

**Duke English Department Course Descriptions  
Fall 2020**

## ENGLISH 90S.01 SPECIAL TOPICS IN LITERATURE

### THE AMERICAN NIGHTMARE

Mickey D'Addario

This will be a hybrid course consisting of in-person and online (synchronous and asynchronous) discussions. If, at some point during the semester, we as a class decide that shifting to an entirely online environment (i.e. Zoom meetings, blog posts and responses, etc.) is a safer, easier, and better option to foster learning and growth, we will make that transition.

When it comes to the American Dream, there is one constant: for every success story, there are thousands of failures; for every dream, there is a lurking nightmare. Despite the captivating allure of rising from rags to riches, what happens to the individuals who dare to dream and end up losing their possessions, their freedom, or their sanity?

While our attention in this course will center on the dark side of the American Dream, we will explore all of its different sides—from the improbable triumphs to the heartbreaking disasters to the redemptive silver linings of trying to achieve a dream at all—through an examination of literature spanning from America's beginnings to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. After starting with tales of prosperity from Ben Franklin and Horatio Alger, we will transition to texts that express more nuanced versions of success such as *The Great Gatsby* as well as those that depict dreams doomed from the start—whether due to suburban malaise, parental negligence, or the indiscriminating path of disease. This trajectory will lead us through different interpretations and iterations of the dream that intersect with historical period, class, race, and sex.

Possible texts include:

*The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1925)

*Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup (1855)

*The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (1793, 1818)

*Ragged Dick* by Horatio Alger (1867)

*Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller (1949)

*Music for Torching* by A.M. Homes (1999)

*Nemesis* by Philip Roth (2010)

To compliment the above texts, possible films include:

*The Great Gatsby* (2013)

*12 Years a Slave* (2013)

*Death of a Salesman* (1985)

Assignments consist of weekly online blog postings, a medium critical analysis paper based on the close reading of a passage (4-5 pages), and a longer paper with library research (8-10 pages) that can be based on ideas explored in either the first essay or a blog post. No exams. No prerequisites. No prior knowledge of course texts or themes needed.

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## ENGLISH 90S.02 SPECIAL TOPICS IN LITERATURE

### LITERATURE AND TECHNOLOGY: On Living with Machines

Russell Coldicutt

If technology is a necessary part of being human, to what extent does it control our actions, thoughts, and desires? From artificially intelligent systems, to vaccines, to social media platforms, it's hard to imagine

contemporary life without the technologies that shape the modern world. But do those technologies govern human behavior? Are we slaves to the machine?

In this class, we will analyze how technology is used to support and occasionally transform the way humans live and think. We'll begin by identifying how different technologies shape the way humans act in all kinds of modern spaces, from the battlefield to the bedroom. Then, we'll figure out how 20th and 21st century authors use those spaces to stage an encounter between humans and machines in their writing and/or art. This class will uncover how modern narratives of technology (both literary and scientific) prepare us to interact with and question technology's involvement in our lives.

**Reading** may include: the films *Modern Times*, *Her* and some episodes of *Black Mirror*; selections of 'drone art'; poetry by Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams and Allen Ginsberg; short fiction by Zadie Smith, Margaret Atwood, Kazuo Ishiguro, Colson Whitehead, Hwang Sok-yong, H.G. Wells, E.M. Forster, J.G. Ballard, William Gibson, and Don DeLillo.

**Assignments** will include two short essays (3-5 and 4-6 pages), and a longer final essay (10-12 pages), which you will have the opportunity to draft and workshop in class. No exams. No prerequisites.

**This class will be online and will provide asynchronous options.** Students from any year and any major are welcome and no prior knowledge of the texts or concepts is necessary! This class meets the first-year seminar requirements. Please email any questions to the instructor at [russell.coldicutt@duke.edu](mailto:russell.coldicutt@duke.edu).

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**ENGLISH 101S.01 THE ART OF READING**

**UTOPIAS & DYSTOPIAS IN AM LIT**

**Michael D'Alessandro**

### **Utopias and Dystopias in American Literature and Film**

From *The Hunger Games* to *The Handmaid's Tale* to *Mad Max: Fury Road*, American culture has become saturated with visions of speculative "other" societies. But why exactly have utopian and dystopian stories become so central to our national landscape? How can so-called utopias allow specific populations to thrive while so many others fail? Moving from the turn of the twentieth century to the present day, this course examines the genre through social, cultural, and political lenses. We investigate traditional examples of utopias and dystopias—from planned communities to futuristic authoritarian regimes—at the same time that we test the boundaries of utopian and dystopian definitions.

Throughout, we ask critical questions of the utopian and dystopian genres, such as: how have speculative futures illuminated fears around changing economic structures, gender dynamics, and race relations? In what ways do utopias and dystopias offer insight into ideals of individualism and fears of conformity? What aspects of United States history have unfolded as real-life utopias and dystopias? Finally, how distinct are the concepts of utopia and dystopia?

Fiction and film lie at the center of our exploration, but we also engage genre theory, television shows, and cultural criticism. Texts include Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives*, Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, and Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games*. Film screenings include Alex

Garland's *Ex Machina*, Steven Spielberg's *Minority Report*, and Bong Joon-Ho's *Snowpiercer*. Evaluation consists of a series of short essays, one oral presentation, a final research essay, and class participation.

The class is a discussion seminar and will be held in an ONLINE format.

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**ENGLISH 101S.02 THE ART OF READING**  
**WAR & WORSHIP, WINE & (WO)MEN & WORK**  
**Thomas Ferraro**

Our age has lost much of its ear for poetry, as it has its eye for color and line, and its taste for war and worship, wine and women.

Henry Adams (1904)

Why read when there is so much else—or so little!—to do? What is there in a novel, a poem, an essay to hold our imagination captive? to make us smarter, wiser, more artful and more courageous? to bring us closer to each other, to the world at large, to the wonder and the terror and the majesty? How are we to know "it" when we see it; get there when we're not; speak of it when we are? And how are we to take the next step—to the point where bearing witness becomes a form of making present? embodying, a form of propagating? critical analysis, a form of collective self-interrogation?

These questions are the biggies—the overarching, meta-issues of deeply engaged, bloody demanding, fiercely intelligent, achingly beautiful reading.

Nice to contemplate, for sure. But, speaking practically, how to begin?

