

Duke English Department
Course Descriptions
FALL 2024

ENGLISH 90S.01 SPECIAL TOPICS IN LITERATURE

Literature and Medicine

Elizabeth Apple

From Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birth-mark" (1843) to Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005), literature provides a record of how humans have understood not only sickness and contagion, but also medicine and its many technologies. Intended as an introduction to the fields of literature and medicine and health humanities, this course will examine a variety of texts, investigating representations of illness from the nineteenth century to the present.

Short stories, novels, films, and creative nonfiction will guide us as we ask: how have patients, medical practitioners, and authors made sense of illness over the past 250 years? In what ways have literary representations of illness and medicine reflected cultural thought regarding race, class, gender, and ability? And, above all, how might reading and writing about illness and medicine better equip us to navigate conversations in healthcare settings and beyond? As we investigate how literature and medicine intersect, we will look to works like Edgar Allan Poe's "The Sphinx" (1846), Susan Sontag's *Illness as Metaphor* (1978), Rita Charon's *Narrative Medicine* (2006), and Leslie Jamison's *The Empathy Exams* (2014). There may also be screenings of films such as Mark Romanek's *Never Let Me Go* (2010) and Steven Soderbergh's *Contagion* (2011).

Students will use their own writing to reflect on course themes and questions. Assignments may include informal blog posts (250-350 words), a short essay due at mid-term (3-4 pages), and a longer project that may take the form of a research paper or a creative work (6-8 pages). Through peer review, one-on-one consultation, and guided revision, this course aims to support students in building an academic writing practice.

No exams. No prerequisites.

ENGLISH 90S.02 SPECIAL TOPICS IN LITERATURE

Identities Beyond Borders

Anvita Budhreja

Identities Beyond Borders: Stories of Migration in 21-Century Film, TV, and Literature

Do you call multiple places home? What does it mean to belong to more than one place? How do you understand identity as hybrid across places, contexts, and borders?

Every year, approximately three to four million people choose to migrate to a new country. Stories of departures, movements, and arrivals have come to define contemporary media. In this course, we will learn how to thoughtfully read and watch diverse perspectives on migrations, explore what cultural hybridity means in the 21st century, analyze how contemporary media captures the pain and joy of creating new homes and identities, and respond meaningfully, in writing, to these narratives.

We will begin with the TV show *Ms Marvel* (2022) as an example of young, second-generation immigrants and their relationship with family history. Then, we move on to the film *Past Lives* by Celine Song (2023) and novel *Joan is Okay* by Weike Wang (2022) that consider the relationships we choose for ourselves with those who represent homes in different places. We will compare and

contrast these with the TV show *Never Have I Ever* (2020) and the novel *Intimacies* by Katie Kitamura (2021) to define for ourselves how contemporary media portrays the ubiquitous experience of crafting our identities across and beyond borders.

Assignments: Regular class participation, short blog posts, workshops for drafts and the chance to revise writing, final writing assignment. No pre-requisites, no exams.

Course Codes: ALP, CCI, W

ENGLISH 90S.03 SPECIAL TOPICS IN LITERATURE

Poetry and Magic

Michael Cavuto

Humans are magical beings. The diverse ways that humans use spoken and written language enchant the world and shape our realities. This course will revolve around different forms of magic, such as alchemy, divination, spellcasting, incantation, conjuring, possession, séance, telepathy, and bibliomancy, in relation to 20th-century and contemporary American poets who either claim or suggest an involvement with magical practices.

Our course will investigate the following 1) how do magical practices persist in contemporary life through the uses of poetic form, and 2) how does thinking with magic give us greater access to language's creative potential? In short, we'll wonder how reading and writing can be experienced as *magical acts*. In giving attention to the presence of magic in the contemporary world, we'll think alongside traditions of occult and esoteric knowledge that persist in relation to more "modern" sciences. We'll also look to the relationship between contemporary poetry, magic, and "religious feeling" as it remains a part of human experience in secular U.S. society. We'll read modernist predecessors such as Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, H.D., and Aimé Césaire alongside recent and living poets Allen Ginsberg, Gloria Anzaldúa, Alice Notley, Susan Howe, Nathaniel Mackey, CAConrad, and Hoa Nguyen, among others.

Creative writers and artists are welcome! Students may produce literary/artistic work for fulfillment of class assignments. Students need not have any prior knowledge of poetry to take this class.

Assignments are designed to emphasize writing *as* thinking, thinking as magically potent. To do so, we'll regularly engage forms of reflection and analysis that are unconventional in scholarly settings (think: Tarot and Astrology), encouraging the development of your distinct critical style and voice.

1. Short, analytic writing exercises due once a week
2. 5-pg. midterm essay focusing on close reading, with in-class peer review workshops; or creative project with critical introduction
3. 7-pg. final essay focusing comparative reading or a creative project (fiction, poetry, dance, film) with a critical introduction, with in-class peer review workshops

Course codes: ALP, CCI, W.

ENGLISH 90S.04 SPECIAL TOPICS IN LITERATURE

Black Literature and Music

Damilare Bello

Curating Black Literature, Music, and Art

How do we understand creative collaborations across the Black diaspora as a collection of beautiful and delicate things?

In this class, literary anthologies, essay collections, music albums, film series, and even a playlist are carefully curated forms. We will engage them as aesthetic objects, analyzing how they convey brilliance, desire, optimism, pain, intimacy, and devotion.

To examine the aesthetics of Black collaboration across genres, we will watch Ryan Coogler's *Black Panther* (2017 and 2023), Eddie Murphy's *Coming to America* (1988 and 2021), and Viola Davis-led *The Woman King* (2022). For music, we will listen to albums featuring collaborations by different Black artists such as Beyoncé Knowles' *Black is King/The Gift* (2018/2020) and Kendrick Lamar's *Black Panther: The Album* (2018). We will read Toni Morrison's *The Source of Self-Regard* and British-Nigerian Sarah Mayinka's *Starshine and Clay* (2023), a series of conversations between distinguished Black thinkers like Claudia Rankine, Michelle Obama, Wole Soyinka. We will read Sheree Renée Thomas' *Dark Matter* (2000), a cross-century of speculative fiction across the African diaspora. We will also analyze "Rusties" (2016), a collaborative short story between Nigerian novelist Nnedi Okorafor and Kenyan film director Wanuri Kahiu. Our class will visit the Rubenstein Library and Nasher Museum of Art to research curated materials on Black culture.

This class practices what it preaches. Students will curate their own collection as final projects, accompanied by a critical reflection (4-6 pages). The collection can be a playlist, a story collection, an archive of images, or a mix of these. The collection and its accompanying essay will be peer-reviewed and workshopped. Weekly writing (1 page) on forms discussed in class will form the basis of a mid-term essay (2-3 pages).

No prerequisites are required.

ENGLISH 101S.01 THE ART OF READING

Friendship, Rediscovered

Corina Stan

Aristotle's lament "Oh, friends, there are no friends" has been quoted or paraphrased by famous philosophers like Montaigne, Kant, and Nietzsche. How do we understand this paradoxical thought today? We'll ponder the question along two lines: 1) with an eye to the foundations of our personal bonds: do all friendships grow out of shared interests or concurrence of opinion? A common history? Well-calibrated proximity and distance? What about AI companions? 2) by tracing the long history of a mistranslation originating in Diogenes Laertius's *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*. As a quick visit to the library (or perusal of digital manuscripts) proves, apparently Aristotle didn't say that there were no true friends, but something closer to: he who has many friends, has none. Perhaps this insight is even more relatable today! (By the way, is there a sense in which written culture is just a huge effort to address previous failures of communication, to account for partial understandings, or to clarify misinterpretations? How can we write in such a way as to

avoid misunderstandings?) Are misunderstandings avoidable in friendship? Or is a resilient relationship possible only through deliberate misunderstanding, that is, if we set aside or generously mistranslate an other's occasionally infelicitous words, gestures, and actions, making allowances for the trivial ways humans fail one another?

