

English Graduate Seminar Descriptions for Spring 2015

Required Courses¹

ENG 501: CRITICAL THEORY (Dr. Ayan Gangopadhyay)

Students in this seminar study various methods of theoretical analysis and critique associated with the discipline of literary, cultural, and rhetorical analysis (including the concept of the subject and its critique; materialist criticism and ideology; a historicist approach; deconstruction; gender; postcolonial studies); and the application of these methods to specific literary and cultural texts. While the course will focus primarily on rigorous reading of established theoretical positions, the course also involves some engagement with contemporary theoretical developments. Students will be expected to read original critical texts by major theorists (albeit as extracts rather than whole works), as well as explanatory secondary reading, and to apply those critical approaches to literary and cultural texts. Assignments could include, but are not limited to, an analysis of a critical/theoretical text; an application of one theoretical approach to a literary or cultural text; and an individual or group presentation of critical ideas and their application

ENG 560: LOCATING LITERATURE (Dr. Carolyn Sorisio)

Students in this seminar will engage in the study of critical approaches to literary texts that focus on the historical construction of literary value, canonicity, and norms of reading, including the idea of “national” literature and cross-cultural approaches to literature (postcolonial, transnational, multiethnic). This course allows us to analyze the historical and cultural locatedness of literature and interpretation and to identify the variability and multiplicity of meaning over time and across different cultural contexts. The course examines historical shifts in interpretations, and develops our awareness of the historical construction of literary and aesthetic value, canonicity, and norms of reading. It asks us to consider how the transmission and circulation of texts between and across cultures reinvents and hybridizes cultural meaning. We will explore these issues by focusing in depth on diverse interpretations of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852). As part of our exploration of the changing interpretations and meanings produced by literature, we will also consider the reinterpretation and rewriting of canonical texts. Specifically, we will study rewritings and representations of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in minstrel shows, poetry, children’s literature, and other genres and venues. Our discussion of the located nature of literature necessitates some understanding of the impact of European and US colonialism on epistemological or hermeneutical paradigms and the idea of a national literature and cross-cultural approaches to literature. We will explore these considerations in relation to Melville’s *Moby Dick*, Jane Johnston Schoolcraft’s poetry and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s *Hiawatha*. We will also focus on the genres of the novel, slave narrative, drama, and poetry (specifically the epic, the complaint, and the ballad).

¹ Courses in this category may satisfy core, capstone, or various breadth requirements, depending on which track of the M.A. English program the student is pursuing. Students should refer to the advising sheet for their specific track.

ENG 600: TUTORING COMPOSITION (Dr. Margaret Ervin)

Students in this course learn the theory and practice of teaching Basic Writing in the tutoring environment. The seminar is required for students who wish to apply to work as Graduate Assistant tutors in the University Writing Center. For more information about the course or about applying for a GAsip in the Writing Center, please contact the instructor.

ENG 616: RESEARCH METHODS FOR WRITING, TEACHING, & CRITICISM (Dr. Vicki Tischio)

This capstone seminar provides a supportive community structure for advanced graduate student-researchers to develop, design, and implement an “action research” project relevant to writing studies. Participants will work through the various stages of the research process, including implementation, of a project of their own design. The project should be related to interests, questions, concerns that students have grappled with throughout their graduate studies. The capstone seminar provides the opportunity to delve more deeply into an idea and further develop it. Participants can develop a previous seminar paper into a journal article, create a curriculum guide, build a thesis project, or investigate other areas, including but not limited to the following: research in/on the classroom or other pedagogical interactions, community-based projects, professional portfolio, website, etc.