I will gather for us some of the best stuff I know, American Romantic texts especially, treating matters of nearly universal interest: those matters of "war and worship, wine and (wo)men and work," to expand pointedly on Henry Adams's 1904 alliterative litany. The kind of texts worth reading again and again. We will take character to heart, query idea and plot, describe the sound and sight and feel of the language. We'll ask each text to tutor us on how it wishes, in particular, to be read. And we'll work methodically on our game: 1) reading aloud, to catch the tone and the drama of the words on the page, even in expository prose, experiencing form as content; 2) cross-interrogating between part and whole, whole and part (a given phrase vs. its sentence or paragraph, a given passage vs. the text, the text-at-hand vs. the texts-so-far); and 3) cultivating self-reflexivity, in which what is going on in a text is seen to be at stake in how, separately and together, we discuss it. The ultimate goal is to be able to inhabit a text in its own terms, so intimately that it lives in us; to analyze it so cogently that it, in effect, analyzes us.

Of course that goal is easier said than done, especially given that the seminar is to be conducted on Zoom, with a little help from Sakai. The special challenge this fall is to (learn to) compensate for the loss of the lived theater of the living classroom. What we will be missing are many of the gestural clues in which we bear individual and collective witness to the impress of each given text upon us—which is how we have traditionally come to awareness of what the text *knows* (about us, through us) and *does* (to us). I expect my method to be both more Socratic (calling on folks in discussion, so we don't lose anyone) and less Socratic (extended riffs on passages or interpretive context) than is usual for me in seminar. (A note on literary history: in Plato's *Dialogues* Socrates asks myriad questions of his designated pupils, à la *The Paper Chase's* law classroom, but in doing so he seems to expect and usually in fact receives rote answers, often simply an affirmation, "yes, sir, I agree." Such an affirmation, which comes across to our U.S. ears as simply sycophantic, only works pedagogically if it is taken as a sarcastic bird-flip to the power-dynamic of the questioning process itself!) We might even try break-out rooms, especially if a teaching assistant is aboard. That should help with the fatigue

of concentrated Zooming, especially on-Zoom intellectual concentration—which is a function, I am beginning to recognize, of both too much looking (staring at video-fied talking) and way not enough (gesture and movement about a table).

I am expecting to retain the traditional writing structure of three semi-formal short essays, 5-7 pages, with likelihood response pieces (what we have come to call “shorties”) each week. Final grade to be based on the three semi-formal essays, the myriad shorties, and individual contributions to our collective process whether synchronous or not.

An introduction, in sum, to the sublime intensities of sustained reading during the age of social-distancing and new-normals: the visceral texture it offers, the analytic trenchancy (including capacity for contradiction) it demands, the repartee it solicits, the essaying that honors it, and the kinship of word and thought it ultimately inspires.

TEXTS TO BE DRAWN FROM: Poetry by Dickinson, Stevens, Hughes; short and not-so-short stories by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James, and Claude McKay; novellas and novels by Zora Neale Hurston, E.L. Doctorow, and Ron Hansen; essays by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Michael Herr, Richard Rodriguez; maybe even a vocal recording or video clip, or two.

PREREQUISITES: an appetite for risk, a willingness to dig in, and that extra something.

INVITATION/WARNING: I know that English 101 fills a requirement, which produces an allergic reaction to all and sundry, even the majors! More damaging still, it is a clear that—thanks to high-school pedagogy, not to mention the current cultural climate—the pendulum has swung back to certain whispered assumptions about “English”: above all, that it is a touchy-feely enterprise of dreamy subjectivity for those without the brains or the gumption to do the real stuff. But let me say, at the risk of sounding defensive: Dream on. As former President Brodhead reminds us, almost every single American winner of the Nobel Prize in the Sciences of the last 25 years began intellectual life with an undergraduate Liberal Arts degree heavy on English. Now is the time to start wondering, what am I missing?

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**ENGLISH 110S.01**  
**INTRO CREATIVE WRITING**  
**Cathy Shuman**

The word, the line, the sentence; the image, the thought, the story – these will be our building blocks as students explore and experiment, write, workshop, revise, and polish substantive work in three genres: poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. Along the way, we will analyze published examples of each genre for inspiration and ideas. In Fall 2020, this course will be taught online.

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**ENGLISH 110S.02**  
**INTRO CREATIVE WRITING**  
**Mesha Maren-Hogan**

Introduction to Creative Writing is a hands-on, interactive exploration of nonfiction, poetry, playwriting, and fiction. Students will read examples from each genre and discuss the craft elements demonstrated in each text. We will then go on to try our own hand at drafting and revising essays, poems, plays, and prose. No previous experience is necessary.

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**ENGLISH 190FS-2.01 FOCUS PROG SEM LIT**  
**SOUTHERN GROTESQUE**  
**Taylor Black**

This course will reckon with representations of the region of the United States that, as William Faulkner describes in *Absalom, Absalom!*, has been “dead since 1865 and peopled with garrulous outraged baffled ghosts.”

The historical lens of slavery produces a condition of grotesquerie that itself has blossomed into fields of insanity. Our tour of the South will seek these out, focusing in on the unsavory, haunted and peculiar figures we meet along the way—figures, who, according to O’Connor, are “not images of the man in the street...[but] images of the man forced out to meet the extremes of his own nature...the result of what our social history has bequeathed to us, and what our literary history forces our writers to attempt.”

So, rather than consider works that romanticize or apologize for the South’s sordid history, our syllabus will be populated by works that offer distorted visions of Southern life, history and culture.

We will consider depictions of the South in fiction (novels, plays and short stories), music (country, blues, bluegrass, gospel), film and television. This evolving character analysis of the region will tend toward the fantastic, terrible and estranged. With this in mind, your assignments will help you develop strategies for understanding and writing about forms of representation that are, in and of themselves, uncanny and highly stylized.

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**ENGLISH 190FS-2.02 FOCUS PROG SEM LIT**  
**THINKERS, DISCOVERERS, SOLVERS**  
**Astrid Giugni**

Renaissance mathematicians theorized the probability of winning games of chance, analyzed ciphers to understand covert military operations, fought duels over the solution of algebraic equations, and discovered imaginary numbers. Their discoveries, in turn, sparked the imagination of other scientists, artists, travelers, as well as of political theorists and writers—but does measuring and quantifying the world spark or suppress the imagination? Is mathematical discovery essential for a sense of wonder at the universe or does it destroy the poetry of the unknown? And how different is science from magic and alchemy?

Taking up these questions in the version proposed by Francis Bacon in his *Novum organon* (1620), this class explores how Renaissance men and women interpreted the new discoveries in algebra, geometry, cryptography, and probability. We will begin by reading, in translation, some of the original mathematical works that broke new ground in these fields and learn how to work with pre-modern mathematical conventions. The main concern of the course will be with how these discoveries influenced thinkers as different as Galileo Galilei, Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, and John Milton as they wrote about politics, religion, and literature.