This course targets the improvement and refinement of students' close reading and argumentative writing skills. It aims to create an awareness of reading and writing as a patient process of discovery and self-discovery, one that involves a concerted effort to understand other people's ideas on their own terms and represent them accurately before engaging with them critically; a genuine desire to explore in good faith various possibilities, even if unusual or uncomfortable, before crafting one's informed position; a fine balance of openness and self-confidence to welcome feedback from other readers and to revise intelligently. It proceeds under the assumption that one *becomes*, rather than is born a writer (even a natural gift has to be cultivated!), and that learning to write well is a lifelong endeavor for all of us. With these goals in mind, reading assignments will be relatively short, but writing will be a weekly disciplined practice.

Over the course of the semester, students will complete three papers: a short analytical one based solely on Michel de Montaigne's famous essay "Of friendship" (unit one); an argumentative paper in which they will rely on several sources that we'll discuss together, including short excerpts from Aristotle's *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Ralph W. Emerson's essay "Friendship", Friedrich Nietzsche's reflections on friends in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Sigmund Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Jacques Derrida's *Politics of Friendship* and Giorgio Agamben's "The Friend" (unit two); a more complex research paper that requires independent work identifying and studying sources relevant to the topic of each student's choice, writing literature reviews, drafting, rewriting, and revising an argument, and polishing one's prose. This final essay will have some connection to at least one of the following texts, which we'll analyze in class: James Baldwin's short story "This Morning, This Evening, So Soon," excerpts from Anthony Giddens' *The Transformation of Intimacy* and from Elizabeth Bernstein's *Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity and the Commerce of Sex*, Michel Foucault's essay "Friendship as a Way of Life," Hervé Guibert's AIDS novella *To the Friend Who Did Not Save My Life*, Sally Rooney's novel *Normal People*, and some short articles about friendship in the digital age, friends with benefits, dating apps, and artificial human companionship such as digital pets or robots (unit three).

ENGLISH 101S.02 THE ART OF READING

Introduction to Tragedy

Julianne Werlin

This class is an introduction to the history and interpretation of tragic drama. Taking ancient Athens and the origins of the Greek theater as our starting point, we will move to medieval and Renaissance England to explore how the English tragic tradition has developed across continents over the last five hundred years. In reading masterpieces of tragedy, will discuss some of the difficult questions raised by this powerful form, such as why we take pleasure in watching terrible events on stage; what are the characteristics a tragic hero or heroine ought to have; what special truths can fiction offer; and how can the distinctive characteristics of live theater shape our experience of tragedy. We will also ask how the tragic tradition has changed over time, as new values, conditions of performance, and kinds of dramatists and audiences came into being.

Authors will include Sophocles, Shakespeare, Beckett, and Soyinka. We will also read some major theories of tragedy, including selections from Aristotle, David Hume, Hegel, and Raymond Williams. Assignments will include two papers, two exams, and weekly postings.

ENGLISH 101S.03 THE ART OF READING

Literature Beyond the Book

Chris Ouma

Small magazines in Africa and the Diaspora

“Some famous writers were discovered in some ill produced shabby little magazine.” These words, by South African novelist and critic Lewis Nkosi speak volumes about small magazines. Often our focus on the book – the novel, anthologies of short stories or poetry – loses sight of the small magazine, a form that enables very rich ways/arts of reading. Another critic, Eric Bulson reminds us that small magazines “faithfully transported writers from the island of the unknowns to the continent of giants”. Small magazines are indeed the ‘literary underdogs’, punching above their weight most of the time. Their smallness is their strength as a literary form: small budgets and small print run.. BUT...wild and wide circulation in directions that are unanticipated while creating networks and connections across countries and continents.

This course seeks to examine the small magazine as a form that left its own literary signature in the long twentieth century, within Africa and the Black World. It is a form that not only connected Africans and their diasporic kin, but also fostered literary cultures, debates and created conditions for the rise of African and Black Diasporic literary canons. The course will sweep across the long twentieth century after the ‘color line’: the interwar through the NAACP’s *The Crisis* and UNIA’s *Negro World*; decolonization in Africa with *Transition*, *Black Orpheus*, *Lotus* and *Drum* and the new Millennium of ‘digilittle’ magazines like *Kwani?* *Jalada* and the new iteration of *Transition* at Harvard and *Chimurenga*. The course will move from engaging with the ways in which *The Crisis* created conditions for the Harlem renaissance to how *Jalada* in East Africa has an online short story with over 100 translations – one of the most translated in the world and certainly the most in African languages.

Assessments will include occasional short pieces, a mid-term paper (4-6 pages) and a) a final term paper (6-9 pages) or b) a creative piece inspired by the form of the small magazine in print or digital format.

ENGLISH 102.01

The Art of Storytelling

Charlotte Sussman

How do we tell stories? Why is the art of telling stories so central to our culture? This course will explore how stories have shaped individuals and societies by reading essential works of literature covering at least six centuries of literary history from the medieval period to the present. We will consider how the art of telling stories has changed even as it has stayed the same, and consider its enduring power. We will discuss works from Britain, North America, Africa, and elsewhere. Likely

authors include Chaucer, Milton, Shakespeare, Edgar Allen Poe, Jane Austen, T.S. Eliot, Toni Morrison, and Chinua Achebe; some films may also be taught.

The emphasis in this course will be on exploring and discussing how stories can be told across a range of genres and media. This class is suitable for all skill levels, and no previous knowledge of literature is required. Students can expect to learn about literary history as well as the development of genres like the novel. The course will be structured around guest lectures by multiple faculty members on their areas of expertise, followed by several classes of additional context and discussion led by the course leader. Guest lecturers for 2024 include Sarah Beckwith, Julianne Werlin, Michael D'Alessandro, Tom Ferraro, Christopher Ouma, and JP Gritton.

Evaluation will consist of several short writing assignments (likely including creative options), a midterm and a final.

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.

ENGLISH 110S.02
INTRO CREATIVE WRITING
JP Gritton

Although this introduction to creative writing will feature (some) poetry, students who enroll in this class should be focused primarily on composing works of prose—in particular, works of fiction. In addition to exploring elements of the craft—setting, characterization, voice, point of view, and so on— this class seeks to explore the ways in which storytellers are engaged in ongoing “conversations” with one another. As a class, we’ll explore explicit responses writers have made to the work of others. In poetry, for instance, the first line of Langston Hughes’ “I, Too” forms an “answer” to Walt Whitman’s “I Hear America Singing.” In fiction, we might read Joanna Pearson’s “Riding” as a response to “Little Red Cap” by the Brothers Grimm, or explore how Nathan Englander’s “What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank” replies to Ray Carver’s “What We Talk About When We Talk About Love” (a story which is itself a “cover” Plato’s *Symposium*). Through our own writing and through the careful reading of others’, we’ll explore a literary “grammar” before situating ourselves in ongoing and ever-evolving conversations of storytellers.

