectivity. These works disrupt conventional narrative forms and linear chronologies, which are often present in nineteenth century narratives and fictions, even as they establish complex sets of historical “truths” that move readers toward contemporary questions about race, slavery, and black national identities in a “free” era.

Required: Students will contribute two researched, 10 page essays, along with several short response papers and presentations.

Texts may include:

Octavia Butler’s *Kindred*

Maryse Conde’s *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*

Edwidge Danticat’s *The Farming of Bones*

Charles Johnson’s *Soul Catcher* (selections)

Edward P. Jones’s *The Known World*

Toni Morrison’s *Tar Baby*

Ishmael Reed’s *Flight to Canada*

Films (tentative):

*Sankofa*

*CSA*

*Daughters of the Dust*

### **691: Studies in Postmodernism** (Professor Hans)

This class will investigate the relations between Modernism and Postmodernism by exploring their links in both literary and philosophical texts. The exemplars of Modernism will be works by Nietzsche, Wallace Stevens, and Virginia Woolf. Postmodernism will be represented by writings from Heidegger, Derrida, A. R. Ammons, John Barth, and Harryette Mullen.

### **694/THE 372: Contemporary Drama** (Professor Davis)

This course is an overview and examination of the dramatic works from the late twentieth century to the present. The course explores issues, themes, style, and form. Coursework includes a research paper, response papers, class presentations, discussions, and scene work. Playwrights

may include Edward Albee, Caryl Churchill, David Henry Hwang, Tony Kushner, Neil LaBute, Jose Rivera, Sarah Ruhl, Suzan-Lori Parks, Paula Vogel, and August Wilson.

### **699/JOU 284: Advanced Expository Writing** (Professor Niepold)

This is an advanced feature writing course designed to evaluate, discuss and practice the skills need to produce magazine stories for publication. Students are encouraged to write creatively and often in a variety of styles and on a variety of topics. The course, however, is not a creative writing class. It focuses on writing specifically for magazine readers. Taught in a workshop setting, students take on roles of actual magazine staffs and write to targeted audiences. A “mock” magazine is created to sharpen the focus of specific communications skills needed throughout the magazine publishing process. Readings, in-class discussions, written assignments – in and out of class – focus on the skills of exemplary journalists who use the power of observations, interviewing and fact gathering to craft compelling stories. Clear writing with substance, personality and a point of view are the elements of a good story, and this class stresses the cultivation of these skills. The goal of the course is to produce stories worth reading – and remembering – the essence of good magazine writing and powerful newspaper features.

Assigned books: *Feature Writing for Newspapers and Magazines*, Edward J. Friedlander and John Lee  
*The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14<sup>th</sup> Edition, 1993

## **Graduate Seminars**

### **Eng 743: Victorian Sensation** (Professor Jenkins)

This graduate course examines an enormously popular subset of novels in the Victorian period – novels that focused on spectacle, mystery, and intense emotions. The sensation novel, also called the “electrical novel,” was at its zenith in the 1860s. It has roots in gothic fiction, melodrama, and romance, and branches in more mainstream novels such as *Great Expectations* (1860-1). When the sensation novel craze subsided in the 1880s, strong traces remained in New Woman fiction, psychological fiction, and the modern detective story. In the process of studying these novels, we will address questions such as canonicity, serial publication, and the pleasures and dangers of solitary novel reading. We will also investigate the social and political sources of the sensation novel craze, including innovations in technology and governance, and the transformation of the Victorian family.

The course grade is based on two essays, an oral presentation, and weekly participation. Writing in the course will emphasize collaboration and revision. Assignments will expose participants to important critical “modes” expected from young scholars in the field: the research proposal, the conference presentation, and the academic article.