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## **ENGLISH 220S.01**

### **INTRO TO THE WRITING OF POETRY**

**Nicole Higgins**

“If there were no poetry on any day in the world, poetry would be invented on that day. For there would be an intolerable hunger.” – Muriel Rukeyser

Online. This course introduces poetry writing as a craft process, emphasizing strategies for generating new material and revising work in progress. Because there is no writing without reading, we will turn to recent collections and commentary by some contemporary poets to better understand the choices they make in gathering ideas, constructing content, and refining poems. We will also explore how their work responds to various poetic traditions, using these discoveries to articulate aesthetic moves in the poems we’ll workshop. Finally, we will embrace the unfamiliar. As a member of this writing community, you will work together to identify and cultivate techniques available to you, providing thoughtful, constructive feedback on others’ writing and building a portfolio of your own polished poems.

Assignments: Bi-weekly poetry submissions for workshop, short reading responses, prompt share, final portfolio (12-15pp) of revised poems. No exams.

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## **ENGLISH 220S.02**

### **INTRO TO THE WRITING OF POETRY**

**Joseph Donahue**

#### **Introduction to ONLINE Creative Writing: Modern Poetry**

The goal of the course is to introduce students to the history and practice of poetic art in the twentieth century. Reading assignments will offer models of poetic practice. Lectures will provide background about the poet or poets we are reading, and about the traditions that inform the poetics of this century. The course proceeds from the premise that a sharp sense of literary history is critical to the development of any serious writer. Students will be expected to read closely, to acquire an overall grasp of the beginnings of modernism, and participate in discussions. Further, students will be expected to investigate the texts towards which their writing leads them. In class and out of class we will explore the possibilities for contemporary poetic practice suggested by earlier works. We will look at a wide range of poems with attention to both how they are made

and to the personal urgency that makes the poem more than an exercise. Our main focus will be on writing poems, and on developing both a critical and a generous approach to each other's work.

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## **ENGLISH 221S.01**

### **INTRO. TO THE WRITING OF FICT.**

**JP Gritton**

In addition to composing their own pieces of short fiction, students will read work by masters of the short form. These stories are lenses through which we will explore the building blocks of the narrative craft—character, point of view, setting, plot, as well as voice—and they will complement chapters from Janet Burroway's guide to narrative craft, *Writing Fiction*. Students who remain in the course will be required to purchase this text; it will provide a kind of technical ballast as we explore fiction by the likes of Jim McPherson, Jo Kyung Ran, Toni Morrison, and others. This is a HYBRID class: in addition to our weekly meetings, we'll maintain a robust online presence on the class's Sakai site. For those unable to attend in-person meetings, alternative/asynchronous assignments and readings will be available, among them: posting discussion questions on readings, as well as informally "workshopping" classmates' fiction on the discussion board. In addition to weekly writing exercises, students will submit one fully revised short story at semester's end, along with a final portfolio "letter" that articulates their revision process.

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## **ENGLISH 221S.02** INTRO. TO THE WRITING OF FICT.

### **Writing the Unspeakable**

**Amin Ahmad**

Hybrid. As writers of fiction, we try to go beyond the surface and delve deep into uncomfortable emotions: desire, sexuality, loss, belonging, madness, personal and historical trauma. We start with our own raw experiences, but all too often end up self-censoring or resorting to clichés and conventional narrative strategies. How then do we create fresh works of insight, clarity and narrative power?

In this class we will learn from contemporary writers who have successfully engaged this difficult terrain. Reading like writers, we will take apart published work to learn craft issues like point-of-view, time management, characterization, and dialogue. Since writing the unspeakable depends on creating innovative forms, we will also learn to re-invent classic story structures.

Readings include contemporary writers such as Zadie Smith, Jhumpa Lahiri, Sam Shepard, Haruki Murakami, Lauren Groff, Edward P. Jones, and Justin Torres.

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**ENGLISH 247.01**  
**VICTORIAN LIT**  
**Kathy Psomiades**

Victorian literature is both formally experimental and profoundly engaged with the political, social and intellectual changes that made the world in 1901 (the end of Victoria's reign) so different from the world in 1837 when Victorian came to the throne. We'll be reading novels, poetry and prose that both changed the things that literature could do, and attempted to imagine and manage a rapidly changing world. We'll start with Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, then move on to Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*, George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* and finally Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. In between, we'll read poetry by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Browning, Matthew Arnold, Christina Rossetti, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and some of the writers of literary and extra literary prose featured in the Victorian Volume of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*.

This course will be a hybrid course: it will be about half to three-quarters on-line and about half to one-quarter in person, should circumstances permit. Everyone in residence will have the option of attending an in-person small group session once a week during most of the semester, but there will also be an online equivalent of that session, for anyone who prefers to attend remotely.

Students will be evaluated on the basis of participation in discussion, six short (2p) written assignments, one 7-10 page paper, and a small group project that results in a presentation.

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**ENGLISH 251.01 BRITISH LIT: 1900-1945**  
**Virginia Woolf: Before and After**  
**Myles Oldershaw**

This class has at its center one of the most celebrated British authors of the 20th century: Virginia Woolf. Over the course of the semester, we will read an array of Woolf's major works, from the novels *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* to the non-fiction of *A Room of One's Own*. Attending closely to each, we will consider a range of questions central to understanding Woolf's life and work: how and why did Woolf break with literary tradition, and become one of the most innovative and forward-thinking writers of her time? What was Woolf's relation to the broader artistic movement of modernism? How did feminist thought and politics shape Woolf's work? What insights does Woolf provide into love, family, and sexuality, and how were these insights shaped by her own experience?

At the same time, however, we will not read Woolf alone. Alongside the works mentioned above, we will also engage with important authors writing before and after Woolf: both those who served as an influence on her, such as James Joyce, and those whom *she* went on to influence, such as Jean Rhys (*Good Morning, Midnight*), Christopher Isherwood (*A Single Man*), and Zadie Smith (*NW*). From the first group, we will gain a sense of the literary forces and precursors that lay behind Woolf's writing: whom she admired, what she drew on, and how she meshed and transformed these influences in her work. Through the second, we will fathom the shape of Woolf's literary legacy: what she meant for following generations, how she affected later authors' work, and why she has been acclaimed across decades. This reading will thus complement and enhance our reading of Woolf, and help to illuminate her place in literary history.

This class will take place online. Students will be graded on two 8-10 page essays, a series of short response papers, and class participation. Both majors and non-majors are welcome.