ENGLISH 110S.03
INTRO CREATIVE WRITING
Frances Leviston

'If prose is a house, poetry is a man on fire running quite fast through it' (Anne Carson). On this creative course, we will feel out the differences between poetry, memoir, fiction, and playwriting. What do each of these literary genres ask of a writer, or an audience? How might we learn their shapes, and test their limits? No prior creative writing experience is needed for this class, only a willingness to put words together in new ways, and consider what makes a form tick — or explode. Tackling fundamental aspects of craft like plot, character, sound, line, dialogue and voice, and inspired by writers including Adrienne Rich, Noreen Masud, Jamil Jan Kochai and Roy Williams, you will learn about genre from the inside out, and receive extensive feedback as you build your own portfolio of original creative work.

ENGLISH 190FS-2.01 Focus Program Sem Lit
Reading the Landscape
Saskia Cornes

If the daily lives of many who were considered “less than” - such as women or the enslaved – have been absent from museums, rare book collections, or libraries, how do we understand or imagine those whom “official” histories have tried to erase? In this course, we will work to trace these lives and livelihoods in other ways, through other means. We will work with more traditional forms of literature and literary criticism, as well as embodied forms of learning – walking in the Duke Forest, working at the Duke Campus Farm, and examining collections at the Nasher Museum and the Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library. With these tools, we'll learn to interpret plants, landscapes, and the soils of the American South - both real and imagined - as archives, points of data, and sites for interpretation.

We will read and analyze texts by Southern authors such as William Faulkner and Wendell Berry, Black authors such as Toni Morrison, Octavia Butler, Saidiya Hartman, and Jamaica Kincaid, and Indigenous authors such as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. You will learn what makes an original claim and how to express it through written and other forms. Weekly responses, one three-page paper and a multi-draft final paper will help you to practice these skills.

ENGLISH 190FS-2.02 Focus Program 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.”

Our ongoing subject here is the post-Civil War South, with a particular emphasis on the recent past. The historical lens of slavery produces a condition of grotesquerie that itself has blossomed into fields of insanity, detectable in the space Toni Morrison describes as the “white literary imagination.” Our tour of the South will focus on the unsavory, haunted and peculiar figures we

meet along the way—figures, who, according to Flannery 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. Students can expect two to three short essay assignments of five to seven pages.

ENGLISH 190S-1.01 Spec Tpcs in Language & Lit
Renaissance Theater
Astrid Giugni

Greed, Vanity, and Laughter: Renaissance Theater and the Urban Vices.

Renaissance London was crowded, expensive, and in the middle of a commercial and social revolution, where gallants, rising merchants, refugees from continental wars, and greedy criminals uneasily shared the same urban landscape. This course uses traditional literary methodologies alongside some computational tools to study how Tudor and Stuart playwrights, such as William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and Thomas Middleton, used satire, comedy, and even tragedy to criticize city-life.

The computational approach will teach you—from the ground up—how to explore and track how these innovative writers reshaped and redeployed classical rhetorical texts (from Aristotle to Horace to Quintilian) to better understand their times. We will study how elements and characters common to these plays—the perpetual busybody, the “city-vices,” and the focus on the urban landscape itself—were used by different authors to construct moral vocabularies to criticize real-life problems. We will pair this computational approach with interpretive techniques central to literary studies, learning about the history of Tudor and Stuart England, the development of commercial English theaters, and the bewildering, but fascinating landscape of Renaissance London and its literature.

No mathematical prerequisites and no prior familiarity with Renaissance literature necessary.

ENGLISH 204.01
History of English
Dominika Baran

This course explores the history of the English language, from its Anglo-Saxon origins in the Early Middle Ages, to its spread across the world and the emergence of Global Englishes. We will examine

linguistic changes in the areas of English phonology, lexicon, and grammar, and consider how these changes have been shaped by political and social factors and by language contact (e.g. with Old Norse through the Viking invasions, with French through the Norman Conquest, with Latin through Christianity, or with languages of colonized societies). We will also study regional and social variation in English across the ages, and the forces that led to the dominance of some English dialects, and the stigmatization or disappearance of others. The course will conclude with an overview of present-day varieties of English around the world, including British and North American dialects, and postcolonial varieties such as South Asian and African Englishes. Students will be evaluated based on short assignments and a midterm and final exam.

ENGLISH 220S.01

INTRO TO THE WRITING OF POETRY

Frances Leviston

‘Poetry sharpens our engagement with language, makes us rethink, rewire our relationship with words’ (Ishion Hutchinson). This course will invite you to explore and rewire your own relationship with words as a poet, approaching language not as a tool to be used, but as a living intelligence to be collaborated with. With playfulness and pleasure, we will explore the possibilities of language: its sounds and rhythms, its tones of voice, its metaphors and images, and its intimate relation to the body. You will read a diverse range of work by poets including Ocean Vuong, Dunya Mikhail, Seamus Heaney and Kayo Chingonyi, and undertake writing prompts and challenges as you work towards your own portfolio of original poems — with plenty of workshop support and feedback along the way.

ENGLISH 220S.02

INTRO TO THE WRITING OF POETRY

Toby Martinez de las rivas

Many people write poems and keep them to themselves, afraid to share them, or afraid that they’re not ‘good enough’. Others wrote when they were younger and then the habit fell by the wayside. But the creative use of language is at the heart of being human. Poems are written to be shared. Diaries are private. Poetry is inherently public. It improves through taking risk and seeking feedback. Introduction to the Writing of Poetry will take you through the process of developing a short portfolio of poems in a supportive setting. We will explore poems from a variety of periods in a range of forms from haiku to erasure, from the sonnet to collage, from the personal to the political. You need have no prior experience for this course – only an interest in poetry, the desire to write, and a willingness to see where it takes you. You will receive extensive written and oral feedback on your work as the course progresses.

ENGLISH 221S.01

INTRO TO THE WRITING OF FICTION: Writing without Fear

Amin Ahmad

Writing a story can be overwhelming: Where does inspiration come from? How do we harness our own experiences? How do we begin and end a story? How do we create a world on the page? How do we get through writer’s block?

To answer these questions, we will examine the craft techniques underlying different kinds of stories: We will read and analyze realistic stories, fairy tales, detective stories, magical realism and fantasy. We'll also learn to create different points-of-view, generate a plot and build complex characters.

All along, we will discuss how to develop a writing process that works for you. Each class will involve a writing exercise that will prepare you for writing longer stories, and homework assignments will allow you to harness your creativity.

Come prepared to read a lot, write a lot, and explore the powerful potential of storytelling!

ENGLISH 221S.02

INTRO TO THE WRITING OF FICTION

Mesha Maren

This is an introductory-level fiction writing workshop. No previous experience is required. A workshop differs from other courses in the fact that in a workshop, we look at works in progress. Therefore, we will focus on process and productive feedback. Keep in mind that the word “workshop,” in its most traditional sense, refers to a place (such as a cobbler’s workshop) where things are built or repaired, not torn down, and destroyed. However, also keep in mind that the repairing may necessitate taking something apart and reassembling it.

In this course, we will study, discuss, and practice all the fundamentals of fiction: setting, tone, character, dialogue, point of view, scene, symbols, and plot. Throughout the semester, you will build a repertoire of fundamentals, a sort of toolbox that you can carry with you for the rest of your writing life.

Reading is just as important to this course as writing. There is no better way to learn to write than to read deeply and broadly. We will read, dissect, and discuss short prose pieces during each class period.

We will use Josip Novakovich's Fiction Writer's Workshop as well as a series of selected short stories that I will upload to Sakai.

