

Department of English Course Descriptions—FALL 2009

300-A: Seminar in the Major: “But is it true?: Storytelling in South Africa” (Professor Still)

Is fiction ever true? If not, what's the point of studying it? If so, what good does it do in the world? How do we think about literature's role in society and in our own lives: as entertaining escapism, ethical guidepost, enjoyable paradox, empty rhetoric, etc? With these big questions serving as a framework, we will devote our attention to South African literature (primarily though not exclusively fiction) about the experience and legacy of apartheid, alongside scholarship reflecting the major trends and developments of literary studies. Because this course is intended primarily for English majors, the extensive reading, discussion, research, writing, and presentations required in the course will all contribute to achieving two specific goals: first, to understand and appreciate the literature itself; and second, to understand and practice literary scholarship.

Readings are likely to include some combination of the following: *Master Harold...and the Boys* (Athol Fugard), *Burger's Daughter* (Nadine Gordimer), *Kaffir Boy* (Mark Mathabane), *Between Two Worlds* (Miriam Tlali), *Mating Birds* (Lewis Nkosi), *The Madonna of Excelsior* (Zakes Mda), *Country of My Skull* (Antjie Krog), *Bitter Fruit* (Achmat Dagor), *Disgrace* (J.M. Coetzee), *Mother to Mother* (Sinidwe Magona), *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (Phaswane Mpe), and *Playing in the Light* (Zoe Wicomb). **(Major Requirement)**

300-B: Seminar in the Major: Conrad and Woolf (Professor Klein)

In this course we will study important novels by Joseph Conrad and Virginia Woolf, two major writers of the Modernist period. We will consider the authors' innovations in narrative form; their treatments of the relationship between private experience (individual consciousness, morality, memory, desire) and public responsibility (political, social, familial); the vexed relationship in their work between history and fiction; their use of fictional genres and their admixture within individual works (melodrama, historiography, quest romance); and study closely each author's treatment of issues of gender and sexual difference, and the role of the narrator/artist. Course requirements include papers and oral presentations. **(Major Requirement)**

Conrad: Heart of Darkness (Norton)

Lord Jim (Penguin)

Nostramo (Penguin)

The Secret Agent (Penguin)

Woolf: Mrs. Dalloway (HB)

To the Lighthouse (HB)

The Waves (HB)

Between the Acts (HB)

300-C: Seminar in the Major: The Uses of Adversity (Professor Ettin)

“Sweet are the uses of adversity,” claims Shakespeare’s Duke Senior in *As You Like It*. English writers of the 16th and 17th centuries often used adversity as an impulse for their art, though not all found it sweet. At times they explicitly responded to personal or professional disappointment, illness or melancholic temperament, at other times to losses through death; often they voiced sorrows or crises of faith or conscience that might not have been their own but that they insightfully articulated. Whether moved by private or public experience, their ways of responding through their art help us understand the transformation of the personal into the publishable, strategies of allusion and reference, the uses and limits of literature,.

Artists will likely include Wyatt, Dowland (as composer and lyricist), Spenser, Shakespeare (one or two plays), Donne (Holy Sonnets and selected meditations), Milton (selected sonnets and *Samson Agonistes*), Marvell and perhaps Purcell (as composer and subject of musical laments). **(Major Requirement)**

302A/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*
(Meets the American Literature Requirement)

311: 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. **(Meets Pre-1800 Literature Requirement.)**

323: 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*, 3rd ed. Edited by David Bevington. *Writing Requirement:* three essays (one with outside research) and occasional response papers. **(Meets Shakespeare Requirement)**

327: 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. **(Meets Pre-1800 Literature Requirement)**

330: 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. **(Meets Pre-1800 Literature Requirement)**

335: 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. **(Meets Pre-1800 Literature Requirement)**

351: "Causes and Effects in British Romantic Literature" (Professor Burkett)

The Romantic period was one of Britain's most "revolutionary" eras in a number of important ways. For England, the late eighteenth and early-nineteenth century was a time of dramatic social, political, literary, and scientific upheaval and change. In this seminar we will investigate the various "causes" that were envisioned, promoted, and enacted during this era and trace their often wide-ranging and revolutionary "effects." The major focus of the class will thus be a continual examination of the idea of British Romantic "causality," or the relationship between cause and effect as proposed by works written during this age. In so doing, our course will focus on Romantic causes (literary, social, political, ecological, scientific, religious, philosophical) and their various effects (or lack thereof) (revolutions both literal and figurative, publications, inventions, discoveries, but also failed programs and other "ends"). We will address and examine these ideas largely through literary texts (lyric poetry, plays, the Romantic novel), but we will also interrogate various other forms and genres as well (pamphlets, journals, religious tracts, art, philosophy, scientific publications). Course readings will likely include selections from the work of the following authors: William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Immanuel Kant, Edmund Burke, John Keats, Erasmus Darwin, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Shelley, William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, William Blake, John Constable, and Lord Byron.

Students will be required to submit two papers for this course -- one due at midterm and one during finals week. Shorter written assignments may be collected on a weekly basis. Class attendance and participation will be crucial to the determination of final grades for this seminar. **(Elective in the Major)**

358: 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.

(Elective in the Major)

381: 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. **(Meets the American Literature Requirement)**

382: Modern American Fiction (Professor Maine)

We will examine what experiments in narrative form reveal about human identity in 20th 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. **(Meets American Literature Requirement)**

385: 20th 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. **(Meets American Literature Requirement)**

Texts:

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

Eliot, *Selected Prose* (Harcourt)

Auden, *Collected Poems* (Vintage)

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

387: Slavery in the 20th and 21st 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. **(Meets American Literature Requirement)**

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, *Flight to Canada*

Films (tentative):

Sankofa

CSA

Daughters of the Dust

391: 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.

(Major Elective)

394/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. **(Major Elective)**

399/JOU 284: Advanced Expository Writing (Professor Mary Martin 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, 14th Edition, 1993

(Major Elective)