

**Duke English Department Course Descriptions
Spring 2021**



ENGLISH 90S.01

SPECIAL TOPICS IN LITERATURE: DIGITAL DETECTIVES

Chris Huebner

Online

Digital Detectives: The Logic of Power // The Power of Logic

This course focus on the power and allure of the detective. There are a trio of questions that will guide our work throughout the course. First, how does detective fiction represent the human ability to construct knowledge, and solve the mysteries of our world? Second, who is able and allowed to operate as a detective, and how is “detective work” segregated according to age, gender, race and sexuality? Third, how does this ability to construct knowledge—and the power associated with it—change with the introduction of new technologies, from the telegraph to Twitter?

Our course will trace adaptations of stories like *Sherlock Holmes*, as well as other updated detective stories like the Netflix series *American Vandal*, to think about how technologies like GPS mapping and cell phones change the human ability to construct ways of knowing and how those new ways of knowing transform the human experience. These new technologies also provide clues about why detective fiction continues to be so alluring to audiences: establishing a fantasy in which humans exercise mastery over the world of knowledge that surrounds them. Additional texts for our focus include selections from Agatha Christie’s *Murder on the Orient Express*, the BBC series *Broadchurch*, Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, and P.G. Wodehouse’s *Piccadilly Jim*.

ENGLISH 90S.02

SPECIAL TOPICS IN LITERATURE: THE SPOOKY AND THE SACRED

Shirley Li

Online

Despite our *not believing* in ghosts and monsters, demons and spirits, we’re often drawn to them in popular culture and literature. The White Walkers of the *Game of Thrones*, the Demogorgon of *Stranger Things*, the Weeping Angels of *Doctor Who*: we consistently find the spirit-world of the weird and wondrous both fearsome and fascinating. Why do we find the spooky, the occult, the paranormal so engrossing? Moreover, does the spooky share anything with other, more “conventional” forms of the otherworldly: the religious and the sacred? This course examines works that are threaded with the “supra”-natural, the unnatural, both spooky and sacred. We begin with works of popular culture: selected episodes from the TV series above, and Neil Gaiman’s graphic novels *Sandman*. What kind of otherworld do these works evoke—the barren North of Westeros, the Upside Down, the Time Paradox, Morpheus’s Dream realm and Hell—and what relation do they bear to our world? Next we turn to works of spiritual autobiography, which may include: Michael Pollan’s book on hallucinatory drugs, Augustine’s *Confessions*, Thomas Merton’s *Seven-Storey Mountain*, and works of the Dalai Lama. Might there be a variety of supernatural or religious experience available to us, and if so how? Finally we turn to works of literature in two movements: first Christian mysticism and second magical realism. Christian mysticism broadly defined may include the medieval poem *Pearl*, Shusako Endo’s *Silence*, and James

Joyce's *Portrait of an Artist*. How does one live—as these protagonists do—oriented toward an afterlife, an otherworld, in an everyday infused with the sacred? The latter magical realism may include: Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Haruki Murakami's *Sputnik Sweetheart*, Jorge Luis Borges's *Ficciones* (selections), and Hayao Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke*. In these works, we examine how that which haunts us—whether slave ghosts or forest spirits—may be those unheard and unseen in our exploitative society.

Writing will constitute a central part of the course. But don't fear! You'll receive feedback for low-stakes weekly responses, and our three essays will gradually build skills toward a longer assignment: 4-5 pgs, 5-7 pgs, 8-10 pgs. The writing you learn—incorporating close reading and critical analysis and argument—will transfer to other humanities majors, social sciences, and science communication. Requirements: no prerequisites, weekly short responses, three essays, no exams.

ENGLISH 90S.03

SPECIAL TOPICS IN LITERATURE: THE ART OF MEMORY

James Draney

Hybrid

The Art of Memory: from Ancient Greece to Google

How do we remember, and forget, in the age of Instagram? Has life become like a *Black Mirror* episode, where everything we do, say, and think is recorded and stored for future reference? In the twenty-first century, our computers memorize information for us, and about us: the entire archive of human knowledge has been uploaded to the cloud, where it can be searched, re-arranged, sorted, and harnessed to suit any conceivable need. We leave permanent traces of ourselves every time we log on to Facebook, check our bank accounts, buy books on Amazon.

In this course, we will consider literary and philosophical perspectives on the nature of memory, from Plato all the way to *Black Mirror*. We will approach the question of memory through multiple frameworks: political, historical, technological, legal, and personal. Along the way, we will read novels and watch films by Virginia Woolf, Dave Eggers, Jorge Luis Borges, and Charlie Kaufman. We'll also consider the legal and political implications of memory in the modern age, looking closely at social media and new laws about the right to be forgotten. For centuries, humans had aimed to be remembered by their peers and successors. Today, we ask for the right to be forgotten. What's changed?

Assessment will be based on essays, blog posts, and in-class presentations. Students are also welcome to design and work on a digital project. No exams.

Readings include: Plato, 'Phaedrus'; Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*; Philip K. Dick, *We Will Remember it For You Wholesale*; Marcel Proust, excerpts from *Swann's Way*; Jorge Luis Borges, 'The Library of Babel'; Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*; Jon Ronson, *So You've Been Publicly Shamed*; Yoko Ogawa, *The Memory Police*; W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*; Tom McCarthy, *Remainder*; Simon Critchley, *Memory Theater*; Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*

Films: *Black Mirror* (“The Entire History of You”); *Memento*; *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*; *Mulholland Drive*; *Sans Soleil*

Assessment: informal weekly blog posts, two short essays on course texts (5 pages), one in-class presentation, and a final research paper (10 pages). No exams.

ENGLISH 101S.01

THE ART OF READING: **INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH POETRY**

Julianne Werlin

Online

This class offers an introduction to English poetry from the Anglo-Saxon period to the present. We’ll look at a wide range of forms, from riddles and runes to sonnets and songs, considering the powerful experiments in sound and sense that have shaped the English poetic tradition. We’ll read the work of some of the most influential and exciting poets in the language, such as Shakespeare, William Blake, Emily Dickinson, and Langston Hughes. In addition, we’ll discuss the writing of contemporary poets, exploring the online poetry communities that have grown in the last few years and taken new forms with the onset of the pandemic. Along the way, we’ll learn techniques for understanding and analyzing poems, including cutting-edge theories at the intersection of literary criticism and linguistics. Students will also engage in creative experiments and responses to poetry.