ENGLISH 222S.01 INTRO TO THE WRITING OF CREATIVE NONFICTION

Creating Reality

Cathy Shuman

Our focus will be on the essay as you explore and experiment with techniques, structures, and themes for describing the places, stories, and things you care about. Over the course of the semester, students will work on creative exercises leading through workshops and revision to the production of three longer essays. Along the way, we will read and discuss selected examples of published creative nonfiction to help us develop techniques for creating our own. No previous creative writing experience is required for this course.

ENGLISH 236S.01**Shakespeare: On Nature****Sarah Beckwith**

We face now unprecedented threats to our planet. Birds, insects, and countless species of animals are dying in mass (it is the sixth extinction). We already see profound alterations in our climate and weather systems. Where do our ideas about nature come from? Are there ways of thinking about the earth that we have foolishly discarded?

We inherit ideas about nature, and relations towards it that were emergent and contested in Shakespeare's time. Francis Bacon pioneered ways of imagining new forms of control and dominion over it beyond that theologically "warranted" in the Book of Genesis; Calvin thought that human nature was utterly depraved without God's saving grace. Nature was newly "improved", claimed for cultivation, and men and women were pushed off common land so that it could sustain profitable sheep. New global frontiers were also formed by conquest and settlement, close to home in Ireland, and further away in the New World, that is, the Americas. In literary terms, nature was at the center of the idealizations of pastoral, and subjected to the most penetrating analysis in Shakespearean tragedy as well as other genres.

Hitherto interwoven with fable, and folk-story, it was also the object of new taxonomies and considerations of the place of humankind within it. (Indeed the word "kind" is subject to new forms of pressure. Who is our kin? And how kind are we? Of what kind are we?)

In this class we will examine several habitats in Shakespeare's plays: forests, gardens, and the sea, for example, as well as ideas around wildness, tameness, cultivation, and creation. We will look at individual animals: Launce's amazing dog, Crabbe, and dogs in Shakespeare; his most famous stage direction, "Exit, pursued by a bear", and his hawks, wrens, and sparrows, complex and precise botanies, and their classical and folk heritage, especially in his discussions of the relation of art and nature. Above all we will see how Shakespeare conceived of the human body as the imaginative medium of theatre, and therefore human nature was at the heart of his dramaturgical inquiries about the kinds of creatures we are.

We will explore a range of plays (about 10 Shakespeare plays in all), and also sixteenth and seventeenth century sources that exemplify and interrogate the nature of nature. We will bring to life Shakespeare's profound testing out of his culture's resources in relation to what nature (one of the most complex words of our language) is, was, and might be. In this way too we will be exploring the nature of Shakespeare's work as well as exploration of human relations with the natural world.

Students will have the chance to keep nature journals, and to track flora and fauna imaginatively through Shakespeare's natural worlds and our own.

ENGLISH 247.01
Victorian Literature
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 Mary Seacole's *Wonderful adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands*, and Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* and George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*. In between, we'll read poetry by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Christina Rossetti, and some of the writers of literary and extra literary prose featured in the Victorian Volume of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*.

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.

ENGLISH 264S.01
Modern American Drama
Mike D'Alessandro

Do casual theatregoers know how *weird* modern American drama can be? Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* follows a heroine haunted by the sounds of Polish folk music and gunshots. Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* features ghosts of suspected Communist spies, plus fever dreams (or are they?) of a sexualized angel amidst an AIDS-ravaged nation. Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* highlights a primate-inspired antihero encountering a street full of masked, mute New Yorkers—and it gets stranger from there. Sex and drugs, murder and madness, delusions and hallucinations, lots of death and even a little cannibalism: these are the subjects that our nation's most audacious playwrights offer us. Never, perhaps, has the depraved underside of the American dream been so apparent as in the "classic" national drama.

This course—which doubles as a survey in American theatre history—tracks some of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries' most recognizable U.S. dramatic plays. It focuses on both the subversiveness of American drama as well as its potential for social commentary. Whether dramatizing women's domestic confinement in post-WWII America or the racial and social tensions that have led to real-life violence, the U.S. stage highlights some of our nation's most visceral self-indictments. Besides the works named above, plays include Sam Shepard's *True West*, Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight Los Angeles, 1992*, Annie Baker's *The Flick*, and Suzan Lori-Parks's *Topdog/Underdog*, among others. Various film adaptations and recorded performances will also be screened.

No prerequisites necessary.

No tech (laptops, tablets, phones, etc.) allowed in class.

As this class is a small discussion seminar, most of our time—and roughly 30% of the final grade—will focus on class participation. The other 70% will consist of weekly response posts, two medium-length papers (5-7 pages), and a short presentation.

ENGLISH 288.01

America Dreams/American Movies

Marianna Torgovnick

A course in selected American films that create and reflect, both for better and worse, American identity from the beginnings of Hollywood moviemaking to the rise of Indie spirit.

We will view and discuss nine to twelve beloved movies such as *The Gold Rush*, *King Kong*,

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, *Casablanca*, *Rear Window*, *Singin' in the Rain*, and

Dr. Strangelove, by directors such as Charlie Chaplin, Frank Capra, Alfred Hitchcock, and Stanley Kubrick.

The course is alert to American cultural history, to the development of the movie industry, to evolving ideas of the director as artist (auteur) and, above all, to storytelling and narrative form in film and to the fundamentals of film analysis. It aims to enhance your lifelong enjoyment of movies.

For each major genre we address—comedies, musicals, romantic comedies, romantic dramas, westerns, thrillers, and genre mash-ups—we will include some attention to developments through the 21st century.

Classes are lecture discussion in format. Assignments are both written and visual experiments in filmmaking, as suits the interests of the class.

ENGLISH 290-7.01 SPEC TOPICS IN LANG & LIT

Classic Works of World Literature

Victor Strandberg

If you are quite certain that you plan to stay in this course, it would be an advantage for you to obtain the textbooks 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 often available for free in any hotel room.

I am 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 Matthew, 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 (Amazon Books) or other such sites online. It is greatly desirable that we all have the same editions. The list:

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). I am planning to have three exams and one or two term papers. There will be no three-hour final exam.

ENGLISH 290-7.02 SPEC TOPICS IN LANG & LIT

What Was Heterosexuality?

Taylor Black & Ranjana Khanna

At the same time as it has become accepted to think of queer sexualities as socially constructed and always in flux, it can be easy to forget that heterosexuality is unstable and far from monolithic. "What Was Heterosexuality" surveys twentieth-century art, literature, theory, and popular media (film, television, advertising, music, etc.) to find out what it used to mean to be straight.

Co-taught by Taylor Black and Ranjana Khanna, the course will offer students a different, deeper, way of seeing, describing, and analyzing textual and discursive configurations of heterosexuality. Turning to queer theory, we will learn how to estrange heterosexuality, seeing it from the outside in. Critical texts from psychoanalysis and philosophy will help us see how notions of heterosexual desire, identification, and socialization are conceived from the inside out. Throughout, we will endeavor to defamiliarize ourselves with what we think it means to be straight, sharpening our skills as consumers and critics of literature, theory, and popular culture while on the lookout for representations of heterosexuality that are anything but average.

Students enrolled in the course can expect to complete two or three short writing assignments of less than five pages and a final creative project.