Readings may include (subject to change):

Elizabeth Gaskell, ghost stories of the 1850s and 60s

George Eliot, "The Lifted Veil" (1859)  
Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White* (1860)  
Ellen Wood, *East Lynne* (1861)  
Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (1861-2)  
Charles Dickens, *Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870)  
Thomas Hardy, *Desperate Remedies* (1871) or *Jude the Obscure* (1895)  
Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897)  
Dan Simmons, *Drood* (2009)

#### **746. William Blake and David Lynch** (Professor Wilson)

In this course, we'll engage in a comparative study of the works of William Blake and David Lynch. While on the surface, such a comparison might seem arbitrary—Blake, after all, is a late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British poet and Lynch is a contemporary American filmmaker—the parallels between the two artists are many and mutually illuminating. Here are a few: both are fascinated by relationships between word and image; both are keen on the subtleties of irony; both are obsessed with innocence and experience; both are consumed with the power of negation; both use art to transcend art; both hunger for the infinite. In studying these two figures side by side, we will of course become familiar with the fertile nuances of their respective canons, but we will also meditate on the general aesthetic questions that arise from comparing the two. How do word and image relate? Are there significant connections between cinema and poetry? Can irony open into religious insight? Is there an artistic form commensurate with negative theology? The course, then, will feature a blending of close explication and theoretical speculation.

Requirements:

An oral presentation; two brief essays; a long research essay

#### **Works:**

##### **William Blake:**

##### **Poetry**

*Songs of Innocence and Experience*

"The Book of Thel"

"Visions of the Daughters of Albion"

*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

"The Book of Urizen"

*Milton*

Selected poems from the "Pickering MS"

##### **Prose**

"A Descriptive Catalogue"

"A Vision of the Last Judgment"

Selected Marginalia

##### **David Lynch:**

##### **Feature-Length Films**

*Eraserhead*

*Blue Velvet*

*Wild at Heart*

*Lost Highway*

*Mulholland Dr.*

*Inland Empire*

##### **Short Films**

"Six Men Getting Sick"

"The Alphabet"

"The Grandmother"

"Lumiere"

#### **768. Landscape in Irish Literature** (Professor Holdridge)

An examination of the aesthetics of landscape, how perceptions have been shaped by Irish history, and how they are reflected in Irish literature, with some attention paid to art, religion and music. The purpose of this course is to use the philosophy of the landscape (when and why we first began to look at nature, why we call a landscape beautiful, why sublime) as a

lens through which to examine Irish culture, literature, art, architecture, folklore, and society since the 18th-century birth of aesthetics. The course will be divided into three historical periods: the Ascendancy Ireland of the 18th century, the Hidden and Absentee Ireland of the 19th century, and Revolutionary/Independent Ireland of the 20th century. Class time will be devoted primarily to discussion of topics based on assigned readings. There will be some examination of Irish films, artwork, and music. Students will be expected to complete two long writing assignments (10-15 pages, accumulatively worth 45% of the final grade) with possible rewriting of the first. Students will meet with me to talk about the project and also to submit a detailed outline. An in-class presentation will be encouraged and discussion will be 10% of the final grade. The pedagogical emphasis is on discussion of the reading material, drawing upon questions raised in class. Lecturing will be minimal.

Tentative texts for the course are as follows:

Theory:

Hooper, Glenn. *The Tourist's Gaze: Travellers to Ireland, 1800 – 2000*

Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*

Oona Frawley, *Irish Pastoral*

Chapters from J.W. Foster (ed.), *Nature in Ireland*

Greg Gerard, *Ecocriticism*

Essays from Seamus Deane, Declan Kiberd, Simon Schama, and other critics

Primary Texts:

Oliver Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*

Lady Morgan, *The Wild Irish Girl*

William Allingham, *Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland*

William Carleton, *Traits and Stories from the Irish Peasantry*

J.M. Synge, *The Aran Islands*

J.M. Synge, *Selected Plays*

W.B. Yeats, *Selected Poems*

James Joyce, *Selected stories from Dubliners*

Patrick Kavanagh, *Selected Poems*

Louis MacNeice, *Selected Poems*

Elizabeth Bowen, *The Last September*

Short stories by Sean O'Faolain, Liam O'Flaherty and Frank O'Connor

John Montague, *The Rough Field*

Selected poems by Seamus Heaney, Paul Muldoon,

Nuala Ní Dhomnaill, Medbh McGuckian.

John McGahern, *By the Lake*