ENGLISH 101S.02

THE ART OF READING: **GOTHIC FICTION & FILM**

Leonard Tennenhouse

Online

This course considers why a literate public who prided itself on its modernity developed such an enduring appetite for gothic fictions and films. How did advances in modern science, the expansion of empires, and the growth of an information society feed this appetite? What aspects of daily life tend to take on gothic qualities and under what conditions? We will address these questions by examining how selected works of fiction and film challenge and perhaps anticipate changes in established notions of the self, family, nation, and world.

ENGLISH 101S.03

THE ART OF READING: PARSING MODERN LIFE: THE ESSAY

Thomas Pfau

Online

The Essay & Modern Life, 1750-2000

In this class, we will trace the evolution of the essay form and explore the genre's enormous diversity of voices and purposes. While the majority of examples will be drawn from English / Scottish essayists, the work of some eminent European and American writers will also be considered. – Even more than the novel, the essay is a quintessentially *modern* form: highly adaptable to all kinds of topics, accommodating entirely different readerships, and ranging in tone from low-brow polemics to high-brow, intellectual argument. Yet regardless of the demographic it targets, the essay always insists on its *provisional* character, its underlying objective being to help us navigate a world increasingly drained of metaphysical norms and certitudes. There is, then, something deliberately inconclusive about the essay form, which aims to pry open matters perceived to be in constant flux, subject to radically different appraisal, and all but impossible to resolve.

While the kinds of topics covered by the essay form have proven virtually limitless, we will mainly concentrate on five categories: 1) social psychology & general anthropology (manners, habits); 2) navigating modern economic life; 3) modern politics, with particular emphasis on totalitarianism; 4) book-reviews and essays on aesthetics and language; and 5) essays on philosophy and religion. – While exploring the essay's astonishing *tonal* variety, we will focus on the following writers: Michel de Montaigne, Addison & Steele, David Hume, William Hazlitt, R. W. Emerson, George Eliot, T. S. Eliot, George Orwell, Hannah Arendt, Simone Weil, Czeslaw Milosz, Lionel Trilling, James Baldwin, John Bayley, Susan Sontag, Wendell Berry, and Vaclav Havel. Most of the essays we will read tend to be short (10-15 pp.), and all course readings will be made available via Sakai as .pdf documents.

As regards writing assignments, this course aims to help you develop skills in writing lively and compelling essays of your own, targeted at a non-specialized audience, and exploring a variety of topics and voices. Thus, you'll be writing 1) a *review essay* on a book, a performance, an exhibit, or a film of your choosing; 2) an essay analyzing a political or social issue, past or present, about which you are reasonably well informed (note: it will not be assumed that you necessarily espouse the views you advance in such an essay); and, finally, 3) an *essay on a topic of particular concern to you*, provided the topic can be effectively addressed within the essay form. – You will have the option of rewriting *one* of these three essays (with the grade for the revised version replacing the initial one).

ENGLISH 101S.04

THE ART OF READING: THE BLACK ATLANTIC

Ranjana Khanna

Online

The idea of the “Black Atlantic” has been compelling for literary studies, and it had demanded close attention to issues of figuration, translation, responses to slavery, and the afterlife of the slave trade. The main text for this course will be Derek Walcott’s long poem *Omeros*. This major poem of the Caribbean, based loosely on Homer’s *Iliad* but referring also to other epics, asks us to place the question of race through the history of the literary canon, and does so through dense figurative language. We will ask, **What is Figurative Language and why is it important to the study of race, the Black Atlantic, and the politics of Black Lives Matter?** Through the course, we will address *Omeros* alongside related critical and literary texts of “the Black Atlantic,” (Homer, James Joyce, Edouard Glissant, Paul Gilroy, George Lamming, Maryse Condé, Paule Marshall), and critical texts on figuration (Erich Auerbach, Paul de Man, Brent Hayes Edwards). We will examine why we need to study figurative language (like metaphor, metonymy, or catachresis for example) and its importance to fictionality and of literature more generally in order to understand racial in/justice.

ENGLISH 110S.01

INTRO CREATIVE WRITING

Faulkner (Carol) Fox

Online

This course encourage students to explore and practice four genres of creative writing: creative nonfiction, fiction, playwriting, and poetry. Part of the class will be devoted to peer critique of student work (“workshopping”), and part to discussions of craft as well as close reading of published essays, stories, and poems; and close watching of scenes from plays. There will be weekly writing assignments, and students will also submit a final portfolio of finished work.

ENGLISH 110S.02

INTRO CREATIVE WRITING

Mesha Maren-Hogan

Online

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.

ENGLISH 110S.03

INTRO CREATIVE WRITING

Akhil Sharma**Hybrid**

Learning to write creatively is like learning to sing, in that the writer is similar to a singer in being her own instrument. The writer's specific sensibility and especial competencies determine the range of excellence that the writer can comfortably operate in.

This course will focus on three genres: poetry, creative non-fiction, and fiction. More particularly, the course will focus on the sonnet, the profile, and the short story. Each section will feed into the next: the stanza preparing us for the paragraph, and the interview leading into third person point-of-view.

Because learning to write creatively involves developing a form of muscle memory, there will be almost daily writing exercises. There will also be, and equally importantly, a daily writer's diary of the experience of performing the exercise.

The end goal of the course is to develop both a suppleness with language and an awareness as to our particular responses to specific subjects and technical challenges.

Requirements: Almost daily writing exercises. Grades: Writing assignments 50%; Participation 50%.

ENGLISH 208S.01

CRITICISM AND THE ARTS

Thomas Ferraro**Online**

Criticism and the Arts: AMERICA'S RADIANT PERSONAE

An Introductory Adventure in Mythopoetic Fiction and Theory

American literature is distinguished by the number of dangerous and disturbing books in its canon--and American scholarship by its ability to conceal this fact.

- Leslie Fiedler (Missoula, October 13, 1959)

This course is focused on a simple recognition of revisionary force: not only are many of the most prominent instances of the American mainline novel focused around individual protagonists (“Romantic” in the technical historical sense of the genre of the “Romance,” with a capital R), but most of these chief protagonists are either obsessed with or are themselves personae of singular *radianc*e, human figures of such sex and grace and power they cause no end of trouble for everyone in sight, including (of course!) themselves. At the least America’s radiant personae foment forbidden love, as glorious as its transgressive, wreaking collateral havoc and engendering deadly sacrifice.