Creative Writing Workshops and Seminars

ENG 609: SHORT STORY WORKSHOP II (Dr. Christopher Merkner)

Contemporary writers of literary short fiction study, question, and interpret the world, its people and its problems. They test their observations, claims, and interpretations against the lives and experiences and circumstances of characters and communities and settings they manufacture with words. They do this work with a force, curiosity, fairness, reason, and care appropriate to their intended reading audience. In this section of ENG 609, all students can expect to write and workshop two stories: one story in the spirit of first person narratives and one in the spirit of third person narratives. Students will revise one of these stories significantly and submit it as their third story. Students can expect to read and discuss five or six collections of contemporary writers of short fiction, lead the discussion and craft workshop on one of these collections of stories, and write a brief semi-critical paper that articulates a trajectory for their own stories moving forward in their lives and careers: what kind of writing are they writing, like whom, for whom, and why do they think this is an important creative project for our world?

ENG 508: WRITING SEMINAR—NON-FICTION PROSE (Spring Ulmer)

The nonfiction readings and writing projects in this course will engage with what it means to write as if our lives depended on it. Throughout the course, subtitled “Nonfiction and/or Life,” we will question how the production and consumption of nonfiction might do more help than harm. What might it mean to think of health or survival as a literary genre? Might nonfiction save lives and/or is it meant to remember and commemorate them? Required readings include Eula Biss, *On Immunity: An Innoculation*; Anne Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*; Jacob Levenson, *The Secret Epidemic: The Story of AIDS and Black America*; Audre Lorde, *Cancer Journals*; and David Quammen, *Ebola: The Natural and Human History of a Deadly Virus*.

Special Topics Courses

ENG 615: CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (Dr. Cheryl Wanko)

Crime. Every society has it, but the questions of how it is defined, what (if any) punishment accrues to it, who is punished, and who metes out that punishment, differ from culture to culture. People in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England were fascinated with crime and criminals, and greater access to print allowed more crime stories to be told in different ways. Questions arose of how to monitor and control a changing populace in a shifting religious climate, in which divine reward and punishment became less certain. High-profile cases and controversies played out in the streets and in the popular press, and the lines between criminal and victim were interrogated. In literature, because of changing narrative forms, opportunities for exploring the criminal life arose—though one might also argue that those narrative forms themselves appeared to fit new types of lives that needed exploration. In this course, we will examine popular and canonical eighteenth-century texts as well as criticism, theory, and legal writings, to determine the ways in which English society made sense of crime. Readings may include Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders*; John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera*; Henry Fielding, *An Enquiry into the Late Increase in Robbers* and *Jonathan Wild*; George Lillo, *The London Merchant*; and various pamphlets and online resources.

ENG 615: AFRICAN AMERICAN RHETORICS (Dr. Michael Burns)

This seminar will explore rhetorics of black Americans. We will address the history and development of the language, its roles within black cultures, and its relationships to black experiences in mainstream U.S. society. The course will draw rhetorical frameworks from Western European and African Diasporic traditions (e.g., Aristotle, Asante, Jackson and Richardson), sociolinguistic theory (e.g., Smitherman, Wolfram), and sociocultural theory (e.g. Omi and Winant). We will analyze texts as expressions of black Americans' experiences and forms of resistance to racial oppression in the United States. Students will write three papers: two short (five-page) papers and a longer research paper. The main goals of the course are to have students engage in rhetorical analysis and develop a more critical understanding of the role language has played in the black American Experience.

ENG 619: CULTURAL STUDIES—PEDAGOGY AND POLITICS (Dr. Bernard Hall)

Cultural studies seeks to examine the ideological struggles between “texts” and practices, the people who produce them, and the larger socio-cultural contexts where meaning is constructed. This course will introduce students to the theoretical foundations of the discipline as a framework for interrogating the discourses of teaching, learning, literature, language, and literacy circulating in and around educational policy and practice. Readings include key texts by Raymond Williams, Louis Althusser, Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Stuart Hall, James Baldwin, George Orwell, E.D. Hirsch, Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Lisa Delpit, and Gloria Ladson-Billings. Assignments will include, but are not limited to, weekly response papers, a midterm essay exam, a teaching demonstration, and a research paper.