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### **ENGLISH 269.01**

#### **CLASSICS OF AM LIT, 1820-1860**

**Victor Strandberg**

After a brief look at the Puritan heritage, English 269 will take up major works by major American authors in the generation leading up to the Civil War -- the time of the Transcendentalist movement. The syllabus will include essays and poems by Emerson, Thoreau's *Walden* and *Civil Disobedience*, tales, poems and essays by Poe, tales and a novel (*The Blithedale Romance* or *The Scarlet Letter*) by Hawthorne, Melville's *Moby-Dick* and *Billy Budd* and some stories, Emily Dickinson, and a generous selection of poems by Walt Whitman. Background reading will include a slave narrative by Frederick Douglass or Harriet Jacobs. Three hour exams (no three-hour final exam). One term paper focusing on one or more of the writers in the course. **NOTE: All lectures will be on Zoom during pandemic. On campus interviews & office hours will be optional.**

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### **ENGLISH 276.01 AFRICAN DIASPORA LITERATURE**

#### **BLACK LIVES MATTER**

**Tsitsi Jaji**

Black lives have always mattered to Black people, and literature has been a crucial way to articulate the beauty and power of Black culture within and beyond its bounds. The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 crisis police violence, and incarceration call for the study of Blackness from a cultural, historical perspective. The term "Black" has been used in multiple ways since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, influenced by race-thinking, colonization, and slavery. This course will focus on how diverse Black cultures think with and about each other. Beginning with the 17<sup>th</sup> century biography of an Ethiopian nun who resisted colonisation, we will turn to writers like Phyllis Wheatly, Mary Prince and Maria Stewart who used their words to call for Black freedom in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. How did African, Caribbean, and U.S. Black women envision freedom. What are the connections between their work and black women's leadership in today's Black Lives Matter movement?

In the wake of emancipation and the struggle for full civil, and human rights involved thinking Blackness in an international framework of solidarity. This was never easy. We will turn to a question first formulated by Countee Cullen, a leading poet of the Harlem Renaissance: "What is Africa to me?" For African Americans, the continent beckoned as a site of origin, as we will see in Maya Angelou's memoir of her years in Ghana, *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes*, and Saiydia Hartmann's moving account of her study trip there, *Lose Your Mother*. African writers also reflected on what pan-African, nationalist, and later, Afropolitan ideas meant for what "Africa" meant. Chimamanda Adiche warned against a single story. Reading poetry by contemporary African writers, particularly those identifying as non-binary will help us attend to the flexibility literature reveals in Black identity. Similarly, reading Caryl Phillips travel memoir as a Black British man and viewing films by the Black Audiovisual Collective will remind us of how the term "Black" in Britain also included immigrants of South Asian heritage.

This class focuses on literature but also includes film, non-fiction, and scholarly articles. No experience in literary study is expected, and grades are based on class discussion, short reflection papers, and essays. There are no exams in this class. All class discussions will be available asynchronously, and discussions online will supplement extensive office hours.

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## **ENGLISH 288.01 AMERICA DREAMS/AMERICAN MOVIES**

**Marianna Torgovnick**

Online. This popular course in American movies aims to help you develop your media skills, whether directed towards writing, filmmaking, scriptwriting, the visual arts, podcasts, or just simply watching movies as an informed, alert viewer. The class will use a full variety of ways to engage students in weekly lectures: break-out rooms, quizzes that are more than rote and tap your interests, forums, and a final project that invites you to complete work that you love, perhaps in collaboration with others. Many students will want to make short films, which available technology makes possible, and for which the class will provide guidance.

After foundational silent or early films by, for example, Charlie Chaplin and Frank Capra, the course will move rapidly to highlights in American movie-making, with work by directors such as Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Kubrick, Francis Ford Coppola, Steven Spielberg, Disney, Spike Lee, Ang Lee, Sophia Coppola, Barry Jenkins, and Jordan Peele.

We will survey the history of the movie industry and learn key terms and analytic skills. We will also consider issues such as race and diversity, the impact of TV, and the use of computer technology for special effects and animation. The course emphasizes America's cultural history as it interacts with movies and dynamic factors such as youth markets and the rise of independent filmmakers.

Throughout the term, the class will include regular, weekly, small discussion sessions to enhance what we hope will already be lively and communal lecture sessions. One of the discussion sessions will be scheduled to accommodate students who require asynchronous work.

Quizzes (some as creative exercises)

Faithful participation and viewing of films

A Final Project of your choice, with opportunities for collaborative work

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## **ENGLISH 290S.01 SP TOP IN LANG. & LIT MASTERPIECES OF WORLD LITERATURE**

**Victor Strandberg**

If you are quite certain that you plan to stay in the seminar, it would be an advantage for you to obtain the textbooks now before the term begins. Accordingly, I am sharing with you my decisions concerning the curriculum. A more detailed syllabus will be provided when we meet at our first class.

The first thing to do is to get hold of a Bible. Any version will do, though I favor the King James version, originally published in 1611, because of its immense influence on writers in English during the last four

centuries. (Examples: Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, and Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*—titles drawn from the KJ Bible.) Hint: this Bible is usually available for free in any hotel room.

I am now planning to begin the course with a series of assignments in whatever version of the Bible you bring to class, including *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *The Book of Job*, *The Gospel of Luke*, *The Book of Revelation*, and assorted brief selections along the way.

To save money, I am asking students to purchase the following books via Amazon.com. It is greatly desirable that we all have the same editions.

1. The Bhagavad-Gita (Signet Classics edition, Introduction by Aldous Huxley)
2. Dante: The Inferno (Signet Classics edition, translated by John Ciardi)
3. Shakespeare: Othello (Signet Classics edition, edited by Alvin Kernan)
4. Greek Drama: Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes (Bantam Classic, edited by Moses Hadas)
5. Montaigne: Essays (Penguin Classics, translated by J. M. Cohen)

In addition to Dante's Inferno, two stories by Chaucer will represent the Middle Ages: The Prioress's Tale and The Pardoner's Tale. To save money, I plan to download these tales from the Internet and distribute paper copies to each student.

If it all works out, we will study works from three ancient civilizations (Greek, Hebrew, Hindu), two medieval masters from Italy and England (Chaucer, Dante), and two giants of the French and English Renaissance (Montaigne and Shakespeare). **NOTE: All lectures will be on Zoom during pandemic. On campus interviews & office hours will be optional.**

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**ENGLISH 290S.02 SP TOP IN LANG. & LIT**

**ASIAN AM GENDER & SEXUALITY**

**Ryanson Ku**

Asian Americans are often represented as either the model minority, the immigrant whose successful assimilation serves to discipline other minorities, or the yellow peril, the eternal foreigner threatening to invade from within. How are these figures not only racial but also gendered and sexual? And how do gender and sexuality transform the figures—e.g., into the highly desirable and “domestic” female body and the hardworking but racially “castrated” man—or undermine representation altogether? Exploring the intertwined constitution, and contradictions, of race, gender, and sexuality, this course focuses on Asian American gender and sexual representation and performance in the context of the social structures—white supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativity—they both reinforce and resist. We will start by recounting the history of Asian men in America, and how women and queers are a part of this history. Through literary and filmic renderings that we will compare with a sociological study, we will then contrast how Asian American masculinity is questioned *and* asserted as well as how Asian American feminine sexuality is a privileged object

of colonization and thus a site of both complicity and an intimate kind of defiance. Inserted in US racial hierarchy and enclosed in Western frames, Asian Americans also look back: at the subject looking, who may also be sexually betrayed; and at places outside the US, but, as betrayed by race, gender, and sexual relations, still in America. In following these dynamics in the diaspora, we will encounter the queer, the child, and the other—figures through which Asian Americans have been represented. We will end the course by looking at Asian American queers, children, and outsiders and seek in the doubling of the literal and figurative the signs of the fraying, and threats to the reproduction, of representation and the social order.