Consider: Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, Chopin’s *The Awakening*, Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises*, and Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Despite their apparent accessibility and once ubiquitous presence, high-school favorites such as these are surprisingly troublesome to interpret, especially for readers who don’t or won’t recognize how they themselves are implicated in the staged entanglements of love-and-death. And by readers I mean even our smartest scholar-critics. The fact is that, under the theoretical mandate of suspicion (dating, really, to Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, de Beauvoir, and Fanon, though that’s a history for another day), we in the U.S. university-system have become quite adept at interrogating intersections of gender, race, class, and diaspora only to miss a critical factor in our combustible caste mixes—and we often do so even when its difference is staring us (an open secret) in the face. *What* factor, pray tell? What is this open secret, this elephant in the room, and *why* is it so “dangerous and disturbing” to American self-knowing and compulsive social practices, and *how* might our favorite books—indeed, our most consecrated books—help?

Well, no spoilers! But if I am right that the big critical guns have had trouble with our canon, so might *you*, at least at first. How could it be otherwise?

So here’s the plan: In this seminar, we will work through our initial confusions and assumptions (beyond them, but also by-means-of-them) regarding several major texts toward fresh interpretations. Pre-emptive habit will yield, I hope, to incisive explorations and, often enough, a special kind of revelation, surprising yet commonsensical: “OMG!” *and* “DUH!” Therein comes intellectual pleasure, literature as equipment for living, and our first hints of collective “theoretical” wisdom.

As for exemplars of America’s radiant personae, I obviously have Hester Prynne, Jay Gatsby, and Tea Cake (or is it Janie?) in mind, with others to be selected (Tom Outland and Lady Brett Ashley perhaps, or the Caribbean Sailor-man nicknamed “Banjo”) to serve our sadly compacted, literally shortened semester. We will also draw directly upon a small host of mythopoetic critics—Emerson, Olson, Paglia, Morrison, Rodriguez—whose revisionist potential has never quite registered, as per Leslie Fiedler’s *Love & Death in the American Novel*. And we may well encounter a few works of fiction (forgotten stories by Fitzgerald or Hemingway or Larsen, neglected novels by Frederic, Cather, and Ron Hansen) tactically chosen to out the “dangerous and disturbing” workings of the canon writ large.

ENGLISH 220S.01

INTRO TO THE WRITING OF POETRY

Joseph Donahue**Online**

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.

ENGLISH 220S.02

INTRO TO THE WRITING OF POETRY

Tsitsi Jaji**Online**

This course will engage in creative reading and writing to develop familiarity with widely sweeping traditions of poetry. We will spend significant time thinking about craft – the choices that writers make about what words to use, how to arrange them, and what alternatives they have discovered – as we seek to join a writing community that stretches across time and space. Because we are living through a pandemic that has disproportionately impacted poor and working class people, the elderly, and Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people, we will be particularly attentive to the creative example of writers of these backgrounds. This class is open to all students regardless of their experience with reading and writing poetry, but the expectations for participation will be high. Students will write multiple versions of poems and learn to give and receive feedback anchored in observation rather than preference and interpretation. The culmination of the class will be a chapbook length portfolio of poems (roughly 25 pp) and a virtual reading.

ENGLISH 221S.01

INTRO. TO THE WRITING OF FICT.

JP Gritton

Hybrid

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'll be exploring 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 are required to purchase this text; it will provide a kind of technical ballast as we explore fiction by the likes of Daniel Orozco, Amy Hempel, Toni Morrison, and others. **This is a HYBRID class: in addition to our bi-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: responding to discussion questions on class readings, as well as informally "workshopping" classmates' fiction. 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.

ENGLISH 221S.02

INTRO. TO THE WRITING OF FICT.

Amin Ahmad

Online

Detectives, robots and talking frogs: Writing altered/alternate realities.

As children, we easily live in worlds that combine reality and fantasy, but as we grow older, we lose that ability. Perhaps that is why we are drawn to fiction that creates new realities. In this class, we will explore fiction that alters existing reality, or creates an alternate one: Hardboiled/ noir detective fiction, magical realism, dystopian fiction, fantasy and science fiction.

Reading like writers, we will analyze each genre to understand how it creates a new but authentic world, and how it draws upon existing archetypes and story structures.

We will then apply those understandings to our own writing through in-class writing exercises and short homework writing assignments. Students will ultimately write two full short stories in different genres, and workshop them in class.

This is an intensive class- come prepared to read a lot, write a lot, and to experiment with your writing. Since this is a workshop-based class, attending Zoom sessions in real time is required.

ENGLISH 222S.01

INTRO TO THE WTG OF CREAT. N-F

Cathy Shuman

Hybrid

Introduction to the Writing of Creative Nonfiction: Writing the Self

How do you craft a self through writing? The semester will be spent exploring approaches to autobiographical writing, as students write preliminary drafts/exercises that will lead through workshops and revision to the production of three 7-9 page autobiographical essays. As we consider topics such as childhood and memory, the people, places, and things that make up our present selves, and the stories that have shaped our lives, we will read selected examples of published memoir and personal essay that will help us develop techniques for creating our own. No previous creative writing coursework is required for this course.

The course will be taught as an in-person/online hybrid, with most students in-person. Workshops will be held on Zoom.

ENGLISH 235.01

SHAKESPEARE: SHAKESPEARE & CONTEMPORARIES

Julianne Werlin & Leonard Tennenhouse

Online

Shakespeare and his fellow dramatists wrote in troubled times. Renaissance London was the site of plague, religious conflict, anxieties about the transition between governments, and a growing gap between rich and poor. Yet within this dangerous world, the theater grew and flourished, reaching audiences of thousands. It produced some of the most remarkable literature in English, whose inspired witticisms, larger-than-life characters, and scenes of passion and violence still shape our culture today.

In this class, we will read some of Shakespeare's greatest comedies, tragedies, and histories, setting them in dialogue with works by his rivals, friends, and imitators. Surveying the landscape of Renaissance theater, we will consider how art responds to moments of uncertainty, and whether it simply reflects dominant views, or can shape public opinion. And we will ask what happens when art itself becomes the subject of controversy -- as in Shakespeare's England, when offended members of the public demanded that the theaters be shut down. We will read a range of plays, including Othello, Antony and Cleopatra, and The Tempest. Writing assignments will include three short papers.