ENGLISH 290S.01 SPEC TOPICS IN LANG & LIT
Human Agency & Responsibility
Thomas Pfau

Human Agency & Responsibility: Stories of 2,500 years

Who we are as human beings has always been closely entwined with the stories we tell and in which we see ourselves implicated, not necessarily as the protagonist but because we grasp a given story as a parable that sheds light on our very existence. Furthermore, it would seem that some type of conflict, or moral dilemma, forms the backbone of most, if not all narrative. Lastly, the very fact



that we habitually tell stories suggests that what we mean by “moral crisis” is an integral feature of our existence rather than an occasional “state of exception.” Through narrative, then, we come to understand that the moral dimension of our lives is both elusive and inescapable. Throughout the semester, we will focus on four concepts that are typically in play wherever a moral crisis is explored in narrative form: 1) Justice; 2) Suffering; 3) Sin; and 4) Self-Recognition (coupled with Forgiveness).

During this term, we will explore a number of works that narrate moral dilemmas in particularly vivid ways: first, there is Sophocles’ *Antigone*, which confronts us with a tragic conflict between two competing notions of justice. Next comes *The Book of Job* with its puzzling juxtaposition between extreme and (seemingly) gratuitous suffering and the monotheist idea of divine benevolence and a well-ordered cosmos, so central to Old Testament narrative. We then move on to some shorter selections from Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, which dramatizes instances of sin, self-recognition, and forgiveness. From here we’ll leap into the modern era, with two works each in the 19th and 20th century: George Eliot’s *Silas Marner* (1861) and Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (1866). We’ll then take up Czeslaw Milosz’s *The Captive Mind* (1951), an influential work of non-fiction about moral dilemmas and forms of self-betrayal under Soviet-era totalitarianism. The final book will be J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* (1991), a novel set in early post-Apartheid South Africa.



ENGLISH 290S.02 SPEC TOPICS IN LANG & LIT

Dystopian Literature

Nitin Luthra

Enemy at the Gates: Reading Dystopian Literature

Novels imagining a bleak future for the US or the West are not plain entertainment. Each fantasy of the end of the West, like the collapse of the US economy or an invasion from the East, either questions or privileges the existing world order.

In this course, we will read novels that imagine stories of foreign invasions and dystopian scenarios. Are such novels harmless amusement or weaponized nostalgia? How does imagining a bleak future affect our attitudes towards “outsiders”- immigrants, foreigners, strangers? We will answer these questions by closely reading, among other texts, novels like Lionel Shriver’s *The Mandibles*, Michel Houellebecq’s *Submission*, Karen Lord’s *The Best of Possible Worlds*, and films like *The End of America* (2008) and *Green Border* (2023). We will also read works that complicate our understanding of insiders and outsiders like Toni Morrison’s *Paradise* (Nobel prize 1993) and J.M. Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians* (Nobel prize 2003). Our readings will be grounded in the theoretical fields of postcolonial, race, and migration studies.

Our methods will combine close reading of these texts with computational methods to analyze popular discourse about immigrants and the construct of ‘the West’. What can we discover using computer software that can read thousands of pages at once? During the semester we will build up our tools from scratch and practice new techniques like sentiment analysis, topic modeling, and Multi-dimensional Scaling (MDS) in class. The course will culminate in a final project where we bring together our interpretations of these texts and results produced using Natural language processing (NLP) methods.

Class assessment will include 1. Weekly reading responses and peer comments (250 words) 2. One mid-term paper (4-5 pages), and 3. a final digital project (w/reflection) that students will present in class. No exams! No coding experience required!

ENGLISH 290S.03 SPEC TOPICS IN LANG & LIT

Reading Chinua Achebe

Chris Ouma

“If you do not like someone’s story, write your own”. These are the words of the famous African novelist Chinua Achebe, a key figure in the founding of modern African literature. Often referred to as the ‘father of modern of African literature,’ Achebe’s fictional world was often both inspired and in contestation with key modernist figures such as Joseph Conrad, WB Yeats and Joyce Cary amongst others. The title of his most famous novel *Things Fall Apart* is inspired by WB Yeats poem ‘The Second Coming’. In response to Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, Achebe wrote that his fiction was meant to “teach my readers, that their past – with all its imperfections – was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God’s behalf delivered them”. Achebe therefore set forth writing his own story and in the process was central to not only setting up the field of modern African literature, but also founding the Heinemann African Writers Series which acquired a global status as syllabus and reference point for African literature.

This course will focus on Achebe's five novels: *Things fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, *Arrow of God*, *A man of the People*, *Anthills of the Savannah* and an anthology titled *Girls at War and other Stories*. Through this corpus, the course's objective is to give students a substantial grounding on this globally inspirational literary figure – Africa's most famous author. We will read for the ways in which Achebe's novels imagined and 'invented' an African world which was in transition, and at the intersection between a 'traditional' and largely 'oral-based' society and a modern 'literate' one emerging at the end of colonization. How for instance could you *read* and indeed *listen* to the difference between the first three paragraphs in *Things fall Apart* introducing Okonkwo to us as readers, and the last paragraph in which with the district commissioner is *writing* about Okonkwo?

The course will emphasize immersive reading of the novels and will rely on classroom engagements with Achebe's prose and style, while placing him in the socio-political context of his time. Assessments will include occasional short pieces, a mid-term paper (4-6 pages) and a final term paper (6-9 pages).

ENGLISH 290S.04 SPEC TOPICS IN LANG & LIT
The Asian American Novel
Victor Jeong

"Who gets to be an American? What does an American look like?" - Charles Yu, *Interior Chinatown*

What kind of hope do we place in a category like "Asian American"? Is identity something endowed to us by the worlds we inhabit, or could it be something we learn to claim and embody? While these questions necessarily evade formulaic and convenient answers, the struggle to make sense of one's social and personal status is a concern that speaks to the very heart of the Asian American community. Considering the boom in Asian American literary production over the last fifty years, then, let us then turn to the form of the novel as an explorative field where these negotiations are played out—what Mikhail Bakhtin describes as "the process of coming to know one's own language as it is perceived in someone else's language." Sitting with the language of Asian American authors, we shall bear witness to sites of doubly significant transformations: the mutual redefining of such classic dichotomies as the private vs. the public, the nation vs. the world, and the foreign vs. the familiar.

Like many inquiries in literature, history runs parallel to and intertwines with our journey. Our first novels will show us harrowing first accounts of acculturation as a process of violent categorization—a disjoining of self-knowledge that prompts Maxine Hong Kingston to proclaim, "I could not figure out what was my village," in *The Woman Warrior* (1976). Working chronologically forward will discover evolving visions of identity: for instance, Asianness as a strategic affiliation in Chang Rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995) where political capital is extracted from race. Theory and memoir will lead us to the present moment, where we grapple with belonging and the possibility of claiming our identities instead of living subordinate to them—a call to be "just there, embedded in everything I loved," voiced in Anthony So's posthumous work titled *Afterparties* (2021). All along the way, we will embrace the multitudes contained in these texts: how they speak to and challenge such topics as institutional racism, sexuality, gender, class, and so much more.

Assignments will include two essays and weekly posts. No pre-requisites, no exams.

ENGLISH 290S-1.01 SP TOPICS IN MEDIEVAL/EARLY MODERN LIT

English Epic

Julianne Werlin

One of the oldest extant works of western literature, Homer's *Iliad* has had a long afterlife. In late medieval and Renaissance England, two millennia after the *Iliad* was first composed, writers sought inspiration from the myths and heroes of ancient epic as they attempted to forge their own national literature. Even today, with its vast scale of action, its cast of heroes and gods, its heartrending scenes of death and devastation, and its startlingly vivid language, the *Iliad* continues to define epic form and style.