Texts include Bruce Lee film clips, *The Chinaman Pacific*, “Happiness: A Manifesto,” *The Book of Salt*, *Dogeaters*, *M. Butterfly*, *The Assassination of Gianni Versace*, *Charlie Chan is Dead 2*, and historical, sociological, and critical texts. Assignments include weekly response papers, literary analysis, comparative analysis, and class participation. This course will be taught entirely online. Students are highly encouraged to “attend” the course virtually through Zoom, but sessions will also be recorded. Additional instruction and participation may take place through Sakai forums, small group sessions, and/or virtual office hours.

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**ENGLISH 290S-4.02 SP TOPICS IN CREATIVE WRITING**  
**PLAYS THAT CHANGE THE WORLD**  
**Faulkner Fox**

Online. The goal of this creative writing course is for aspiring playwrights to think deeply about what—exactly—they are trying to do, and avoid, in their writing. What causes a play to be heavy-handed and propagandistic, as opposed to impassioned? How can students who believe deeply in a particular issue write artful drama about that issue? In what ways is theater similar—and dissimilar—to social protest in the streets? Students will be encouraged to experiment, question, and revise, at every turn.

This course will closely examine a diversity of plays that have had a marked impact on their cultures—an impact beyond an excellent and meaningful theater-going experience. Recent examples we will study include *Pass Over* by Antoinette Nwandu and *The Talk* by local playwright Sonny Kelly. We will also watch and study more traditional plays like *The Crucible* and *Angels in America*.

Over the course of the semester, students will read—and watch—excellent political plays as well as write their own. They will write and develop their own full-length script, in addition to doing weekly shorter, more informal creative exercises and reading responses. Class discussion—which will be recorded—will be divided between focus on student work-in-progress, produced plays, and playwriting craft. Students will also work in small groups, meet individually with one another, and meet individually with me. In addition, they will interview the director, producer, and/or playwright of a recent production and report back on how these professionals view the line between artful moral suasion and propaganda.

All work for this course can be done asynchronously. We will be using ZOOM, Sakai forums, Sakai dropbox, email, as well as other platforms suggested by students. There will be multiple forms of interaction. Grading will be as follows: 50% development and revision of the student’s own creative work, 25% written commentary on professional plays and classmates’ work, and 25% participation in other aspects of the class such as one-on-one discussion with me and with peers, small group run-throughs of scenes-in-progress, and interviewing a theater professional.

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**ENGLISH 320S.01**  
**INT. WORKSHOP IN WTG OF POETRY**  
**Joseph Donahue**

**Intermediate ONLINE Creative Writing: Postmodern Poetry**

The goal of the course is to deepen students' engagement with the history and practice of poetic art in the twentieth and twenty first century. Reading assignments will be drawn from the canon of post WWII avant-garde poetry and literary art. Lectures will provide an historical and cultural context for the works we are reading, and about the controversies and challenges that inform the poetics of the late nineteen forties to the present. The course proceeds from the premise that a deeply internalized command of literary history is critical to the development of any serious writer. Students will be expected to read closely, to acquire an overall grasp of modernism and its development into what is now called the postmodern, and above all to participate in discussions. Further, students will be expected to investigate on their own initiative the texts towards which their own writing leads them. In class and out of class we will explore the possibilities for contemporary poetic practice suggested by earlier works. We will look at a wide range of poems with attention to both how they are made and to the personal urgency that makes the poem more than an exercise, that creates surprise or sorrow or exhilaration in the reader. Our main focus will be on writing poems, or creating letter-based artworks, and on developing both a critical and a generous approach to each other's work.

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**ENGLISH 321S.01**  
**INT. WORKSHOP WTG OF FICT.**  
**Akhil Sharma**

Intermediate Fiction -- Hybrid

This course will provide intensive training in the writing of short stories. In particular, the course will focus on the question: what is worth writing about? In exploring this question, we will look closely at the Russian masters: Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekhov.

These artists were concerned with whether it is the external social life that is worth writing about or the interior life that we all live. They also struggled with how to write stories that do not have a plot, that is stories where there is not a strong mechanism of causation. Grappling with these challenges led to what are still the dominant strains of Western fiction. We want to look at the solutions these writers developed and see what we can use for our own purposes.

The course will require small daily writing exercises and a larger weekly exercise.

Half of the grade will be based on class participation and the thoughtfulness of the written feedback that each student will provide every other student. The other half of the grade will be based on the weekly writing assignments.

There will be regular one-on-one interactions with the instructor outside of the classroom.

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**ENGLISH 336.01**  
**SHAKESPEARE THROUGH 1600**  
**Leonard Tennenhouse**

Online. This course will focus on the first half of Shakespeare's career. Known as the Elizabethan Shakespeare, this was his most productive period. Within the decade from 1590 to approximately 1600 or so, he wrote more than twenty plays including nine history plays, seven romantic comedies, five or six tragedies, several long poems, and over one hundred and fifty sonnets. Reading a representative selection of plays and poems, we will look at his development as a dramatist and ask as well what his preoccupations were in this period, what concerns the various forms shared with one another, and why as the decade came to an end he began to experiment with new forms in which to write. The course will consist of a mixture of lecture and discussion. Lectures will be relatively brief. They will be designed to provide some historical and theatrical background.

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**ENGLISH 338S.01**  
**MILTON: Poetry, Theology, Politics**  
**David Aers**

**ONLINE**

Why would anyone want to spend a whole semester studying John Milton's writings and their seventeenth-century contexts? The answer is the extraordinary scope and utterly brilliant quality of the writing in often very demanding but exquisite poetry as well as in passionate prose. This scope includes explorations in ethics, politics and theology on topics that should still be of central concern to us.