ENGLISH 236S.01

SHAKESPEARE: ON NATURE

Sarah Beckwith

Online

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, involving pushing men and women 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 kinds of pressure. Who is our kin? And how kind are we? Of what kind are we?)

Unlike so many of his contemporaries whose habitat was the city, Shakespeare famously returns to Stratford towards the end of his life, and perhaps, in theatrical and conceptual terms never really left it.

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 245.01**ENG LIT ROMANTIC PERIOD: REVOLUTION AND PROGRESS****Catherine Lee****Online**

Revolution and Progress, 1780–1820

Is the world progressing or regressing? Some argue that life for humans is better than ever before, that we are living the wildest dreams of those who lived on this earth centuries or even decades ago. But others insist that such a view overlooks the magnitude of human suffering that exists around the globe today, and the sheer number and scope of problems that humans face, such as climate change, economic inequality, political unrest, and more. Clearly, a consensus is yet to be reached regarding what progress really means.

The question of progress became central in the Romantic period (1780–1820), during which a series of revolutions brought the world closer to the form that we recognize today. The American Revolution, for example, gave rise to a new nation-state, and to the ideals of liberty and democracy. These ideals were championed by the French Revolution, which dismantled old ideas about social structure, the individual, and happiness, and by the Haitian Revolution, the self-liberation of slaves in Haiti from French colonial rule. The Industrial Revolution, as critic Michel Serres writes, “destroyed the agrarian, cool society of water mills and windmills” in England, and “created a new and burning society.” At the heart of these revolutions was the idea that things were changing for the better, that progress was taking place.

In this course, we will explore what the individuals who lived during the Romantic period, and grappled with the concepts of progress and revolution, can teach us about these concepts, as well as related ideas about the individual, society, liberty, democracy, and happiness, by examining a variety of Romantic-era texts. Readings will include works of Romantic poetry by William Blake, William Wordsworth, Charlotte Smith, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats, and others, political and philosophical writings by J. J. Rousseau, Edmund Burke, William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Thomas Malthus, and more, documents from the Haitian Revolution, the slave narrative by Olaudah Equiano, and two novels, Jane Austen’s *Emma* (1815) and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818). Assignments will include short reflection papers and medium-length essays.

ENGLISH 269.01

CLASSICS OF AM LIT, 1820-1860: **AFRICAN AMERICAN LIT**

Karen Little

Online

In this course, we will take a long historical approach to literature, looking to Black American texts of the colonial through antebellum periods to understand the deep roots of social protest in the Black American cultural tradition. Despite barriers to free movement, to property-ownership, to education, and to the press, the earliest Black Americans produced poetry, songs, oration, fiction, and journalism. We will sample each of these genres and consider how texts harness the power and conventions of literature to advance vital arguments. Issues of note will include the institution of slavery, property rights, rights to worship, rights to literacy, rights to political participation, legal recognition, and more. Via structured research activities, students will produce original arguments about the treatment of social issues in Black American literature with options to make comparative arguments across colonial/antebellum texts and between these texts and those from later eras.

Course Requirements: Participation in class discussion and workshops; regular “blog” entries; two brief research presentations (one based on an archival object; one based on a newspaper article); one 10-minute work in progress presentation; and one 10-12 page research paper.

ENGLISH 275S.01

INTRODUCTION TO ASIAN AMERICAN DIASPORA STUDIES

Ryan Ku

Online

Treated as “forever foreign,” not quite a minority (a “model”), Asians resurface in U.S. national culture from time to time, remembered anew amid perennial forgetting. What conditions this (dis)appearance and how does it define Asian American identity? When do Asian Americans emerge in the mainstream and to what extent does invisibility betray a constitutive role in U.S. history? This course charts the shifting place of Asians in the modernizing of America—their structural relation to U.S. sovereignty along with the solidarities and fissures, or inclusions and exclusions, within and beyond the America they reclaim. We will begin by reviewing the rise and current state of Asian American studies as a field of study in the context of political struggle and academic change. We will then read literary and cultural texts alongside ethnic historiography and criticism to trace the evolution of America’s relation to an other it cannot see as a part of itself. Through three, double-sided lines of inquiry, we will lay bare the historical conditions of the present as well as the diversity of an ever unseen but by no means vanishing—in fact, the opposite—constituency.

First, we will trace new “developments” in representation to the family’s longstanding construction as a contested medium of immigrant assimilation *and* the transnational migration of an economically vital yet politically excluded labor force—of coolies, “cheap farmers,” “illegal aliens,” and the colonized. Long before its “pivot to Asia,” the U.S. has imagined the Pacific as an “American lake,” which is littered by eerily reminiscent yet forgotten wars. This making of a “new” empire through wars on magical waters is the second axis we will examine by looking at the “unincorporation,” internment, and proxy wars to which Asians have been subjected and contradictions among Asians due to diasporic nationalism and empire soldiering. Finally, we

will (re)turn to the “new” forms of visibility, often couched in capitalist and technological terms, that increasingly characterize Asians in America to discern interracial, indeed interspecies, relations and conflict amid their simultaneous projection to the past and the future. In providing a critical history of Asian America as a cultural and disciplinary formation, this course will expand the field’s foundational concerns toward a transpacific and hemispheric Asia/America and explore minor adoptions and resistances of America, including of its aesthetic trajectory from realism to modernism, postmodernism, and beyond.

Texts may include *Crazy Rich Asians*, *The Year of the Dragon*, *America is in the Heart*, *Obasan*, *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*, *We Should Never Meet*, *Tropic of Orange*, Philippine–American War editorial cartoons, *Homecoming King*, *Robot Stories*, *Coolies and Cane*, *Impossible Subjects*, *The Quest for Statehood*, *Soldiering through Empire*, *Immigrant Acts*, *America’s Asia*, *The Oriental Obscene*, *Alien Capital*, *Consuming Japan*, and *Dangerous Crossings*. Students will be evaluated based on class participation and presentations, written responses, (con)textual analysis, and comparative analysis or historical synthesis. This course will be taught online. Students will be required to attend the course on Zoom. Additional instruction and participation may take place through Sakai forums, small group sessions, and/or virtual office hours.