This class will examine Homer and his influence on medieval and Renaissance English writing. We will begin by reading the *Iliad*, then consider some of the great adaptations and rewritings of Homeric epic by major authors including Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton. We will see the story of Troy transformed into a tale of betrayed love in Chaucer and Shakespeare, while in Spenser, we will find Homeric epic conjoined with Arthurian legend and Christian allegory to create a strange literary hybrid. With Milton, we will encounter epic on a new scale, spanning Heaven, Hell, and Paradise, as Homeric gods and heroes are replaced with angels, devils, and the Christian God. Throughout the course, we will consider such questions as the character of the epic hero and the nature of heroism; the value attached to human life in this frequently violent form; and the relationship between epic action and literary style.

ENGLISH 290S-1.02 SP TOPICS IN MEDIEVAL/EARLY MODERN LIT

Living, Loving, Learning

Sarah Beckwith

"What is most difficult is to love the world as it is", said the great political philosopher, Hannah Arendt. Arendt felt that this task of learning to love the world defines the task of education, for to truly learn is to decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it. Love is then a thoroughly "transformative idea."

This course examines love as a craft, a means of learning, an art in which we can apprentice ourselves. We will do this by exploring some of the great writers who have articulated and shaped our richest conceptions of it. We will think about love as *eros*, *caritas*, *agape*, *storge*, also love as care and repair, about loving and *being* loved. (We will also think about love's imitations and corruptions.) We will think about the genres in which we encounter it: philosophical dialogue, treatise, drama—comedy and tragedy, gospel, revelation, and romance. We will look at some foundational treatments: *Plato's* scintillating and tricky dialogue, *The Symposium*, at the revolutionary idea of love in the New Testament, at the Thomistic idea of love as a virtue, the medieval art of courtly love and in the subsequent sonneteering tradition, at Julian of Norwich's revelation of divine love, and some of Shakespeare's highly innovative explorations of love as a form of freedom, and finally the work of love as revealing the world as it is as explored in the philosophical work of Iris Murdoch and Simone Weil.

In this class I will also model assignments to fully integrate the task of thinking with the task of writing as we think about the forms of our encounters with love, love's knowledge, and love's work.

ENGLISH 290S-2.01 SP TOPICS IN 18th & 19th CENTURY

Poetry of the Earth

Abigail Rogers

In our highly industrialized and digitized milieu, it's easy to feel out of tune with the natural world. Can poetry—of all things—help to bridge this rift? The ecocritic Jonathan Bate argues that as modern technological forces—from “bulldozers in the forest” to “cyberspace”—deafen us to “earth's own poetry...so there will be an ever greater need to retain a place in culture for the song that names the earth.” Grappling with a burgeoning Industrial Revolution, many writers of the nineteenth century wielded poetry as a form of resistance to modernity's growing alienation from—and domination of—the natural world. In this class, we will look to British Romantic poets who view the earth not as raw material to be manipulated but as having a “voice” of its own.

Readings will include selections from poets like Anna Laetitia Barbauld, John Clare, William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, Percy Shelley, and John Keats. We will also explore Romanticism's legacy as it surfaces in the work of several modernist poets. As we encounter these writers, we will discuss the forms of religion and spirituality that shape their responses to the physical environment, focusing particularly on their understandings of the relationship between the natural and the supernatural/God. The course will also engage with Romanticism's critiques of industrialization, urbanization, and what Alexander Hampton calls “a key element of the secular social imaginary, namely the subject-centered representation of nature, which sets the self over and above nature.”

No prior experience in reading poetry is required here. Through group discussions and (low stakes!) in-class writing activities, we will practice how to read a text closely and attentively. Students will be evaluated on class participation, short (~75-word) discussion posts, a personal reflection (1-2 pages), and two close reading essays (4-5 pages).

ENGLISH 290S-4.01 SP TOPICS IN CREATIVE WRITING

From Memoir to Fiction

Akhil Sharma

All fiction is about the felt experience of the author. What the author experiences is what gets converted into fiction. This course will try to find the channels between the actual personal into the general fiction. We will begin by spending several weeks focusing on memoir writing. From this we will discover what seems to hold the greatest energy for us. And then we will try to channel the energy into fiction.

ENGLISH 290S-4.61 SP TOPICS IN CREATIVE WRITING

Poetry and The Archive

Toby Martinez de las rivas

We think of archives as rooms full of boxes and boxes full of documents, buried somewhere in the vaults of a library or museum. But put your hand in your pocket. Open your bag. What do you find there? Isn't that also a kind of archive? What is it you keep in your drawers in your room? What messages are saved up on your phone? What photos? What notes? Aren't these things a series of personal archives? Perhaps, when we walk outside, we can begin to see Nature as an archive? Perhaps other people with their particular histories and memories are archives? If we accept the definition of an archive as 'a place where records are kept', we can begin to find them in many unexpected places, and use this knowledge as an opportunity to write – the record of our lives, the record of the world around us, the record of the silent or silenced. In this course we will write out of all of these unexpected and unexplored archives, as well as partnering with the documentary, digital, artistic and object archives held in the Duke collections to read and write poems in a variety of forms, and to produce our own records that future generations can unbury.

ENGLISH 320S.01 INTERMEDIATE WORKSHOP WTG OF POETRY

Joseph Donahue

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.

ENGLISH 321S.01 INTERMEDIATE WORKSHOP WTG OF FICTION

Akhil Sharma

This course will include discussion of basic techniques such as writing effective dialogue and developing complicated characters inside of a plot. The focus, however, will be on developing a voice and then trying to use that voice as the engine of a narrative. Voice is often what distinguishes a work.

Each week will have a writing assignment and each week will require a close reading of a short story.

ENGLISH 322S.01 INTERMEDIATE WORKSHOP WTG OF CREATIVE NONFICTION**Art of the Personal Essay****Faulkner Fox**

This creative nonfiction writing course will introduce students to multiple styles and types of personal essays. We'll study essays that make you laugh out loud, ponder the meaning of existence, or break your heart. And we'll look at a few essays that—arguably—accomplish all three. Meanwhile, students will write and revise their own personal essays.

Over the course of the semester, students will write multiple drafts of two final essays, as well as weekly shorter, more informal exercises and reading responses. The class will contain a workshop component in which students discuss drafts of each other's work, as well as several individual conferences with the professor, peers, and the Duke Writing Studio. We'll also go on occasional field trips.

ENGLISH 360S.01**Environment in Literature, Law & Science****Priscilla Wald**

Climate change, resource exhaustion, an increase in natural disasters, from tornados, hurricanes, floods to droughts, heat domes, earthquakes, and, of course, 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 eight billion; we are putting increasing pressure on the planet, with dangerous consequences, as the Covid-19 pandemic has made so starkly clear. Social hierarchies and inequities, as we have seen over time, take their toll on every aspect of the planet; the natural and social worlds are fully integrated entities.

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 productively about how to live more justly, compassionately, and responsibly in our world? What can we learn from the stories we tell about the environment not only in fiction, film, and the mainstream media/journalism, but also in scientific, legal, and political documents? How might we change that story, and with what consequences?