John Milton left Cambridge as an orthodox member of the Church of England. He died (in 1674) as one who had rejected this church, defended the execution of its governor (Charles I) and generated a theological system which included a dense cluster of positions which were startlingly "heretical" in terms not only of the magisterial Reformation but also of Catholic traditions. His unfinished treatise on *Christian Doctrine* begins with a statement which sets up the inquiry pursued in this seminar: "If I were to say that I had focused my studies principally upon Christian doctrine because nothing else can so effectually wipe away those two repulsive afflictions, tyranny and superstition, from human life and the human mind, I should show that I had been concerned not for religion but for life's well being." As both this statement and the title of this class suggest, poetry, politics and theology are inextricably bound together in Milton's work. We aim to read much of the poetry and areas of the prose that will provide a rich sense of his theological and political reflections and enable us to have well-informed discussions about the complex relations between the great poems and his evolving theology. For Milton's approaches to theology, ecclesiology and politics belong to a revolutionary moment in which unprecedented thoughts and practices emerged in England. How did Milton and his writing respond to the defeat of the revolution and the restoration of Crown, Church of England, episcopacy and the attempt to suppress nonconforming groups? There has been a strong tendency in recent Milton scholarship to revise the Whig version of Milton into one that fits the narratives of secular postmodernity and some people taking this class may find it offers opportunities to interrogate some of these grand stories.

It will be helpful to read a competent biography on Milton before this class: I suggest Gordon Campbell and Thomas Corns, *John Milton: Life, Work, and Thought*. Because we will be reading substantial, complex

works, the more Milton you read *before* class the better. The **set text** (required) is *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton* edited by John Kerrigan and others (Random House). Before the first class, make sure that you have AT LEAST read (1) *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*; (2) *The Passion*; (3) *Ad Patrem*; and (4) *A Masque presented at Ludlow*, also known as, *Comus*.

#### Note on grades, class format, and expectations

This is an online seminar and attendance (either by joining live via Zoom or by watching a recording of the live seminar) and active participation (discussed below) are mandatory. The grade comes from two essays (8-10 pages), which must be submitted by the given deadline to count. There will be no exams.

Please note well: Even in an online format, a seminar is a dialogic form of learning, very different to a lecture class. Robust participation and careful preparation will be key to ensuring that the rich discussion, debate, and reflection that characterize in-person seminars can continue to thrive in the somewhat alien format demanded by our current situation. While it is strongly encouraged that students participate by joining in our seminar meetings live and contributing to our discussions there, asynchronous participation will be possible through viewing recordings of the seminars and contributing to class discussion via some combination of written responses, email exchanges, virtual "office hours," or other methods.

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### **ENGLISH 373.01 AMER LIT COLD WAR & AFTER**

#### **VOICES OF RESISTANCE**

**Caoimhe Harlock & Margaret McDowell**

#### **Voices of Resistance: American Literature in Times of Crisis**

As James Baldwin tells us, we might think that our suffering is unique in all the world... but then we read. Although the crisis of 2020 has left many of us in a state of precarity and uncertainty about what the future holds, American literature shows us that our situation is not unique to us. In fact, any real discussion of American history must deal with an unavoidable truth: precarity, scarcity, crisis, and historical upheaval have *always* been the conditions of life for certain underprivileged and underrepresented groups of Americans.

The books, poetry, and film we'll encounter in this class are created by those who have faced considerable adversity and lived to tell about it. So, while the tapestry of American literature is broad, we'll be focusing on works by people of color, women, queer authors, economically disadvantaged authors, and authors who have contended with pressing issues of political instability, pandemic disease, and personal disability. This class is founded on the increasingly unconventional premise that literature, especially literature from marginalized voices, is critically useful in a time of crisis and always has been. Good writing allows us to deeply connect with the lives of others. It has the power to heal and comfort us, but also to challenge us to think beyond our own limited experiences and discover valuable ways of living through crisis and becoming stronger for it.

Through encountering stories of crisis and resilience from the likes of Octavia Butler, Ursula LeGuin, Spike Lee, Audre Lorde, Sylvia Plath, and Carmen Maria Machado, we hope not just to become witnesses to suffering, but to take real inspiration from these creative individual's lives and how they lived them, finding lessons that we can turn towards our own lives and our own world as we prepare to go forward and rebuild them.



This class will take place entirely online, through a mix of live online seminar conversations, forum posts, and individual and collaborative creative projects. We are happy to accommodate anyone who would like to join from a time zone that may make participation in live meetings difficult.

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**ENGLISH 390S-1.01 SINGLE AMERICAN AUTHOR**

**WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS**

**Nathaniel Mackey**

Online. A study of the major works of poetry and prose by William Carlos Williams, from *Kora in Hell* (1920) to *Paterson* (1963), with particular attention to formal innovation, linguistic change and cultural diagnosis.

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**ENGLISH 390S-7.02 SP TOPICS IN LANG & LIT**

**LIT & THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS**

**Leonard Tennenhouse**

Online. Together, we will try to figure out how the religious promise of heaven as the fulfillment of life and self, plenitude and perfect love, continues to operate in modern secular society: How did the pursuit of happiness become the driving force of a world organized by capitalism, one in which human life must seek and find self-transcendence in the world? This is powerful stuff!

To help us identify this elusive and deeply contradictory secular myth, we will consult a few of the major intellectual arguments that proposed and/or challenged it, including those by Locke, Marx, Weber, Marcuse, and Coetzee. But to understand where these arguments break down or fail to deliver on their promises, we will rely on such works of fiction as Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, short stories by Nathaniel Hawthorne, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, the film version of *The Wizard of Oz*, and Colson Whitehouse's *Underground Railroad* among other texts.

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**ENGLISH 490.01 SPECIAL TOPICS LANG/LIT**

**ENVIRONMENT IN LIT, LAW, & SCI**

**Priscilla Wald (English, GSF), Daniel Richter (Nicholas School), Saskia Cornes (Duke Campus Farm, FHI)**

Climate change, resource exhaustion, an increase in natural disasters, from tornados, hurricanes, droughts, earthquakes and floods to pandemics: these, we are told, are problems with "the environment." We are living, it seems, in the Age of the Anthropocene, when humanity has become a geological force.

Racism, unprecedented poverty, inadequate health care, and urban blight in the midst of rising affluence: these, too, are problems with "the environment." The world population has exceeded seven billion; we are putting increasing pressure on the planet, with dangerous consequences, as the pandemic we are currently living through has made so starkly clear.

So what is this “environment,” and why does this question matter, now more than ever? How might a better understanding of how that term is circulating and being used help us move beyond our impasses and think more productively about how to live more justly, equitably, compassionately, and responsibly in our world.