ENGLISH 290S.01

SP TOP IN LANG. & LIT: **AFRICAN AMERICAN POETRY**

Nicole Higgins

Online

Contemporary African American Poetry

“I’ve come here to lash out / I’ve come here to reclaim my tenderness / Which is not linear and I’m trying to remember...” –Harmony Holiday

This course will explore a range of African American poetry written since 2008. Many rushed to hail the moment, with the election of the first Black president, as a turn to a “post-racial” America. Instead, it was marked by ongoing and increasingly visible racial violences. The variety of witness-bearing responses from Black poets in particular invites an exploration of the relationships between their culturally-informed poetics, Black life, and the American literary canon. How are contemporary Black poets contending with historical notions like “art for art’s sake,” or the Black Aesthetic? How do they navigate the lived and psychic experiences of race in their poems? What kind of space is made for the concurrent parts of their identities, both on and off the page? How are these considerations shaping the landscape of American poetry in the 21st century?

Likely texts include: Jericho Brown’s *The Tradition*, Camonghne Felix’s *Build Yourself a Boat*, Ross Gay’s *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude*, Claudia Rankine’s *Citizen*, and Avery R. Young’s *booker t. soltreyne: a race rekkid*.

Open to all majors and levels. No prerequisites, no exams. In addition to thoughtful participation in class discussions, students will write short reflection papers, and either a longer critical essay or short collection of poems + critical introduction.

ENGLISH 290S-4.01

SP TOPICS IN CREATIVE WRITING: **FLASH NONFICTION**

Cathy Shuman

Online

Experimenting with creative nonfiction style, tone, and structure, in this class we will explore the challenges and opportunities offered by the genre of flash nonfiction (very short personal essays). Over the course of the semester each student will gather material for, draft, workshop, revise, and polish a series of six flash nonfiction pieces of 600-800 words each, using a variety of approaches. Along the way, in-class writing exercises and published examples of flash nonfiction will provide inspiration and ideas. No previous creative writing coursework is required for this course.

ENGLISH 290S-4.02

SP TOPICS IN CREATIVE WRITING: TRANSFORMING FACT INTO FICTION

Akhil Sharma

Hybrid

At its core, this course grapples with what fiction provides that non-fiction does not.

Over the course of the semester, students will interview a subject multiple times to gain an understanding of the subject's experiences. They will then use these interviews to identify the arc of a possible story and the story's relevant characters. They will then consider the formal requirements of this possible story and read other works that are comparable to the story they wish to write. Finally, they will write multiple drafts of a fifteen to twenty-five page story.

ENGLISH 321S.01

INT. WORKSHOP WTG OF FICT.

JP Gritton

Hybrid

This course will build on the concepts outlined in "ENGL 221S - Introduction to the Writing of Fiction." Students will work to apply the concepts outlined in craft essays by Kate Bernheimer, Pete Turchi, and others to their own fiction through weekly writing exercises on setting, point of view,

characterization, and voice. While learning from masters of the craft, students will also work to complicate any easy understanding of the “rules” of writing fiction. How and when (for one example) might we tell, instead of show? When might (for yet another example) a “flat” character suit our purposes better than a “round” one, and how do stories like A.S. Byatt’s “The Thing in the Forest” complicate easy notions about a character “depth”? In addition to weekly writing exercises, students will submit three complete short stories to the workshop, revising one before semester’s conclusion. **This is a HYBRID class: in addition to our bi-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.

ENGLISH 377.01

CONTEMPORARY NOVEL: POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE

Russell Coldicutt

Online

Postcolonial Literature: From Colony to Computation

A civilization depends upon the fictions that its people use to understand themselves, their relation to each other, and to the places they live. It’s therefore no coincidence that for most of the history of English literature, Western readers have presumed that the best literature, in fact the only literature worth reading, has come from the First World—from England and its settler nations. This literature provided its readers with a shared understanding of how they should behave and is in this sense partly responsible for producing the cultural sensibilities that limit what and, crucially, *who* is excluded from a society. This is no less true for today’s globally interconnected world as it was for the readers at the height of the British Empire. A study of a society’s literary forms provides us with a way to understand how a given population understands itself and its relation to those it excludes from its social interactions.

So, what does it mean when the majority of literature produced by the First World fails to mention its dependence on colonialism, past and present? In this class, we’ll explore how this murky division between history and fiction has come to shape how writers and readers alike understand their relation to the past, the present, and to their means of expression through literary genre. To do so, we look to the fictions of the twentieth and twenty-first century from the former British Empire and Commonwealth—both those considered by that Empire as central, as well as those considered peripheral. We will discover how the most prolific writers of those centuries came up with strategies in order to come to terms with, or hide, the historical facts of empire and its continuing effects on their present day. As we move through some of the most important works of fiction written during the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, we’ll tease out some of the issues to emerge out of the uneasy relation between colonial history and literature as it appears in the novel, drama, poetry, and film: cultural-nationalism, diaspora, and globalization; histories, identities, and generational shifts; literary form and the idea of “postcolonial literature.”

Students will write three short responses (under 1 page), one short essay (5-7 pages), and one final essay (8-10 pages) instead of a final exam. This course will be held online with both synchronous and asynchronous options.

ENGLISH 386.01

SCIENCE FICTION FILM

Priscilla Wald & Margaret McDowell

Online

The computer running your spaceship has turned homicidal; you have crash landed on a planet run by talking apes. Your little sister can read your mind; your future is revealed in the DNA sample taken moments after your birth. From space travel to time travel, from mind control to genetic manipulation, from aliens to sentient robots, no genre has more fully captured—and influenced--the relationship between important scientific discoveries and profound geopolitical and social transformations than science fiction. It registers the anxieties and hopes, the terror and the anticipation that comes with scientific innovation and social change. This class will consider science fiction film from its rise in the 1950s through the present. From its earliest years, science fiction film offered an important mode of engaging profound social changes and of imagining ethical responses to them. In its depiction of the future or of other worlds entirely, it offered a template for rehearsing a variety of outcomes for contemporary dilemmas, from the cultural negotiations of the multi-galactic crew of the starship Enterprise in *Star Trek* to the consequences of genetic determinism in the sterile world of *Gattaca*. And it staged explorations of human potential and limitations in the Atomic Age through such scenarios as the discovery of alternate universes and mental dimensions, the implications of human evolution and the creation of artificial intelligence, encounters with alien beings and worlds, and the ultimate unthinkable that was never really far from the human imagination: the consequences of full-scale nuclear war or environmental apocalypse. Since its proliferation in the post-war period, this cinematic genre, with its fantastical settings, imaginative plotlines, and inventive special effects, has dramatically registered collective responses to the radical scientific innovations and geopolitical transformations that have characterized the second half of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first and has forged new mythologies for the contemporary world.