This class will address these questions by considering the global and the local, with special attention to the very ground on which Duke is standing: the Southern Piedmont, the city of Durham, the Duke campus, and the Duke Campus Farm. Beginning with early human settlement, when the earth began to get a human-natural history of its own, we will consider three historical moments — settlement; plantation culture and enslavement, and the ongoing struggles for Civil Rights from the late 1960s into the Environmental Justice and Environmental Health Movements in the present—to

show how science, law, and cultural forms (literary and cinematic as well as scientific works, legal cases, policy documents, and the news media) contribute to the changing idea of “the environment.” The class will include site visits to Duke Forest and the Duke Campus Farm and a walking tour of downtown Durham.

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 circulate through social, cultural, economic, legal, political, agricultural, academic, and other networks, reshaping the ever-changing relationship between the local and the global.

ENGLISH 373S.01 Amer Lit, Cold War & After

Puzo's Canon

Thomas Ferraro

For 35 years, I have been reading Mario Puzo's The Godfather (the original novel, not just the films) through the collective lens of the American novelistic tradition, and it is time now to return the favor. The primary purpose of this version of English 373 is to (re)inhabit The Godfather and then to read through its prism a half dozen of the indispensable acts of the U.S. imagination composed in its immediate wake, during the 1970s and '80s. The Godfather was at the first and continues to be, among other things, the world's most successful novel for grown-ups, and there are reasons for that, culturally mythic because narratively ingenious: especially, its sardonic complexity, which outstrips in significant measure even Coppola's movie, perfect a realization on screen though it otherwise is. By sardonic complexity I mean the thematic entanglements of family and business, bound masculinity and feminine eros, self-interested violence and God-gifted sanctity--of blood and the marketplace--that lie at its thematic center. So blatant, yet so unfamiliar. But by sardonic complexity I also mean the combination of love and irony, reverence and fear, hypnotic romance and insidious condemnation that Puzo's narrative style conjures, which is at one level again blatant yet in other ways oh-so-unfamiliar. Understanding that “overdetermination” is the offer I will make you won't want to refuse, I promise. For in the omerta between text and readers, Puzo not only portrays but constitutes--embodies, enacts, effects--an alternative mode of knowing and doing (call it “Pagan Catholic”) that challenges at the deepest levels how we in the U.S. have been taught to think (pop liberalism, therapeutic moralism, allegorizing by symbols, either/or dichotomization, the pre-professional libidinal economy) and in so doing calls us forth, as individuals but also as a crew, to bear special witness to the developing American novel--sotto voce--in all its dark wisdom, courage, and beauty.

For me, as I say, it has been a quarter century in coming, but revenge, as the Don reminds us, is a dish best tasted cold. That the year 2019 was the fiftieth anniversary of the novel's publication puts extended icing on the cake. All are welcome to the block party.

Novels to be chosen from: Cormac McCarthy's All the Pretty Horses or Blood Meridian, E.L. Doctorow's The Book of Daniel, Joan Chase's The Reign of the Queen of Persia, Toni Morrison's Sula, Joy Kogawa's Obasan, Ron Hansen's Mariette in Ecstasy, Oscar Hijuelos's Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love, and Don DeLillo's White Noise. You will surely want take a look also at one or more of The Godfather films, as well as greatest “novel” of the new millenium, David Chase's The Sopranos, Season 1.

ENGLISH 390-1.01 Single American Author
William Faulkner
Victor Strandberg

MASTERWORKS BY WILLIAM FAULKNER

When literary pundits occasionally post a list of the ten greatest novels in world literature, no writer is more likely to be cited than William Faulkner, Nobel Prize winner in 1950. The main question is which of his masterworks will be cited (if not both)—*The Sound and the Fury* or *Absalom, Absalom!* If the list were extended to the top twenty, two other novels could be in play—*As I Lay Dying* and *Light in August*.

As Hemingway conceded, Faulkner “has more talent than all of us [contemporaries]. I would be happy just to be his manager.” This course will begin with several of Faulkner’s best short stories—for example, “A Rose for Emily” and “Red Leaves”—and then follow the divided stream of his creativity, taking up his more conventional novels first (*Sanctuary*, *Light in August*, *The Hamlet*) and reserving until last his greatest and most challenging experimental novels such as *Absalom, Absalom!* Three hour exams, one optional term paper (5-7 pages), no three-hour final exam.

ENGLISH 390S-1.01 Single American Author
Emily Dickinson
Joseph Donahue

This seminar on the life and times on one of the foremost lyric poets in world literature, Emily Dickinson. We read the entirety of her published work in the order of, to the degree scholars can determine, its composition, which is between roughly the late eighteen forties to her death in 1886. For all the mastery of syllables, phrase, cadence, and visionary psychology, Dickinson’s work cries out for a cultural context, which as a member of an elite and ambitious family was richly available to the poet. Dickinson, in short, as recent scholarship has amply demonstrated, was deeply attuned to the intellectual concerns of her day, especially in the realms of art, politics, and theology, and such sciences as geology and botany. However much her lyrics give the fullest voice in the English language to states of ecstasy and despair, they also draw on the world around her, and our reading of her letters and poems sets her poems deeply in the culture from which they arose, a culture that given its deep roots in American Protestantism and in the Civil War, remains of vital interest to the contemporary moment, as two recent full length films exploring the life and legend of Emily Dickinson attest.

ENGLISH 395.01
Language & Society
Dominika Baran

This course examines language as a social practice, focusing on different aspects of its role in social life. Topics addressed in the course include: language and social identity, such as ethnicity, social class, age, and gender; variation in language, including dialects, accents, and registers; multilingualism and language contact; new languages such as pidgins and creoles; language, culture,

and intercultural communication; language and ideology; language in education and in the media. Through the discussion of these topics and homework including reading and small research projects, students are introduced to key concepts, theories, and methods in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology.

ENGLISH 420S.01

ADVANCED WORKSHOP IN WRITING OF POETRY

Nathaniel Mackey

Advanced Writing Workshops build on the work done at the intermediate level, and are intended for the most well-prepared and gifted creative writing students. Pre-requisite: English 320S or consent of the instructor if prior work merits admission to the class (as judged by the instructor).

ENGLISH 590S-3.01 Special Topics Seminar III

AMERICAN EPIC (and its Mythopoetics)

Thomas Ferraro

“He thought the world’s heart beat at some terrible cost and that the world’s pain and its beauty moved in a relation of divergent equity and that in this headlong deficit the blood of multitudes might ultimately be exacted for the vision of a single flower.”

—Cormac McCarthy, of John Grady Cole

What happens when the genre of the “Romance,” which is the episodic novel of individual self-determination, goes epic? So that the story of *One Outsized Figure* turns out to embody the U.S. imperial will writ large, in its interrelatedly extractive-capitalist, entrepreneurial-capitalist, and finance-capitalist forms: the violence of men (and I do mean *males*) hell bent on conquest and dynasty and elimination of the Other (all the way, at times, to self-immolation)? What you get are the greatest stories of America ever told, ever absorbed and then re-imagined: Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick*, William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*, and Cormac McCarthy’s *Blood Meridian*, interspersed to my designing mind with Mario Puzo’s *The Godfather* for its sardonic comedy (as per the often-hilarious *Moby-Dick!*), and with Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (an American *anti*-epic if ever there were one) for its view-from-below. Men assume that the story-stage is theirs alone—beginning, notoriously, with Melville—but interracial homosociality is only part of the larger story, as we tease out the erotic power, social complicity, and fugitive resistance of the women, too. Each of these books has proven uncannily, profoundly prophetic—in ways we are still catching up with, thanks to both Cultural Studies and its discontents. And while narrative complexity and plot satisfaction are keys to the less-episodic novels, in each one the prose-poetry (word by word, sentence by sentence) and/or the imagistic regimes (figure by figure, scene by scene) are sublime—Biblical and Homeric, Shakespearean and Dantean. No *Midsummer Night’s Revel* like that onboard the good ship Pequod (at spermaceti time!), whilst Hades Hath No Darker Wanderings than that of McCarthy’s Judge (self-elected, heinously) and Ellison’s Unseen Human (socially dead but brilliantly alt-alive).