This class will address these questions by considering the very ground on which Duke is standing: the Southern Piedmont, the City of Durham, and the Duke Campus Farm. Beginning with early human settlement, when the Earth began to get a “history,” we will consider three historical trajectories — settlement; plantation culture and slavery; and the ongoing struggles for Civil Rights from the late 1960s into the environmental justice and Black Lives Matter movements of the present—to show how science, law, and cultural forms (literary and scientific works, films, news media) contribute to the changing idea of “the environment.”

We will trace the idea of the environment not only across time, but also across geographical space, as we consider how ideas take root locally, and also travel through social, cultural, economic, agricultural, academic, and other networks, reshaping the ever-changing relationship between the local and the global.

**Logistics:** This class will meet once a week and will move at the pace of Duke’s adjusted schedule. This will be a hybrid class with interactive lectures and seminars online and, if permitted, 3-4 meetings outdoors at different locations, including, ideally, the Duke Campus Farm. Half of each class period will be interactive lecture and the other half will break into smaller discussion groups, each led by one of the faculty members.

The class will also break into smaller groups (different from the seminars), which will work together throughout the semester to produce a final project. Each of these groups will work with a faculty or graduate student mentor.

**Asynchrony:** Lectures and seminars will be recorded and circulated to students who are unable to attend class for any reason. Those students will submit short responses in writing engaging several questions based on lectures and seminars that we will circulate with those recordings. The responses are required but will not be individually graded assignments.

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## ENGLISH 590S-1.01 SP TOP SEMINAR I

### THEORY OF POETRY

Julianne Werlin

What poems are, how they work, and what makes them good (or not) has been a preoccupation of literary theory since its inception. In recent years, however, there has been a wave of innovative theoretical work on poetry, inspired in part by the New Lyric Theory and exemplified in Jonathan Culler’s *Theory of the Lyric* (2015). This class will introduce the theory of poetry in historical perspective, including both classic works and cutting-edge treatments. We will pay particular attention to classic problems such as the nature of metaphor, the “lyric I,” meter and scansion, aesthetic judgment, and the social function of lyric. We will also look at work at the intersection of linguistics and literary theory, including such understudied topics as the relation of poetry to linguistic standardization. Texts will include Aristotle, Coleridge, Adorno, and Jakobson, and important recent figures such as Jahan Ramazani, Virginia Jackson, Nigel Fabb and Jonathan Culler. In addition, we will test out the theories we read (and, perhaps, invent) on a small set of poems. Assignments will include collaborative group work, a series of short response papers, and a final project.

This will be a hybrid course, with both in-person and online components.

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**ENGLISH 590S-3.02 SP TOP SEMINAR III**

**CONTEMPORARY BLACK SOUTH**

**Jarvis McInnis**

This course explores contemporary representations of the Black US South in African American literature and culture. Journeying through rural Mississippi and the Carolinas to urban centers such as Atlanta, Memphis, New Orleans, and Houston, we will interrogate the geographic and cultural diversity of the contemporary Black South. We will juxtapose canonical texts—by Ida B. Wells, Richard Wright, Zora Neale Hurston, Anne Moody, Alice Walker, or Gloria Naylor—that have shaped predominant cultural representations of the region, alongside works by contemporary writers such as Jesmyn Ward, Natasha Trethewey, Randall Kenan, Tayari Jones, Kiese Laymon, Attica Locke, Jericho Brown, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, and Regina Bradley. We will also examine depictions of the region in media and pop culture, e.g., TV shows *Atlanta* and *Queen Sugar*; HipHop artists OutKast, Lil Wayne, and Big Freedia; and experimental films such as Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* and Beyoncé's *Lemonade*. We will read a range of critical and theoretical works that cut across literary, cultural, media and performance studies, African American Studies, New Southern Studies, gender and sexuality studies, geography, and sociology.

In Fall 2020, this course will only be offered online. Students will be expected to submit a critical response paper each week, lead 1-2 class discussions, and submit a 15 to 20-page seminar paper at the conclusion of the course.

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**ENGLISH 826S.01**

**THE GLOBAL NOVEL: Mediations**

**Nancy Armstrong & Roberto Dainotto**

Louis Althusser is known to have said that “ideology represents individuals’ imaginary relation to their real conditions of existence.” Assuming that statement is a pretty good fit for traditional literary realism as well, we feel it is time to rephrase this principle for the global novel, “the global novel represents individuals’ imaginary relation to forms of mediation.” Rather than refer to life beyond the page as one organized around the home, the workplace, the school, the legal system and so forth, the novels we have in mind aspire to live not only outside the language in which they were written but also beyond the printed page in film, television series, comic books, audiobooks, electronic games, and so forth. In that a good number of these novels quite literally attempt to escape the material confines of the medium, they require us to figure out new procedures for reading them.

*Procedures:* This course will be taught over zoom, with seminars recorded, questions pre-circulated, and voluntary responses solicited beforehand.

*Requirements:* In addition to informal class responses, the writing requirement will include a 12-15-page essay developed from a repertoire determined by the class in two workshop sessions where we develop a collective glossary of critical concepts most helpful in elucidating the novels.

*Likely primary readings:* McCarthy's *Remainder*, Saviano, *Gomorra*, Whiehead's *Zone One*, Kushner's *The Flamethrowers*, Hage's *Cockroach*, Lianke's *Lenin's Kisses*, Cole's *Open City*, Kehlmann's *Fame*, Bolaño's *The Skating Rink*, Pajak's *Uncertain Manifesto*, Cusk's *Transit*, Ibrahim's *Season of Crimson Blossoms*.

*Likely secondary readings:*

1. Adorno and Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception."  
Benjamin, "The Work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction."

Williams, *Technology, Television, and Cultural Form*.

Deleuze, "Postscript on societies of control."

Derrida and Stiegler, *Echographies of Television*.

Jameson, "The Aesthetics of Singularity."

Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*.

2. McGurl, "Fiction in the Age of Amazon."

Bernes, "The Feminization of Speedup."

McClanahan, "Credit, Characterization, Personification."

Broe, "Serial Aesthetics."

Illouz, "Romantic Webs."

McCarthy, from *Tintin and the Secret of Literature*.

Murakami, TBD

*General Plan:* This course begins with two seminars aimed at establishing (with the help of the 1st set of critical readings) a critical framework for reading the novels. Subsequent seminars focus on a novel listed and paired with an appropriate critical essay from the 2<sup>nd</sup> set of critical readings.