This class will be organized around the relationship between scientific innovation and social and geopolitical transformation: how, for example, the threats of nuclear war and the exhaustion of environmental resources, discoveries in virology and genetics, and the innovations in cybernetics intersect with decolonization and global development, race relations, and new social and geopolitical configurations. We will explore how science fiction film registers and responds to the contours and uncertainties of a changing world: to the challenges to the concept of human being and to the survival of the species. We will consider both how the films stage the dilemmas emerging from scientific and social change and how they posit responses to them. We will explore the cinematic innovations, the social criticism, and the mythological imaginings of science fiction film.

Course Structure and Requirements: This class will be taught online. It will be half lecture and half seminar. Requirements include a critical essay and revision, weekly blog postings, and a final project.

ENGLISH 390-1.01SINGLE AMER AUTHOR (TOP): **T.S. ELIOT****Victor Strandberg****Online**

Regarded in his lifetime as a dominant force in modern poetry (compared by one critic to “the sun and the moon in the firmament”), T. S. Eliot has largely retained his iconic status nearly a century and a half since his birth. The central purpose of this course is to facilitate a better understanding of Eliot’s whole poetic oeuvre, from “Prufrock” and “The Waste Land” through “The Hollow Men,” “Ash-Wednesday” and “Four Quartets.” To enhance this effort, we will also read one or more of Eliot’s plays and broadly examine his literary/cultural commentary, his biography, and the historical context of his life and work. An abundance of recent Eliot scholarship, including the release online of over a thousand letters of his to an intimate female friend, will provide opportunities for original scholarship.

ENGLISH 390S-1.01SINGLE AMERICAN AUTHOR (TOP): **EMILY DICKINSON****Joseph Donahue****Online**

The adultery, betrayal, homoeroticism, tragic death and contested estate would make “The Dickinsons of Amherst,” were it ever a series, a hit, at least on PBS. Then there’s the central figure, Emily Dickinson, who was, there’s no polite way to put this, the greatest lyric poet in the English language. This course is an answer to her own question: Dare you see a Soul at the White Heat? To do so, we will read through her extraordinary Collected Poems, some of her letters, and works that influenced her, and that she influenced. We will explore her confrontations with such matters as love, death, belief, the fate of the soul, in those sharp small poems, by turns witty and grave, that aspire to the condition of lightning.

ENGLISH 390S-1.02SINGLE AMERICAN AUTHOR: **ZORA NEALE HURSTON****Jarvis McInnis****Online**

#CiteBlackWomen: Reading Zora Neale Hurston

This course examines the life and work of Zora Neale Hurston. Though best known as a novelist of the Harlem Renaissance, Hurston was also a formally trained anthropologist, who wrote and experimented across a range of literary genres and cultural media, including: novels, short stories, plays, anthropological essays, political essays, autobiography, sound recordings and documentary film footage. In addition to Harlem, she spent a considerable part of her career traveling throughout the US South and the Caribbean collecting and theorizing black vernacular culture, such as folklore, music, dance, and religious expression. Bringing together literature, music, gender and sexuality studies, and performance studies, this course will explore the vast range of Hurston's impressive oeuvre. Some questions we will take up include: What is the relationship between literature and anthropology in Hurston's oeuvre? How does her work converge with and depart from that of her male contemporaries (e.g., Richard Wright, Sterling Brown, and Langston Hughes) who also wrote about black culture in the US South? How does she represent gender, and particularly black women's experiences, in her work, and what is its significance for contemporary black feminism? How do Hurston's depictions of "the folk" defy conventional understandings of black modernity? How does the emphasis on the US South and the Caribbean in her work offer an alternative geographic framework for exploring questions of diaspora? Can we trace linkages between her literary, sonic and visual projects, and if so, how might this function as a model for practicing and understanding interdisciplinarity and, more specifically, the project of Black Studies?

ENGLISH 397S.01

NARRATIVES OF MIGRATION

Dominika Baran

Hybrid

Not a service -earning course this semester

Migration is a journey, and a journey makes for a story. Whether it is a story of dreams and successes, of struggling with physical and emotional challenges, of traumatic pain suffered by refugees from war-torn regions, of mixed emotions that accompany discovery and loss, or of some combination of these, the story of migration is always captivating because it touches on things deeply important to all of us as humans: home, family, belonging, identity. In this course, we will explore narratives, or stories, of migration, as told by refugees and immigrants from across the world, through different media: written, spoken, photographed, constructed digitally on social media. Narratives as texts are of great interest to a number of disciplines, including literature, cultural studies, linguistics, anthropology, psychology, and sociology, because studying them allows us to examine how people make sense of their lived experience. This course approaches narratives of migration primarily from the perspective of sociocultural linguistics and discourse analysis, but we will refer to other scholarly traditions as well, such as literary criticism and cultural studies, to explore the interdisciplinary nature of narrative research. Throughout the course, we will also think about different ways of defining a narrative, about what distinguishes it from other forms of discourse or other types of texts, and about new forms that narratives can take in the age of globalization and in the multimodal, translocal contexts of social media.

ENGLISH 420S.01

ADV WORKSHOP WTG. POETRY

Nathaniel Mackey**Online**

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 421S.01

ADV WORKSHOP WTG. FICTION

Mesha Maren-Hogan**Online**

The Advanced Writing Workshop in Fiction builds on work done at the intermediate level and is intended for the most well-prepared and gifted creative writing students. In this course, you will hone and polish your fiction writing skills with an eye towards revision and full manuscript development. This course is built to prepare you to continue professionally after your undergraduate studies, either in an MFA program or on your own. Because you cannot write well without reading extensively, we will read and discuss five full-length fiction books as well as James Wood's craft manual *How Fiction Works*. You will write and revise continuously throughout the semester as well as engaging in feedback with your peers.