Five long novels only, so we are going to go slow. As the course subtitle indicates, we will also take pointers (provocative excerpts, not books, which tend of epic length in themselves!) from the critics who have risen to the occasions of these novels and whose mythopoetics ought to be a revelation even—perhaps especially—to graduate students: Walt Whitman, D.H. Lawrence, W.C. Williams, Charles Olson, C.L.R. James, Charles Feidelson, Leslie A. Fiedler, Albert Murray (Ellison's shadow editor), Fredric Jameson, Richard H. Brodhead, Toni Morrison, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Camille Paglia, Caleb Smith, Peter Coviello, and the writers of *The Sopranos*.

I have been told, by the way, that these novels can't be taught anymore—too complex, too brutal, too contrary and knowing and wise. I am not ready to give up, and I am hoping you will take first a gander and then a risk, coming along for what promises to be a helluva ride.

ENGLISH 590S-5.01 SPECIAL TOP SEMINAR DIVERSITY

Corpses of Empires: Europe, Otherwise

Corina Stan

In this seminar we will read and analyze major philosophical and literary texts of the past century that explore the European self-understanding during and after the collapse of imperial projects and the exhaustion of (what philosophers have called) "Europe's promise to the world." We'll begin by tracing the philosophical history of that promise in the work of Kant, Hegel, Marx, Husserl, Berlin, Derrida, Glendinning, and others, in parallel with exploring fictional texts and memoirs chronicling the disintegration of intra- and extra-continental empires. In so doing, we'll engage critically with the metonymical use of "Europe" (as a substitute for the West) and examine the merits and limitations of comparisons between the historical situation of Eastern and Central Europe, on one hand, and that of colonized cultures in Africa and Asia, on the other. A thread throughout our discussions will be the role of intellectuals and literature in articulating historical responsibility, the work of collective memory, the possibility of reparations, and the value of human life after the bankruptcy of humanist ideals. The texts in the reading list below – by Romanian, Polish, Hungarian, German, Czech, Somali-Italian, Bulgarian, Israeli, Senegalese, Tanzanian-British, and Austrian/stateless writers – engage in layered meditations on history, typically spanning hundreds of years and multiple generations.

Reading list:

Mihail Sebastian, *For Two Thousand Years* (1934)

Witold Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke* (1937) and selections from *A Kind of Testament* (1968) & *Diary* (2012)

Sandor Márai, *Embers* (1942) and selections from *Memoir of Hungary (1944-1948)* (1972)

Gregor von Rezzori, *Memoirs of an Anti-Semite* (1979)

Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984) and "The Death of Europe" (1984)

Jenny Erpenbeck, *The End of Days* (2014)

Abdulrazak Gurnah, *Afterlives* (2020)

Mohamed Mbougar Sarr, *The Most Secret Memory of Men* (2021)

Igiaba Scego, *The Color Line* (2022)

David Grossman, *More than I Love My Life* (2021)

Georgi Gospodinov, *Time Shelter* (2021)

ENGLISH 590S-5.02 SPECIAL TOP SEMINAR DIVERSITY

Black Mobilities: Cartographies of Black Transnationalism and Diaspora

Jarvis McInnis

This course examines cartographies of black transnational and diasporic mobility within African Diaspora literary and cultural studies. Loosely organized around overlapping cartographies—the Black Atlantic, Circum-Caribbean & Hemispheric Migrations, European Sojourns, and African “Returns”—this course explores literature, criticism, and theories of black people on the move, from the coercive and fugitive movements of slavery, colonialism, and their afterlives to labor migration and practices of black cosmopolitanism. We will trace these routes of black mobility across a range of literary genres, including fiction, travel writing, memoir, and alongside theories of diaspora, transnationalism, internationalism, cosmopolitanism, and geography. Readings may include works by Martin Delany, Zora Neale Hurston, W. E. B. Du Bois, Claude McKay, Richard Wright, Maryse Condé, Erna Brodber, Saidiya Hartman, Yaa Gyasi, and Chimamanda Adichie, among others. Primary texts will be paired with secondary criticism and theoretical works by Paul Gilroy, Brent Edwards, Hortense Spillers, Michelle Ann Stephens, Tsitsi Jaji, Ifeoma Nwankwo, José Esteban Muñoz, Katherine McKittrick, Daphne Brooks, Samantha Pinto, and Achille Mbembe, among others. For the final assignment, students can choose to complete one of the following: 1) 15-page seminar paper 2) abstract and annotated bibliography 3) conference abstract, paper, and presentation 4) syllabus.

ENGLISH 890S.01 SPECIAL TOP SEMINAR

AI, SMARTNESS & LEARNING

Rob Mitchell

Artificial Intelligence, Smartness, and Narratives of Learning

This is a media theory course, which aims to sharpen the question of the ontology of media by focusing on the implicit theories of *learning* that underwrite recent media theoretical work on “smart” technologies and artificial intelligence (e.g., the work of Louise Amoore, Benjamin Bratton, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Alexander Galloway, Kate Hayles, Yuk Hui, Adrian MacKenzie, Bernard Stiegler, and others). The “smartness” of smart technologies names the capacities of devices and techniques to learn, and the mechanism of this learning are various forms of artificial intelligence. But what kind of learning, specifically, is this? How does that mode (or modes) of learning relate to traditional accounts of learning, such as those of Locke, Rousseau, Dewey, and Skinner (and, more recently, Terrence Deacon), some of which have sought to account for both human and non-human learning? What role do signs and semiotics play in both traditional theories of learning and in more recent accounts of smart, artificial intelligence-assisted learning, and what are the implications of

these theories of semiotics for our understanding of the nature, or natures, of media? What relationship do these theories of machine learning bear to concepts of *critique* and *expertise*? What kinds of narratives structure these accounts of machine-assisted learning?

While this is a media theory-heavy course, we will anchor this theory in analysis of concrete instances of contemporary smart technologies and learning algorithms. Some cases will focus on specific technologies (e.g., ChatGPT; smart medicine applications); others will focus on architectural instantiations of smartness (e.g., smart cities); and others will focus on theoretical resonances (e.g., between the neoliberal theory of the market, often presented as a vast information processor, and theories of computer-assisted “deep learning”). While the first several case studies are written into the syllabus, the last several will be determined by student interests.

ENGLISH 890S-4.02 SPECIAL TOP SEMINAR CTM
History of Contemporary Literary Criticism
Rob Mitchell

This course provides students with a concise historical and theoretical overview of university-based literary criticism, with the goal of enabling graduate students to understand better—and hence, situate their own projects within—the history of their discipline. 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, feminism, postcolonial criticism, critical race studies, queer studies, and possibly a few others, depending on the direction(s) in which our conversations go. We will also consider how these movements relate to both the changing structure of the university and to non-university publics across this period. This course does not aim to provide a snapshot of the field at the current moment; rather, it provides a history of the developments that have led to the current state of the field.

ENGLISH 890T.01
Dissertation Workshop
Priscilla Wald

ENGLISH 890T.01
Job Market Workshop
Jarvis McInnis