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## **ENGLISH 890S.02 SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR**

### **History of Contemporary Literary Criticism**

**Robert Mitchell & Charlotte Sussman**

Hybrid

This course provides students with a concise historical and theoretical overview of university-based literary criticism, with the goal of enabling graduate students to better understand--and hence, situate their own projects within--the history of their discipline. (The desire for such a course has been expressed at several recent graduate department meetings, and this course is the response to those requests.) We will focus on a number of key twentieth- and twenty-first century methodological orientations and movements, such as new criticism, structuralism, deconstruction, Foucauldian poststructuralism, new historicism, postcolonial criticism, critical race studies, and distant reading. We will also consider how these movements relate to both the changing structure of the university and to non-university publics across this period. Rather than aiming for an exhaustive survey of twentieth- and twenty-first century modes of literary criticism, we will focus on those modes that have had the most impact on current practice.

In addition to providing a historical survey of literary criticism, this course also focuses on several key skills for navigating successfully the first few years of graduate school, including time management strategies; project abstract writing (useful for conference and fellowship applications); and locating, and positioning oneself within existing academic debates/discussions (useful for minor exam creation and articles).

This course will offer Zoom lectures and discussion during the Wednesday meeting time (these will be recorded for those who cannot meet at that time), and two modes of discussion section: an in-person discussion section at the Friday meeting time, and an online discussion section at the Friday meeting time. (There will also be the possibility of asynchronous discussion for participants.)

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## ENGLISH 890S.01 SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR

### REDEEMING LOVE

David Aers

**Redeeming Love: Julian of Norwich; Margery Kempe; William Langland; Nicholas Love**

#### ONLINE

“The medievals located the redemptive value of Christ’s work primarily in his passion and crucifixion, seeing Christ as making *satisfaction* for our sins, and as *meriting* our justification and everlasting life.”

(Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus*, 129)

This quotation introduces some central areas explored in “Redeeming Love.” We will be working with different kinds of writing as we study different models of the redemption. This is a course in vernacular theology. Were it on Latin theologians of the late medieval world, it would not include two women writers. Although the seminar involves the study of central topics in Christian teaching, it is text centered. I have no interest in encouraging intellectual or theological history composed as a grand narrative of ideas or doctrines, no interest in a survey of theories of the atonement (a sixteenth-century term I shall eschew as an unhelpful anachronism). Why not a survey, why not a grand survey? Because such surveys have a habit of abstracting ideas / doctrines from complex exploratory and sometimes self-divided texts: and then composing their abstractions into an orderly, teleological story. The result is often a persuasive, even compelling history of ideas that no texts actually produced and perhaps nobody actually thought. What alternatives are there? A history concentrating on particular texts belonging to particular practices in particular discourses. A history of the way ideas are embodied and explored in often thoroughly complex, intellectually and affectively demanding texts. With such hermeneutic *caveats* in mind, we will study four medieval texts. Having done so, we may be able to consider whether these texts tell any kind of story and, if so, what.

We will begin with a text you should read **before the first class**, bringing a copy of the text to the first (online) meeting: Nicholas Love’s early fifteenth century translation of an immensely popular and formative Franciscan work, *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* (Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies, published by Liverpool University Press, 2004, paperback). Why begin here? Because this work displays in detail the late medieval tradition of affective devotion and its approach to Jesus Christ. The translation by Nicholas Love (a Carthusian from Mount Grace in Yorkshire) also includes some fascinating anti-Wycliffite inflections: the first Wycliffite had been burnt to death in 1401. The form of contemplation was central to Margery Kempe who we study later in this course. I would like participants to have read, before this course, St. Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo*

since this was such a decisive text in late medieval accounts of the Redemption. Although I do not intend to discuss this directly in class, it should be a shared reference point. I recommend the translation in Anselm of Canterbury, *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (Oxford World's Classics, published by Oxford University Press, 2008, paperback). From Nicholas Love's *Mirror* we will turn to the greatest Christian poem of the Middle Ages written in English: William Langland's *Piers Plowman*. We will be studying the C version of this work, the final version. Those unfamiliar with Middle English should certainly read the poem in the translation by George Economou, *William Langland's Piers Plowman: The C Version* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996, paperback); for the Middle English, the set text is the fine annotated edition, with the helpful introduction, by Derek Pearsall: *Piers Plowman: A New Annotated Edition of the C-text*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Exeter Medieval Texts and Series, published by Liverpool University Press, 2008, paperback). Make sure you get this, "new annotated" edition (2008 and later); not the first edition (1978). This wonderful, demanding poem you should read in the long vacation, before the class, re-reading it during the class. After Langland, we will study another truly great work from the period, the visions and meditations of Julian of Norwich. The most accessible cheap text and one I recommend is *The Showings of Julian of Norwich*, edited by Denise Baker (Norton Critical Edition, 2004, paperback). If you want a good modern translation read the "Long Text" in Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, edited and translated by Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (Paulist Press, 1978, paperback). If you want a densely annotated, so-called critical edition, use that by Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins, *The Writings of Julian of Norwich* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005). We conclude the course with some weeks on the astonishing work of a lay woman, mother of fourteen children, pilgrim to Jerusalem and elsewhere, and intimate contemplative of Jesus Christ. Her work, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, should be read in either the fine modern translation by Lynn Staley (Norton Critical Edition including some essays on Kempe, 2000, paperback), or in Lynn Staley's Middle English edition (TEAMS Texts, Western Michigan University Press, 1996, paperback).

The primary task of anyone enrolling in this course is to read the set texts, slowly and meditatively. I will suggest relevant scholarly work during the class but here are a few excellent introductory works:

Rik Van Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to Medieval Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Elizabeth Salter, "Piers Plowman: An Introduction" in her posthumous collection, *English and International: Studies in the Literature, Art and Patronage of Medieval England*, ed. Derek Pearsall and Nicolette Zeeman (Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 111-157.

Denys Turner, *Julian of Norwich: Theologian* (Yale University Press, 2011, paperback).

Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars. Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580*, second edition (Yale University Press, 2005, paperback), chapters 1-10: anybody studying medieval writing should read the pre-Reformation part of this book.

Bernard McGinn, *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism: 1350-1550* (Herder and Herder, 2012, paperback).

### Note on class format, expectations, and grading

This class is an online seminar, and attendance (either by joining live via Zoom or by watching a recording of the live seminar) and active participation (discussed below) are mandatory. The grade will come from one essay of not more than 25 pages to be handed in during or before the final class.

Please note well: Even in an online format, a seminar is a dialogic form of learning, very different to a lecture class. Robust participation and careful preparation will be key to ensuring that the rich discussion, debate, and reflection that characterize in-person seminars can continue to thrive in the somewhat alien format demanded by our current situation. While it is strongly encouraged that students participate by joining in our seminar meetings live and contributing to our discussions there, asynchronous participation will be possible through viewing recordings of the seminars and contributing to class discussion via some combination of written responses, email exchanges, virtual "office hours," or other methods.