ENGLISH 490S-10.01SP TOP CRITICISM/THEORY/METH: **SELF-HELP NARRATIVES****Kathy Psomiades****Online**

This course examines self-help writing as genre and as cultural phenomenon. From business advice about productivity and entrepreneurship, to instructions on how to dress and decorate so as to reveal your "true self," to the podcasts that help you to be happier through positive thinking and self love, self help is ubiquitous. We'll be making self help the object of our study, using the methods of theorists of culture like Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu; we'll also be looking at a few 19th, 20th or 21st century novels that speak to the intersection of literary and self-help ideas of the self. As a Criticism/Theory/Methodology course, this course will focus both on the theories and methodologies that allow us to analyze and criticize self help, and on the reading techniques that allow us to understand the narrative pleasure self help offers.

Some short (2-3) page written assignments, and two assignments that take the form of podcast episodes—one practicing the genre and one critical analysis—along with brief written rationales for those episodes.

ENGLISH 590S-4.01**SP TOP CRITICISM/THEORY/METH: END OF THE WEST****Corina Stan****Online**

The “End” of the West

This seminar will trace the history of the term “the West” (or “Western civilization”) and the cultural pessimism that has accompanied it since its beginnings. We will examine the resilience of European imperial ambitions (from the Holy Roman Empire to the “scramble for Africa”), and the fear that “the West” would suffer a similar fate to the Roman Empire, whose collapse served, for centuries, as a cautionary tale; study the ways in which Greek philosophy, Roman law, and Judeo-Christian morality have been construed as the three main pillars of European identity, and unpack the controversy generated by historians who made a case for the Afro-Asiatic roots of European civilization (Martin Bernal, Tim Whitmarsh); understand the enduring influence of the fetishization, by the “father” of European art history Johan Winckelmann, of “white” Greek sculpture (ignoring that the originals were actually colored), and its connection to race theories that emerged at a time of imperial expansion, serving to justify it (Nell I. Painter, Sarah Bond); how the West’s self-understanding was challenged by colonialism and decolonization, waves of immigration, the fall of the Berlin Wall and of the Eastern Block, the crises of 2016 (Charlie Hebdo, the refugee crisis, Brexit...), the rise of the Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident (Pegida) and other far-right groups.

We will also evaluate arguments put forward by thinkers who construed Europe as a philosophical project (Husserl to Derrida, Rodolphe Gasché, Simon Glendinning), by critics of Western imperialism (from Aimé Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism*, Richard Wright’s report from the Bandung conference *The Color Curtain* and the European lectures in *White Man, Listen!*, James Baldwin’s “Powers and Princes”, and Samir Amin’s *Eurocentrism*, to Thomas Pakenham’s *The Scramble for Africa* and Walter Mignolo’s *On Decoloniality*), and by nostalgic critics of European decline (Rolf Peter Sieferle’s *Finis Germania*, Walter Laqueur’s *The Last Days of Europe* and *After the Fall*, Douglas Murray’s *The Strange Death of Europe*). We will also explore some of these themes in novels by Joseph Conrad, Leila Sebbar, Jenny Erpenbeck, Michel Houellebecq, and Caryl Phillips.

ENGLISH 590S-4.03**SP TOP CRITICISM/THEORY/METH: TRANSGRESSION & REDEMPTION****Thomas Ferraro****Online**

A Seminar in Mythopoetic Fiction and Theory

American literature is distinguished by the number of dangerous and disturbing books in its canon--and American scholarship by its ability to conceal this fact.

--Leslie Fiedler, October 1959

A work of this span goes against the grain of current critical taste, but we haven't seen the forest for the trees much in recent years, and I think "Transgression & Redemption" will hit a lot of reset buttons, and jumpstart important new works.

--Anonymous ms. reviewer, February 2019

I invite you to a seminar in exposure, if not immersion and participation. The exposure is to an ambitious updating (feminist and queer, Morrisonian and Jamesonian, pan-sensorial and sacramentally alert) of the greatest account ever given of canonical U.S. storytelling, Leslie Fiedler's Love & Death in the American Novel. For it was Fiedler who first taught us that American narrative is a compulsive restaging (Protestantly derived, Protestantly directed) of the interplay among sex, violence, and sanctity, and it is one of the unrecognized byproducts of nearly a half-century of canonical revision--under the signs of gender, race, class, and diaspora--that it re-animates and re-inflects but by no means defangs or escapes Fiedler's mythography. By immersion I mean the inhabitation ("slow reading," if you will) of major novels of that neo-canon--in which the reader cultivates her own capture by the text's knowing, to the point where she is enabled to talk back to the text in its own idiom. I am especially interested in a major trajectory of the tradition's own idiom, its conjuring of Marian Catholicism--be it explicit, closeted, or allied. To participate, then, is to summon the implications of such immersion and act on the consequent vision of re-emergence, not only my re-emergent vision but yours: ideally, it is to contribute to professional praxis at its real cutting edges, beyond the Puritan pedagogy of U.S. Critical Theory, where the impact of visual, sound, and media studies is now being felt in literary studies proper, and where American mythopoetics—its appetite for radiant beauty, its insinuation of fierce wisdom, and its demand for disciplinary-suspicious courage—take command once again.

Our primary reading is to be chosen from:

Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, with "The Minister's Black Veil"

Herman Melville, Billy Budd

Harold Frederic, The Damnation of Theron Ware

Kate Chopin, The Awakening, with "At Chênrière Caminada"

F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby, with "Absolution"

Willa Cather, The Professor's House, with "Coming, Aphrodite!"

Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises, with "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen"

Nella Larsen, Passing, with Claude McKay, "Jelly Roll"

Ron Hansen, Mariette in Ecstasy

Complementary readings in theory and criticism, from Fiedler of course, but also from Paglia, Emerson, Lawrence, Williams, Baym, Berger, Mulvey, Sedgwick, Paglia, Rodriguez, Morrison, Benn Michaels, Butler, Orsi, Fessenden, and (should we read The Professor's House) a small host of Duke affiliates. Also—in Huck's unavoidable fashion—yours truly.

ENGLISH 890S.01

SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR: **The Novel as Theory**

Nancy Armstrong & Anne Garréta

Online

Theory of the Novel: The Novel as Theory

This course takes a new look at the moment of postmodernism as the moment when major novelists of various national traditions seemed to turn against their respective traditions, lending credence to Auerbach's claim that the novels of Virginia Woolf had pushed realism to the point where "exterior events have actually lost their hegemony" and "serve [only] to release and interpret inner events."

What would the novel, on the verge of postmodernity, look like if we were to begin with Calvino and move horizontally from there to see what the likes of Beckett, Pynchon, and others, including Barthes' *S/Z* do with the vestiges of both realism and modernism.

Here are the preliminary rationales and rules of the game:

- To reverse the prevailing temporality of literary history that proceeds from realism to modernism to postmodernism, we want to look retrospectively from the presentism of 21st century fiction and identify the present in the past.
- To consider the late twentieth century-century novel in its own (distinctively spatial) terms, we plan to organize our inquiry around Calvino's 1979 *If on a Winter's Night . . .* and proceed metonymically by way of the links established by that novel which define its moment.
- To reverse the prevailing tendency of critical theory, we shall regard the novel as its own best theory, asking how, for example, do the novels of the late twentieth century account for the rise of the hypertechnical literary and critical theory of the same period?

This course is designed for online teaching and will include guest participants, workshops, and a collaborative final project.

Intended for graduate students who plan to research some area of novel studies, this course offers concepts that give them access 1) to the mode or modes of thinking developed in and by novels across the modern period and several different national traditions, 2) to the best known critical theoretical definition of those concepts.

This course takes a new look at the postmodern moment, when major novelists turned against their respective national traditions, seemingly fulfilling Auerbach's claim that the novels of Virginia Woolf had pushed realism to its vanishing point.

What would the concept of the novel look like if we were to start with Calvino's 1979 *If on a Winter's Night* and proceed metonymically to what Beckett, Pynchon, Perec or Barthes among others do with the vestiges of realism and modernism?

Reversing in the process the prevailing tendency of critical theory, we shall regard the novel both as its own best theory and a critical spur for the late 20th century rise of a hyper-technical literary theory.

This course is designed for online teaching and will include guest participants, workshops, and a collaborative final project.

ENGLISH 890S.02

SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR: SHAKESPEARE TRAGEDIES

Sarah Beckwith

Online

Shakespeare, Tragedy, Ethics: The Responsibility of Response

A first aim of this class will be to explore Shakespearean tragedy as a "lethal attempt to deny the existence of another as essential to one's own." So tragedy in Shakespeare's handling turns out to explore acknowledgment as the home of our knowledge of others and of ourselves. This class explores Shakespeare's tragedies as a set of meditations on the costs of denying that we share language. Why does this idea become compelling and attractive right then? How is such a denial so much as possible? We will focus on Shakespeare's late tragedies (*King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Coriolanus*, *Timon of Athens*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*), as well as *Hamlet*, and *Othello*. We will also ponder the tragic matrix of comedy in plays such as *Much Ado About Nothing*, as well as those plays that begin as tragedies but turn aside from that form: *The Winter's Tale*, and possibly *The Tempest*.

A second aim of the class, and closely connected with the first, is an exploration of ordinary language philosophy (Wittgenstein, Austin, and Cavell) in relation to theatre. I see a natural affinity between the practices of theater and the practices of ordinary language philosophy because each practice is committed to examining particular words used by particular speakers in particular situations. Each practice understands language as situation, which is different from "context" because sometimes we only understand the context when we understand what it is that is being said. Ordinary language philosophy makes the very radical claim that we will fail to understand what something means until we understand what it does, until we understand the force of the words used on any particular occasion as, say, entreaty, command, order, suggestion, permission, request, prayer. Each practice understands language as act, as event in the world, and so asks us to extend our conception of the work of language beyond the work of representation, the chief focus of historicism old and new.

We will read some central essays of J.L. Austin, Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, and especially Part 4 of Stanley Cavell's work: *The Claim of Reason: Skepticism, Morality, Acknowledgment, Tragedy* where we will attempt an exploration of the intimacy of these four terms to each other. This will help us explore tragedy's work between "avoidance and acknowledgment."

This class should be of interest to anyone interested in exploring Shakespeare, tragedy as a genre, theatre, ordinary language philosophy and ethics, and performance studies.

ENGLISH 890S.03**SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR: AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIMENTAL WRITING****Nathaniel Mackey****Online**

A study of poetry and fiction by African American writers pursuing alternative approaches to form, content, style, coherence and meaning inside the literary work and outside it. The period covered is the 1960s to the present. The authors read for the course are Amiri Baraka, Jayne Cortez, Renee Gladman, Erica Hunt, Bob Kaufman, William Melvin Kelley, Clarence Major, Harryette Mullen, Claudia Rankine, Ishmael Reed, Ed Roberson and Fran Ross.

ENGLISH 890S.05**SPECIAL TOPICS SEMINAR: THEORIES OF NATURE & THE HUMAN****Priscilla Wald & Matthew Taylor (UNC)****Online**

This class will explore changing theories of nature and the human by examining three conceptual clusters in their broad historical moments: state of nature and natural rights and law (colonial encounter and the Enlightenment); evolution and ecology (mid 19th century); and eugenics, biopolitics, and biotechnology (the long twentieth century). We will start by considering how changing ideas about “nature” informed such concepts as “natural law” and “natural rights” and how they evolved through the idea and settlement of “America.” Ranging across oceans, genres, and media, the class will then focus on key developments in the sciences and political philosophy and their relationship to innovations in the literary and visual arts. Broadly speaking, we will consider the centrality of theories of nature and the human to the co-emergence of scientific and humanistic thinking—of their similarities and antagonisms. Our working premise in this class is that these conceptions underpin the broad assumptions—we might call them “cosmologies”—that we make about the world and, more specifically for our purposes, that a sense of how theories of nature change and how they shape our thinking is crucial for understanding “theory” more generally.

The wide range of works considered in this class will allow us to investigate how ideas circulate across media, genres, historical periods, and cultures. Accordingly, the course will include discussions not only of the topics covered by the readings, but also of method and approach: how we understand categories such as “theory,” “literature,” “history,” “life,” and “popular culture,” and how we might approach them in scholarship and in the classroom. There will also be an emphasis on pedagogy throughout this class.